

Matras, Yaron; Leggio, Daniele Viktor; Steel, Mirela

## 'Roma education' as a lucrative niche. Ideologies and representations

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# ZEP

Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung  
und Entwicklungspädagogik

Mit: Mitteilungen der DGfE-Kommission  
Vergleichende und Internationale  
Erziehungswissenschaft

1'15

## Sinti and Roma

- Warehouses and Window-Dressing: A Legal Perspective on Educational Segregation in Europe
- 'Roma Education' as a Lucrative Niche: Ideologies and Representations
- Romani pupils in Slovakia: Trapped between Romani and Slovak languages
- Reading Tales – an Informal Educational Practice for Social Change



1'15 ZEP

**E**ducation for All (EFA) is the widely known label of the global development consensus that has been established 15 years ago. Most countries in Europe have achieved EFA goals or are close to doing so and thus have seldom been a matter of concern. Looking beyond national averages, however, shows that certain populations are to a great extent excluded from quality education. A group especially vulnerable in this regard are Roma. Roma have lived in Europe for hundreds of years, are predominantly sedentary (contrary to popular perception) and in most countries a recognised national minority.

International surveys show a high degree of educational inequality when comparing Roma with majority populations. The provision of quality education for Roma has been defined as a key European policy priority since the launching of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005, with similar emphasis apparent in the 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Since then, a wide range of approaches at international, national, and local level has emerged to improve the Roma's situation of education. However, at each level there is considerable variation in actors' views about what might work and how education should be organized. The various approaches have met with varying degrees of success in addressing the Roma's disadvantage in the area of education.

*Helen O'Nions* examines cases of educational segregation that were brought to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights and found to violate the right to education in combination with the principle of non-discrimination. O'Nions shows that the segregation of Romani children and youth is likely to be discriminatory even if specialised segregated provision is defended as being in the

interests of the pupils and tailored to their needs. Similarly, the justification of segregated education with reference to parental consent does not preclude discriminatory treatment. Looking at subsequent developments in relation to the cases under consideration, O'Nions draws the conclusion that the rulings of the Grand Chamber, while consistent in their rejection of segregation, have failed to secure compliance on the part of governments.

*Yaron Matras, Daniele Viktor Leggio* and *Mirela Steel* scrutinise local approaches to the education of Romani migrants from Romania in Manchester. Their case study reveals how NGOs position themselves as education service providers between local authorities and Romani migrants. The authors examine how actors under constant pressure to secure project funding present Roma as a population in need of educational support. To this end, the actors develop educational approaches that – according to observations by Matras et al. – are selectively taken from international discourses on identity, culture and belonging rather than based on local needs.

*Tina Gažovičová* examines language policies in education in Slovakia. Looking at Romani students, she finds that the existence of language rights has not led to the realization of adequate language support. Gažovičová discusses several institutional barriers that complicate the use of the Romani language in the school context. Moreover, schools in Slovakia are not prepared to effectively teach students for whom Slovak is a second language. In the absence of systemically integrated interdisciplinary language support, learners who are labelled as having an insufficient command of the language of school instruction are channelled into preparatory classes or special schools which ultimately compromise their school success.

*Laura Surdu* and *Furugh Switzer* examine an intervention that targets early reading. Focusing on the project “Your Story”, which supported Romani mothers in developing reading skills and in using storybooks as educational tools, Surdu and Switzer analyse the experiences of project beneficiaries in Hungary. In addition to highlighting positive outcomes of the project such as improved attitudes towards learning, kindergarten attendance and post-compulsory education, the authors identify a set of challenges to the endeavour such as the training of facilitators and the inclusion of mothers as well as fathers who have severe difficulties in reading.

The contributions raise important questions and offer links for further research. The judgements of the Grand Chamber examined by O'Nions provide a broad normative framework against which persistent educational segregation could be analysed. Matras et al.'s findings can be taken as a call for a closer look at unintended effects of the ‘economy of Roma education’ that is often characterised by service outsourcing and short-term project funding. Gažovičová's analysis begs the broader question of how policies of long-term, interdisciplinary language support in inclusive settings could be designed and implemented. Finally, Surdu and Switzer point to a need to gain knowledge about how to support the most marginalized segments of a marginalized population, and – we might add – to move from claiming ‘best practice’ to also speaking openly about weaknesses and problems of policy interventions.

*An interesting and informative read*  
*Christian Brüggemann & Eben Friedmann*

Berlin/Skopje, March 2015

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**Titelbild:** © Bogumila Delimata, <http://jawdikh.pl/en/bogumila-delimata.html>. Bogumila Delimata is a Bergitka Roma dancer and painter. She lives in Poland and Spain.

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- |           |    |   |
|-----------|----|---|
| Themen    | 4  | <b>Helen O’Nions</b><br>Warehouses and Window-Dressing: A Legal Perspective on Educational Segregation in Europe                |
|           | 11 | <b>Yaron Matras/Daniele Viktor Leggio/Mirela Steel</b><br>‘Roma Education’ as a Lucrative Niche: Ideologies and Representations |
|           | 18 | <b>Tina Gažovičová</b><br>Romani pupils in Slovakia: Trapped between Romani and Slovak languages                                |
|           | 24 | <b>Laura Surdu/Furugh Switzer</b><br>Reading Tales – an Informal Educational Practice for Social Change                         |
| Kommentar | 29 | Use and Misuse of Data on Roma: A comment on the Salford on Roma Migrants   |
| VIE       | 31 | Neues aus der Kommission/Generationsübergreifender Workshop des Weltfriedensdiensts   |
|           | 33 | Rezensionen   |
|           | 39 | Informationen   |

Yaron Matras/Daniele Viktor Leggio/Mirela Steel

## ‘Roma Education’ as a Lucrative Niche: Ideologies and Representations<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The paper addresses the motivation of local actors to engage with Roma migrants, the methods and content of engagement, and the discourse of expertise that emerges to justify them. We analyse a case study based on engagement with Roma in the education sector in Manchester, UK. We explore how support for Roma offers a niche operation for actors who seek a role in the local authority's outsourcing of public services, and how an ideology is forged to help conquer that niche.

**Keywords:** *Roma Education, Cultural Essentialism, Manchester, Romania, Outsourcing Educational Services*

### Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag befasst sich mit der Motivation lokaler Träger in der Arbeit mit Roma-Migranten, mit den Methoden und Inhalten der Arbeit, sowie mit dem Diskurs über Expertise, der diese Arbeit rechtfertigt. Anhand einer Fallstudie in Manchester analysieren wir das Engagement für Roma im Bildungssektor. Wir erörtern, wie die Unterstützung von Roma-Migranten eine Nische für Träger eröffnet, die sich um Mittel für öffentliche Leistungen bemühen und welche Rolle Ideologie bei der Besetzung dieser Nische spielt.

**Schlüsselworte:** *Roma und Bildung, Kulturalisierung, Manchester, Rumänien, Outsourcing von Bildung*

### Introduction

Education as a key to social inclusion figures prominently in policy measures on Roma; examples are the Roma Education Fund, sponsored by the World Bank, governments and charitable foundations, and the place of education in the EU's National Roma Integration Strategies. But research has also offered a critical perspective on education policy as a measure used to contain and control the Roma minority. Krause (1989) for instance talks about a century-old tradition of “persecution through education”. Taylor (2014, p. 147) discusses education policies toward Roma as part of a “wider package of tools aimed at repressing their distinctive culture”. Trubeta (2013, p. 20) argues that while earlier policies focused on the Roma's supposed failure to adopt the norms of society, modern emphasis has been shifting to a view of Roma's inherent poverty, vulne-

rability and social deprivation, to be overcome through education. This allows institutions to justify the use of education to subjugate the Roma into conformity. Education has thus become a means of both assisting and ‘civilising’ Roma, of both care and control (see also Clark 2008; New/Merry 2012).

Education measures also run the risk of constructing Roma as a problem population. Levinson (2013) describes how reports on Gypsy, Roma and Travellers in UK schools tend to focus on poor attainment and underachievement. O’Nions (2007, p. 146–155) reviews the practice of addressing the obstacles that Roma face in access to education – parents’ illiteracy and inability to provide learning support at home, economic instability leading to poor social skills, difficulties adapting to schooling in the dominant language, as well as daily discrimination at school by pupils, parents, and teachers – as inherent learning disadvantages. These have been used to refer Roma to various special needs programmes, which risks perpetuating educational inequality. Teasley (2013) regards segregation within the education system as a containment strategy, while Helmesoet (2013) shows how education policy often mirrors overall social constructs of Roma as a problem of criminality, lack of acculturation, and poverty.

Informed by these critical approaches to Roma education, our aim is to explore how educational support for Roma provides a niche opportunity for specialist careers and the prestige and authority of unique expertise. Trehan (2001, p. 138–144) mentions how careers emerged in the non-profit sector for those wanting to specialise in promoting Roma integration. She asks whether that sector has become a space of co-option and social control of Roma. Timmer (2010) discusses how NGOs construct Roma as ‘needy subjects’ in a way that risks perpetuating their dependency on aid. She argues that despite their commitment to humanitarian goals, NGOs’ reliance on external entities puts them under pressure to show that their work is needed. To this end, they adapt to the discourses of government and other funding agencies and continue to construct the Roma as a problem population. Van Baar (2013) similarly describes how NGOs gradually depart from a movement of participating democracy and become service deliverers who contribute to, rather than challenge mainstream discourses and prevailing notions on Roma. He adds that in such a position, NGOs often try to develop a parallel system of expertise on Roma that mimics social scientific methods.

In the following we discuss a case study of local engagement with Roma migrants from Romania. The Actors first identify Roma as a group that requires particular support especially in the education sector. They offer to deliver an intervention package consisting of a narrative of 'Roma culture', which purports to promote awareness, and of protocols to accompany and monitor and so arguably to contain Roma within the school environment. They then try to codify and systemise their work in the interest of securing their role as experts. They enlist consultants to certify the intervention and they consolidate the construct of Roma (in general, and of Roma youth and Roma girls in particular) as subjects who are at risk and beyond the reach of conventional support procedures and so only accessible to the Actors themselves. Drawing on Boudon's (1989) theory of ideologies we describe this process as consisting of two dimensions: the situational effects, consisting of the Actors' position as officers of the local education authority and their dispositions (what they know or think they know about Roma), and the communication effects through which the Actors try to lend their knowledge a semblance of authority.

Our discussion is based on a five-year period of observation (summer 2009–summer 2014), during which we took part in various events, meetings, and briefings organised by the Actors, interacted with a range of professionals in the local authority and schools who came into contact with the Actors, and worked with young people in the Roma community who were under the Actors' influence. We also analyse documents that were produced directly by the Actors – education materials that they have published, applications for grants, and reports on their funded interventions which they authored or commissioned – as well as statements that are attributed to the Actors in a number of memos and minutes from local schools and city council committees, and we contextualise these in connection with a broader documentation that is available to us on the city council's engagement strategy with Roma migrants since 2008 (council committee minutes, circulars, and press reports). Finally, we have interviewed a number of individuals who were employed and line-managed by the Actors as part of their engagement in the education sector.

### **Roma migrants in Manchester**

Romanian Roma migrants began arriving in Manchester with the accession of Romania to the EU in 2007. By 2009, a community of up to four hundred individuals, some two thirds of them children, had settled in the districts of Gorton South and adjoining neighbourhoods (Matras et al. 2009). Self-employment as street vendors, scrap metal collectors and more offered the migrants an opportunity to settle and, in principle, to obtain access to state health care and school education and to assistance such as child support, tax allowance, and housing benefits. Many local primary schools discouraged Roma parents from registering their children and denied them school places. A key aspect of the local education authority's policy on Roma at that stage appears to have been a deliberate strategy to refer Roma children to one particular primary school (P1), which was prepared to welcome them with open arms. According to a report submitted by a local Education Trust in June 2013 to the Department for Education, the International New Arrivals department "helped Roma parents apply and ap-

peal for places at the Trust Schools [...] rather than allocate them via the IYFA protocol" (p. 5). As a result, primary school P1 (part of the Trust) quickly acquired a large number of Roma pupils, who at one point made up around a fifth of the total school population.

By the summer of 2009, the local authority flagged the presence of Romanian Roma migrants in the area as a 'crisis'. Several factors contributed to this development. First, a local opposition councillor forwarded a petition in May 2009 protesting against the Roma. The Labour-led Council reacted by setting up a 'Roma Strategy Group' that brought together senior officers from various departments and by holding regular public meetings at which residents were invited to air their complaints against Roma. In June 2009, a firebomb attack against Romanian Roma migrants in Belfast triggered concerns among authorities in Manchester that anti-Roma protests might escalate into violence. Finally, London Metropolitan Police launched 'Operation Golf' targeting allegations of child trafficking by Romanian Roma. In August 2009, media briefings suggested that the investigation was to be extended to Manchester, contributing further to tensions (though we are unaware of any charges brought against members of the Roma community in Manchester).

The local authority reacted by commissioning the Romani Project at the University of Manchester to write a report on the Romanian Roma community (Matras et al. 2009). It then welcomed the report's recommendation to allocate resources to capacity building and outreach work in the community. In line with its overall policy not to expand the municipal payroll, however, it outsourced the outreach work to a local non-profit organisation, the Black Health Agency for Equality (BHA). The BHA had originally been set up to support HIV prevention and other health work among the African-Caribbean community. Its main sources of funding were and still are the National Health Service (NHS) as well as Leeds and Manchester city councils. In 2010 it was commissioned to coordinate advice services for eastern European migrants as part of the government's Migrant Impact Fund, with a grant of around £500,000. It drew on close working relations and partial personnel overlap with the local authority's International New Arrivals, Travellers, and Supplementary Schools Team (INA/T/SS) – a group of around five-six persons catering for the educational needs of immigrants, English Gypsy and Irish Traveller minorities, and community-run supplementary schools. A group of between four and six collaborators emerged who reported either to BHA or to the INA/T/SS or alternately to both; these are the Actors in the intervention that we describe below.

The Actors' involvement with Roma began as part of routine classroom support provided to immigrant children. Run by INA/T/SS but contracted to BHA, the group employed classroom assistants of Romanian background already in 2008–2009 to support Roma pupils from Romania. After the release of the University of Manchester report (Matras et al. 2009) the group visited the place of origin of the majority of Manchester's newly settled Roma, Țândărei in southeastern Romania. It then produced a brochure (Davies and Murphy 2010) that was showcased at an event in a local secondary school in June 2010. An education toolkit on Roma culture called 'Long Roads'

followed (BHA 2011). As local authority resources diminished, the group applied for funding for a one-year project from the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). The principal applicant was BHA in partnership with INA/T/SS and two European organisations – the Fundación Secretariado Gitano in Spain and Pharos in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> A key element of the project was to engage young Roma as 'mentors' to carry out events on Roma culture in local schools. The consortium received a grant of €123,380 for these activities, which included the production of a manual for work with Roma migrants in schools (Murphy 2013). A total of £7,750 was used to commission two academics based at the University of Salford to write an assessment of the project (Scullion and Brown 2013).<sup>3</sup> In time for the completion of the LLP project in March 2013, the BHA applied to Manchester City Council's Equalities Funding Programme for a grant of around £114,000 for a three-year project aimed at 'safeguarding' Roma girls considered to be 'at risk'. That project began in March 2013 and is in its second year as this article is being written. The BHA is currently also partner in another LLP-funded project, 'Romasmile'.<sup>4</sup>

### Essentialising Roma culture

The rationale constructed by the Actors to justify targeted support for Roma was this: As immigrants with a history of social deprivation and discrimination (as well as repeated migrations and evictions, resulting in disrupted school attendance), Roma pupils face difficulties adjusting to the school environment and receive little parental support. At the same time, schools are largely unaware of Roma culture and lack the tools to liaise effectively with parents. The purpose of a school-based intervention was therefore to introduce aspects of Roma culture into classroom activities and to produce materials for teachers that are otherwise scarcely available. We will show that the Actors approached this task in a manner that 'essentialises' Roma culture. We follow Sayer (1997, p. 454) in identifying as "cultural essentialism" discourses that offer a fixed image of groups of people, "not merely stereotyping but either pathologising or wrongly idealising them", and Herzfeld (1996, p. 288) in understanding as "essentialising" forms of discourse that implicitly deny individuals included in a group control of their own lives.

The Actors' position as local authority education officers shapes their perspective on Roma children. This perspective draws on existing dispositions, which, we propose, incorporate two strands: On the one hand, they continue the narrative of the UK's Traveller Education Services. This equates 'Roma' with 'Gypsies' and therefore with 'nomads' and Travellers. On the other hand, recognising the Roma as recent migrants, the Actors try to emulate the mode of delivery used for the nation-state cultures of pupils of other migrant backgrounds. To this end, they draw on Roma political activists' portrayal of a 'standardised' or 'official' Roma culture that devises symbols of nationhood, best represented by the work of Hancock (2002), whom the Actors consulted personally in preparation of some of their materials. While the first strand presents a romantic image of 'Gypsies', the second yields a politically correct narrative of Roma culture. Neither, we argue, is realistic in connection with the target population of Romanian Roma migrants, whose communities are neither nomadic

nor involved in or even exposed to the political mobilisation efforts of a rather small international circle of Roma activists.

One of the learning resources produced by the Actors for primary schools is the 'Roma Box' (Murphy 2013, p. 40). It includes stories that focus on travel, journeys, caravans, Appleby Fair, and horses, and an exercise called "We are riding on a caravan", described as an opportunity for children to "write their own travelling stories" (ibid., p. 84). Caravan and travel were also the main themes of the 'Culture days' organised by the Actors for schools as part of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month. As described in Murphy (2013, p. 30–31), a 'vardo' (the English Gypsy term for a caravan) was parked near the school, to make schools "more positive about Roma and Traveller children and ways of life". The documentation includes a letter from a head teacher who writes that the children enjoyed "listening to a traditional GRT story while sitting inside the Vargo [sic.]", "making their own Bow Top Wagon models" and "designing GRT traditional patterns". It is evident that the intervention created an image in the minds of the teachers (and pupils) of a coherent ethnic-cultural entity called 'GRT' (Gypsy/Roma/Travellers), which conflates groups that rarely if at all think of themselves as a single population. The Long Roads toolkit (BHA 2011) describes Gypsies as a musical, magical people. The section on "Traditions" pictures a violin on the cover. It is claimed that Romani children receive a name that is "whispered by the mother, which remains secret and is used to confuse supernatural spirits", that Roma values are "related to a higher spiritual power (Rromanipen, Rromipa or Rromanija)" – lending a mystical interpretation to what is simply an everyday Romani term for 'being Roma' or 'Romani-ness' – and that these values "are known as Karma in India and it is here where the Romani spirituality reflects the Indian origin of the Romani people most."

Long Roads also presents a narrative that strongly adopts the 'victim discourse'. It is claimed that the "fragmentation" of the Romani people is a result of "oppression and persecution". The compilation includes sections on Slavery and the Holocaust. For the latter, the authors use Hancock's term "baro porajmos", a word that most Roma associate with a sexual act and not with any historical event, while on the other hand there is no mention of the deportation of Romanian Roma to Transnistria, an experience that most of the families in this particular community are well aware of. The toolkit also features a theme on the Romani Flag and Anthem, both of which were previously unknown to most members of the local Roma community. Symbolism and the 'victim discourse' are found already in the Actors' first publication on Roma (Davies and Murphy 2010). The cover of this report carries the design of the Romani flag, and Roma migrants are described as victims of dreadful conditions in Romania. The section on "Life before Manchester" features images of poverty in rural Romania and informs the reader that "all families have come to Manchester following extreme financial hardship" (ibid., p. 6).

From our own observations in the community we are aware that as a result of these depictions, young Roma are ashamed to admit to outsiders, in particular to teachers, that their families maintain close contacts with the origin communities and that many have invested their savings earned in Britain to build spacious houses for their families back in Romania. Mo-



bile phone pictures of these houses are routinely exchanged among young members of the community, but they make every effort to conceal them so as not to be caught dismissing the image that has been constructed supposedly on their behalf. Nacu (2011) argues that constructions of Roma identity are central both to the way in which Roma migrations are managed by national and local actors, and to the way in which Roma respond to and perform these constructions in order to take control over their lives. On at least two occasions, the Actors facilitated the participation of a group of young Romanian Roma in the annual Manchester Parade. The girls appeared in Indian garments, which the Actors defined as “traditional Gypsy dress”, and the boys were instructed to lead a ‘vardo’, which, as one of the participants explained to us, was “what our ancestors travelled in”. Another young Rom from the community was cited in a BHA publication describing how his grandfather survived the Auschwitz concentration camp (there is no evidence that any Romanian Roma were deported to Auschwitz).<sup>5</sup> In this way, the Actors used their influence on young members of the community to get them to perform a particular identity, one that derives not from their actual experiences (nor indeed from those of their ancestors) but from the dispositions entrenched in or adopted through the Actors’ own situational perspective.

### Roma in need of support

“Safeguarding” and “children missing education” were part of the Terms of Reference of Manchester City Council’s Roma Strategy Group when it was first constituted in 2009. But by early 2010, these issues no longer appear as frequently on the Group’s agenda. A minute from one of its later meetings, in July 2010, reads: “Children in Education- Discussed and agreed was not the focus, but addressed by default.”<sup>6</sup> But as the policy focus shifted away from these issues, the Actors’ involvement in them increased. During 2010–2011, INA/T/SS used its resources to contract part-time staff via BHA to provide classroom support for Roma. Their principal engagement partner was a particular secondary school (S1). Led by BHA contracted staff, Roma pupils were often removed from regular classes and referred to a designated “Pathway”. The practice was criticised in an external audit of English as Additional Language (EAL) provisions carried out at the school in January 2011, which concluded:

“The EAL Pathway is focused upon a Roma cohort [...] This Pathway could be interpreted as a withdrawal mechanism in itself. Pupils are then withdrawn from English, Mathematics and Science for small group work. The teachers of this Pathway provision have had no formal training or induction in terms of EAL knowledge, cultural awareness and how Step Descriptors inform the differentiation of lesson planning and target setting.”

Despite the fact that Roma-specific educational problems were practically declared a ‘non-issue’ by the local authority, when Council funding for classroom support was withdrawn the Actors applied for an LLP-grant for their ‘What’s Working’ project (2012–2013) with the declared aim of helping “improve school attendance through working both with Romani communities and with schools”.<sup>7</sup> The project’s flagship publication (Murphy 2013) presents it as a “network” of six

Manchester primary schools where strategies and resources were piloted. The use of Roma mentors is flagged as a key to successful integration of Roma pupils. But the numbers of Roma pupils provided in the report for the individual partner schools are relatively low, ranging from 5 to 19, while primary school P1, with around 60 Roma pupils, was not included in the project. It is noteworthy that by 2013 the local authority had not only ceased to focus on issues of education, but that it even declared in its “Roma Strategy 2011–2014” document from March 2013 that “attendance rates of Roma children are now outstripping the attendance rates of non-Roma children” (Mills and Wilson 2013, p. 5). Yet the Actors’ narrative construction of Roma education as a problem continued. As part of their work at secondary school S1, the INA/T/SS team informed school staff that “[Roma] male and female students are not used to being together” and that therefore “Roma students can be very promiscuous and are very accepting of inappropriate sexualised behaviour from male students”.<sup>8</sup> They shared their concerns about “safeguarding” and reported that the INA/T/SS team were “starting a pilot scheme to engage Roma girls.” The background for the scheme was described as a concern that female Roma pupils leave school at the age of thirteen to “get married back in Romania”, that they are caught “begging in Manchester City Centre”, and that weddings of female Roma “from the age of eleven” take place at a local park.

The reference to a “pilot scheme” relates to the BHA’s request from January 2013 for a grant from Manchester City Council’s Equalities Funding Programme. In its application BHA claims that statistics indicate a rise in teenage pregnancy in the Gorton South area coinciding with the arrival of Roma. It also claims that twelve percent of teenage mothers who engaged with a local advice centre were from the Roma community, though no actual numbers are provided. In a subsequent report the number was identified as merely four, though the time frame remains unknown.<sup>9</sup> The application goes on to say: “The main factors attributing to disengagement of young [Roma] girls from education are early marriage and teenage pregnancy”. The BHA asks for funding for “assertive outreach” in the Roma community. It also promises to “develop protocols [...] which will identify and track hard to reach girls” and allow to “share information regarding ‘at risk’ young people in relation to criminal activity, school drop-out”.<sup>10</sup> The authors make repeated references to the “trusting relations with the community” which they have established with Roma and with teenage girls in particular. Most of the project’s budget of upwards of £36,000 per year over a three-year period was foreseen for salaries for the core staff, with only £1,500 set aside for “interpreters” – some of whom, though not all, are Roma. Clearly, the aim of the project was to fill the funding gap that emerged after the gradual withdrawal of local authority resources in 2012 and the end of the LLP-funded intervention in March 2013.

The Actors continued their efforts to portray the intervention as necessary and urgent. In the minutes of Manchester City Council’s Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting in November 2013, the leader of BHA’s Roma engagement work is quoted as saying that “the outreach process was very intensive and could take up to 4 times longer with members of the Roma community”, and that “there were still too few females from the Roma community attending high school and teenage

pregnancy was thought to be an issue".<sup>11</sup> At the end of the first project year, the BHA submitted an interim report to its sponsor, the Council's Equalities Team.<sup>12</sup> Explaining the rationale for the intervention, the authors state: "Roma girls are at risk of being kept at home, moved to other areas of the UK or sent back to their country of origin." They relate this to "cultural expectations", claiming: "Early marriage is a rite of passage that individuals from within the Roma community are required to partake in". The report concludes by stating that "Roma in the UK and on continental Europe have developed a deep-rooted mistrust of outsiders, limiting forms of interaction and engagement with social care providers" and recommending that the BHA's remit and funding for the intervention should be extended in order to draw on the expertise and "trusting relationships" that the BHA team has established in its own work with the Roma. The message is thus that Roma culture poses a threat to the most vulnerable members of its own community, i.e. young girls; that the community is not accessible to others and that BHA therefore requires an exclusive franchise to intervene; and that it is the city's responsibility to mandate such an intervention or risk failing in its statutory duty of care and protection. The Actors' focus had shifted from developing a narrative of Roma culture to utilising that narrative to convince local institutions of the need to continue to support the Actors' interventions within the Roma community.

### Certifying the intervention

The Actors' engagement with Roma intensified at a time that saw local authority budgets hit by severe cuts or 'austerity' measures and increasing pressure to outsource services to third sector agencies. The availability of EU funding for Roma inclusion and the success that the Actors had in receiving a European grant supported a business case by which the local authority might be persuaded to continue to fund the intervention in the hope that its investment would serve as a seed corn toward securing external funds. In an interview that we carried out in April 2014 with a member of staff contracted by INA/T/SS between 2009–2013 to provide classroom support, the interviewee commented on the team's focus on Roma during that period:

"This is in order to attract funding in a time when the team's activity with Travellers was limited and the work with new arrivals was finishing. The work with refugees on the Gateway Project finished and bilingual support moved to One Education. While I was there, many members of the team lost their jobs in the restructure and cuts. I was told that the team only existed due to the Roma. The focus was short-term though because they did not foresee the settlement pattern of the Roma community. This was probably influenced by their previous experience with Travellers."

In order to make a case for funding, the Actors had to demonstrate a need for the intervention, show that it was valued by others, and convince funding bodies that they had the expertise to carry it out. Consequently, they emphasise partnerships and networking in their reports. Davies and Murphy (2010, p. 4) describe how "many agencies, both statutory and voluntary, have been working together ... sharing good practice, tracking mobility and working in partnership to understand and better meet the needs of the community." BHA's

report to the Equalities Team from June 2014 refers to collaboration with a "wide range of people from within BHA and also the International New Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team", while in fact the latter three agencies constituted a single unit of some 5–6 individuals under one line management since 2009.

One method of certification was to enlist the support of academic consultants. In 2012 a free-lance consultant was commissioned by BHA to author a report on support for Roma children in education (Lever 2012). The report is framed as a comparison between four northern English cities, though its main emphasis is Manchester, which the author flags as being "chosen because of its emerging good practice in the field" (*ibid.*, p. 6). The author reports that the aim of Manchester's engagement with Roma was "to investigate claims of criminal activity whilst maintaining social cohesion" (*ibid.*, p. 14). He describes INA/T/SS involvement as "crucial" to this end as it involved investigating concerns over child safety, claims of child trafficking, and alleged links to the school attendance of girls. He goes on to assert that Roma have a "strong cultural aversion to integration" (*ibid.* p. 14), which the INA/T/SS Team sought to overcome by working closely with the police. The author repeats the jargon that BHA employs in its own reports, using terms like "holistic approach", "assertive outreach", "inward looking philosophy of self help", and "multi agency approach", and he incorporates long quotes from the practitioners, who are not named but are evidently members of the BHA and INA/T/SS team, i.e. those who had commissioned his research in the first place. He concludes by expressing concern over the likelihood that government and local authority funding that enabled the intervention might be discontinued. His list of recommendations (*ibid.*, p. 27) pertains exclusively to the need to provide funding and to guarantee the involvement of "third sector agencies" in the process.

The Actors' LLP-funded project "What's Working" commissioned two academics from Salford University to author a report (Scullion and Brown 2013). The choice directly mirrors the Actors' dispositions on Roma identity: The consultants' background is in housing policy and in that connection they examined stopping sites for Travellers. Their only involvement with Roma had been marginal, as junior partners in a small-scale survey on attitudes toward Roma sponsored by Migration Yorkshire, a consortium of voluntary sector agencies, as part of its EU-funded project 'Roma Source' (Brown et al. 2012). Yet being local (Salford is located within Greater Manchester) and having a link to the over-arching category 'Gypsies' was presentable to the funding body. Much of the report consists of long quotes from practitioners in the three participating countries. The respondents are not named but the description indicates that they are mostly members of the project staff. In effect, the report, much like its predecessor, the Lever report, is thus a self-presentation of the funding beneficiaries themselves. The respondents were asked to identify work priorities and asked to estimate the numbers of migrant Roma based on their daily work rather than on any formal statistics. A key statement in the report pertains to the connection between numbers of Roma and funding (*ibid.*, p. 42):

"The key impact of the lack of data on Roma communities related to how data is often used by authorities to allocate

resources. Respondents in the UK and the Netherlands, for example, suggested that it was difficult to argue for additional financial resources to provide support to communities when they were unable to accurately state the size of the population they were required to support.”

Once again, as in Lever’s (2012) report, the main conclusion is that the Actors require more funding. The Salford report suggests that in order to make the case for funding, the scale of the ‘problem’ should be amplified by emphasising the large number of potential clients. In October 2013 the authors took this strategy one step further and published a highly controversial estimate of the number of Roma migrants in the UK, similarly based on selective responses from practitioners (Brown et al. 2013). This received considerable media attention in the UK, not least thanks to an aggressive publicity campaign by the authors and their sponsors in Migration Yorkshire’s EU-funded ‘Roma Matrix’ consortium (see separate commentary in this issue). Acting on commission to certify the Actors’ expertise thus provided the consultants with a point of entry to present themselves as national authorities on Roma migrants. For the Actors, in turn, enlisting the support of academics is a key to lending authority to their own communication effects.

### Constructing an ideology

Boudon (1989, p. 73) argues that social actors build their knowledge of the world around them from a particular position and based on a series of dispositions. That is, what we see is conditioned by where we are looking from (position) and by what we already know (dispositions). These situation effects, as Boudon calls them, “often give rise [...] to misinterpretations that are difficult to shift” (ibid., p. 80). Communication effects, primarily the principle of authority, are crucial for ideas to spread. Boudon thus suggests that for ideas to become diffused knowledge, they need to be presented by those who are regarded by other social actors as having authority in a particular field (ibid., p. 84). We interpret the Actors’ interventions as conditioned by their situational perspective as agents of the municipality and affiliated third sector organisations. They navigate multifaceted effects that arise through their interaction with a variety of other agencies. To this end, they negotiate a variety of existing dispositions. The content of their communication is strategically crafted to lend their narrative authority in the eyes of the institutions whose recognition and support they require in order to continue to function.

The Actors’ role within the education sector makes them the principal point of contact with Roma migrants in the initial stage. This puts them in a strategic position to advise other agencies, in the absence of any alternative or transparent structures of representation or leadership within the Roma community itself. Through that same position they are also affected by the drive to outsource local authority services to the private sector, and from 2010 by the pressure of austerity measures triggering large-scale budget cuts and the downsizing of personnel. This creates a drive to secure independent funding, which amplifies the need to demonstrate authority and expertise. The launch of EU National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011 opens up an opportunity to secure support for interventions on Roma and so it adds further positional effects and another contingent of social actors among whom the Actors

wish to be regarded as an authority. The Actors now hope to secure funding from schools that require support, from European institutions that wish to promote Roma inclusion, from national government, which needs to tackle challenges brought about by migration, and from the local authority, which is required to meet its statutory duty of care for vulnerable groups and children in particular.

This complexity of positions provides a blend of dispositional effects. They include both popular romantic stereotypes of Gypsies and real experiences with Travellers. They also include a view of Gypsies as a threat, which instigates criminalisation and fears of an uncontrollable influx of Roma migrants, as well as a view of Gypsies as a primordial culture that poses a threat to its own vulnerable members. At the same time we see the adoption of a European discourse on Roma that flags victimhood and in part replicates the activist narrative on Roma nationhood. In an attempt to forge an effective strategy that would secure maximum recognition of their authority, the Actors thus integrate and internalise diverse and often contradictory notions. The result is an ideology that combines imagery of romanticism as well as nationhood, of criminality as well as victimhood, and of compassion as well as paternalism, and which purports to nurture young people but at the same time pathologises their culture and their community.

### Notes

- 1 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 7th Framework Programme under the call on “Dealing with diversity and cohesion: the case of the Roma in the European Union” (GA319901).
- 2 See Lifelong Learning Programme Key Activity 1 Compendium 2011, p. 4–5: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results\\_projects/documents/roma\\_compendium\\_en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results_projects/documents/roma_compendium_en.pdf)
- 3 Salford University grant code ELRA61, July 2012 to March 2013; see <http://www.seek.salford.ac.uk/data/projects/viewDetails.do?pid=7270&verson=1>
- 4 <http://www.romasmile.com/>
- 5 Helen Clifton, ‘The Route to Integration’, *Health Equalities* 1, April 2012, p. 14–17.
- 6 Roma Operational Meeting: Records of Issues/Actions, 06.07.2010.
- 7 Lifelong Learning Programme Key Activity 1 Compendium 2011, p. 4–5: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results\\_projects/documents/roma\\_compendium\\_en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results_projects/documents/roma_compendium_en.pdf)
- 8 S1 draft report on “Education issues relating to Roma pupils 2007 to present”, spring 2013.
- 9 BHA Final Report authored by Jennifer Davies and Julie Davies; received from Manchester City Council Equalities Team on 27.06.2014. The document is available here: <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/BHA%20FINAL%20REPORT%20Jun%202014.pdf>
- 10 The BHA application to Manchester City Council is available here: [http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/BHA\\_equalities\\_application%20Jan%202013.pdf](http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/BHA_equalities_application%20Jan%202013.pdf)
- 11 Minutes of Manchester City Council Communities Scrutiny Committee, 13 November 2013, p. 2–4. [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/meetings/committee/81/communities\\_scrutiny\\_committee](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/meetings/committee/81/communities_scrutiny_committee)
- 12 BHA Final Report; see above.

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