Romany Countergovernmentality through Transnational Networking [*]

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Abstract

Over the last fifteen years, Romany minorities in Central and Eastern Europe have been involved in two dominant, though contrasting developments. On the one hand, the end of Soviet domination, the collapse of the industrial and agricultural sectors, and the rise of nationalisms have resulted in various (new) forms of marginalization, exclusion, and displacement for many members of Romany communities. On the other hand, the post-1989 order has given rise to a variety of new Romany movements and the establishment of many Romany networks at local, national, and European levels.

This article analyzes different ways in which some of these new networks try to mobilize forms of 'countergovernmentality', that is governmentality (in the Foucauldian understanding of the concept) 'turned against itself'. Many of the national and European Roma-related projects of the last decade are criticized because they were considered to have generated 'Roma policy' instead of 'Roma politics' most of the time. Nonetheless, over the last few years, and mostly out of the Roma's frustration over the ways in which national governments, European institutions, and even many NGOs dedicated to helping the Roma tend to ignore their basic needs, there has appeared to be a growing awareness of the necessity to link Romany grassroots experiences transnationally and transregionally. These networks of grassroots movements operate by modes of 'horizontal learning'; processes in which local knowledge and experiences are shared and exchanged transnationally, rather than informed by NGO, state or EU-based standardized practices. This article analyzes the extent to which the particular forms of countergovernmentality these networks mobilize can be considered to provide new parameters for ongoing processes of Romany identity formations in Central and Eastern Europe.

Keywords: Roma policy and Roma politics in Central and Eastern Europe; (counter)governmentality; grassroots movements; politics of scale; transnational and transregional networks; European integration

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Introduction

Over the last fifteen years, Romany minorities in Central and Eastern Europe have been involved in two dominant, though contrasting developments. On the one hand, the end of Soviet domination, the collapse of the industrial and agricultural sectors, and the rise of nationalisms have resulted in various (new) forms of marginalization, exclusion, and displacement for many members of Romany communities. On the other hand, the post-1989 order has given rise to a variety of newly developed Romany movements and the establishment of Romany media, cultural, political, civil and human rights networks at local, national, and European levels. To a great extent, supranational institutions, such as the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (COE), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have supported these initiatives financially and politically. Yet, social scientists and political activists, who have recently examined these investments in the Roma, have concluded that the attempts to improve the Roma's social circumstances have been ineffective most of the time (e.g. Guy 2001b; Kovats 2001, 2003; Gheorghe 2003).

The dominant critique of many of the national and European Roma-related projects of the last decade has been that they have generated 'Roma policy' instead of 'Roma politics' most of the time. The introduction of Roma-related policy at a variety of institutional levels is considered inadequate, because its practical implementation has been evaluated as ineffective or counterproductive with regard to its aim to 'integrate' the Roma in mainstream society. Moreover, and closely related to this evaluation, support for the Roma's cultural and political representation within organizations and institutions has not led to the intended result, for the Roma's representation has so far been predominantly limited to a Romany elite. The Roma's representation is said to be successful only partially, because it has not led to an influential Romany civil movement or to what is often termed 'Roma politics'. This evaluation of a decade-long investment in the improvement of the living condition of the Eastern European Roma is often paired with a critique of the ways in which policy is implemented inadequately at supranational, national, and local levels. In this particular line of reasoning, unsuccessfully implemented 'Roma policy' is implicitly or even explicitly related to the failure to mobilize 'Roma politics' effectively.

In my article, I will critically interrogate political and policy strategies towards the Roma in different European contexts of governance. Subsequently, I shall suggest an approach to Roma policy and politics by analyzing a form of Romany political mobilization that allows for a restatement of the process of policy building. My article is composed of three interrelated parts. In the next section I briefly assess a couple of recent critical evaluations of the ways in which Roma-related policy has been introduced in different European contexts. By doing so, I also hope to clarify the prevailing use of the concepts 'policy' and 'politics' regarding the Roma. Subsequently, I shall illustrate how these evaluations depart, both in their critique of the actual situation and their call for alternatives, from the assumption of preconstituted institutional and organizational levels.

In the third section I will argue that these levels of governance are intrinsically related to a 'politics of scale', where scales have largely been considered as the preexisting

levels for politics rather than as one of its active, spatiotemporally constructed objects. Moreover, I will show that this politics of scale is central to the project of Europeanization and has to be understood in the broader context of techniques to spatialize and temporalize 'Europe' in terms of development and integration. This particular framing of Europe can also shed light on the relation between Roma policy and politics. To reconsider this relation and its European context critically, I propose that we adopt another concept of government in studying institutions and organizations in Europe. I confront a prevailing understanding of government with a Foucauldian one and focus subsequently on an analysis of so-called 'governmentalities'. Foucault's concept of governmentality asks for a reformulation of government, which is no longer restricted to what is conventionally understood to be the state or politics. The analysis of governmentality should focus on a variety of discourses, practices, and rationalities that shape conduct. In my view, a genealogical study of European governmentalities implies that we have to look differently at the question of why Roma policy has not yet led to the intended results. Simultaneously, such a study shows that, while scales and agencies in Europe are produced in accordance with hierarchically organized levels, it does not imply that we have to understand European policy building only according to top-down structures. Since it is fundamental to European governance to encourage the formation of multiple alliances within its sphere of interest, it is equally possible to challenge its dominant politics of scale.

In the fourth section I will analyze some of the recently emerged Romany networks in Central and Eastern Europe. I will show that they embody a politics of locality and self-empowerment that challenges the general governmental attitudes towards the Roma within Europe. The networks of these grassroots movements operate by modes of 'horizontal learning'; processes in which local knowledge and experiences are shared and exchanged transregionally and transnationally, rather than informed predominantly by EU, state or NGO-based standardized practices. Finally, I ask whether we can consider these new networks part of a countermovement to the dominant post-1989 approaches of the Roma in the region. Do these networks turn the 'politics of scale' implied by the actual European governmentalities against itself to mobilize a form of Roma politics that enables policy innovations bottom-up?

Heading for the Inclusion of the European Roma

On 2 February 2005 in Sofia, Bulgaria, governmental and Romany representatives from eight Central and South-Eastern European countries opened the so-called 'Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015', which is a joint initiative of the World Bank and the Open Society Institute (OSI). The governments of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia have officially adopted its program. Important international organizations, such as the European Commission, the OSCE, the COE, and the UNDP support it. Most importantly, when it comes to questions of Romany representation and agency, the Decade project is backed up by Romany organizations in the region, as well as by International Romany organizations, such as the Brussels-based European Roma Information Office.

The idea of the Decade project was publicly introduced in the summer of 2003, at the Budapest conference 'Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future' organized by the OSI and the World Bank at the Central European University (CEU). Two weeks after the conference, on 16 July, the Romanian Romany intellectual Nicolae Gheorghe was one of the first to discuss the Decade project. He was rather reserved with regard to the policies the project was to introduce. In his lecture at CEU he discussed more generally the question of whether the Roma-related policy that was introduced at different local, national, and international levels over the period 1989-2003 has really contributed to a substantial change in the living conditions of the European Roma. He asked why a decade of European integration of the former socialist states and their Romany minorities has predominantly led to a wide variety of Roma policy at different levels, instead of to the introduction of what he termed 'Roma politics'. At the beginning of his lecture, he briefly explained his use of the terms 'policy' and 'politics'. His rather vague definition of politics refers to a state of awareness of the national interest and the subsequent promotion of this national interest in international life, both in the relation with other states and in the context of international organizations. He considered policy the set of actions or measures adopted by governments or other identifiable agencies towards certain aims and programmatic rights, such as access to health, education or housing.

Gheorghe considered a number of processes of Roma policy building at different levels. In about half an hour he summarized the interim results of a decade-long introduction of national and European Roma policy by listing the initiatives taken by national governments and European and international organizations. Contrary to most of the Western European governments, almost every country in Central and Eastern Europe has by now introduced and detailed its own particular Roma policy as part of the processes geared towards accession to the EU. This has taken shape in a motley collection of governmental documents, action plans, strategies, projects, recommendations, and initiatives. To illustrate this, Gheorghe somewhat ironically referred to the introduction of the 'Stage I and Stage II Strategy' with regard to the Roma minority by the Slovakian government; to the short, medium and long-term 'Roma Action Programme' as initiated by the Hungarian government; to the 'Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma' agreed upon by the government in Sofia; and to the long-term Roma project implemented by the Romanian government.

As for the European level, Gheorghe listed a couple of institutional initiatives introduced within European bodies over the last decade. The COE for example has its Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies; the OSCE has, within its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, a Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, of which Gheorghe is the head; the United Nations have their Belgrade-based Focal Point on Roma within the UNHCR; and the EU has (among other initiatives) its Guiding Principles to improve the living conditions of the Roma.

However, the ongoing tendency to introduce ever new projects, new conferences, new NGOs, new meetings, and new forums with regard to the Roma in a variety of European institutional contexts—among which the Decade project is undoubtedly the most pretentious one—led Gheorghe to reconsider seriously the effects of Roma policy building on the actual social circumstances of the majority of the Roma in Central and

Eastern Europe. Though he recognized an increasing Romany participation and representation in political and social institutions, he wondered whether this contribution could not be characterized as largely an elite's affair. '[W]e have a small elite; we have a Roma intelligentsia, a Roma bourgeoisie, a Roma middle class, a Roma nomenclature,' Gheorghe put forward. But he added:

> I think we are starting to lose the contact with the grassroots, with the communities.[1] We are not managing to enter there in a systematic way, on such a scale that we can really generate a change. … [I]n the 1990s, we hoped to generate a major change in the mentalities, and then in the institutions of the states, and then in the everyday life of the people, including the mentalities and everyday life of the Roma. I think we are starting to lose that; we are rather in a threat of creating bodies, documents, whose impact on the real life [of Roma] is very difficult to measure (Gheorghe 2003).

Gheorghe did not want to be pessimistic or cynical—although he definitely gave this impression in many of his statements—but aimed to bring forward questions concerning the growing gap between Roma policy and politics. However, he did not have concrete suggestions on how to challenge this worrisome tendency. Instead, he encouraged his listeners at CEU to analyze the extent to which particular political structures and institutions, as well as the seemingly ongoing machinery of national and supranational policy-making are responsible for the threatening gap he perceived between Roma policy and politics.

Apart from his rather vague and general definition of politics, Gheorghe did not explain what he considered explicitly Roma politics. But from the broader context of his lecture, it became clear that he intended to understand it in at least two related ways: a representational one, in which equal participation of Roma in institutions must result in a strong say in their own affairs, and one that provides an account of the needs of the Romany grassroots and their inclusion in mainstream society in general. Six years before his lecture at CEU, he had argued that '[t]he Romani community itself needs new ideas to govern and mobilize itself' (Mirga and Gheorghe 1997: 22). In his 2003 lecture Gheorghe no longer mentioned the Romany communities as a site of self-mobilization. Instead, he predominantly focused on what he by now clearly considers to be the biggest problem: the inability to combine Roma policy and politics in a way that would structurally advance the Romany grassroots communities.

Once we take seriously Gheorghe's call to reconsider the structures and tendencies in question, we also need to take it a step further and reconsider what is often conventionally termed politics and policy with regard to the Roma and to European integration in general. Though I largely agree with Gheorghe's analysis regarding ineffective policy building and implementation, he does overlook a budding Romany grassroots movement (as I will show at the end of this article). Since Gheorghe does not explain why Roma policy has not yet led to the intended results, I will briefly consider the social scientific analyses of Will Guy (2001a; 2001b) and Martin Kovats (2001, 2003). Both of these analyses chiefly agree with Gheorghe's perception and give a more or less comparable answer to Gheorghe's central question; Guy with regard to the overall situation in the region and Kovats mainly regarding European institutions. They

conclusively analyze the ineffectiveness of Roma policy and the subsequent failure to reach the Romany grassroots. In particular, they show that the ethnicization of policy has resulted into its disconnection from the wider politico-economic and socio-cultural context of the Roma in Eastern European societies. Moreover, they criticize top-down policy approaches and the ways in which the asymmetrical power structures of both non-governmental and governmental organizations hamper real and equal Romany representation (see also Trehan 2001). Here, however, I will not focus on the details of their analyses, pointing only to their general recommendations concerning the political approach to the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe by NGOs, national governments, and European institutions.

Kovats, in his call for alternatives, speaks in terms of a 'channelling of policy initiatives through state-level structures' (Kovats 2001: 110). Though he does not deny that much remains to be done at the state and NGO-levels, he primarily addresses his recommendations to European institutions. He considers it 'the role of European policy … to overcome the political and financial obstacles to effective policies within national politics' and, subsequently, argues that '[o]nly "Europe" has the authority and the resources to provide the framework for addressing the multifarious policy problems affecting Roma/Gypsy people across the Continent' (110). As regards the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Guy suggests that the future of Roma politics and its mobilization 'will depend largely on whether the Czech and Slovak Governments, with the help of Roma and pro-Roma organisations and NGOs, can successfully implement their policies at local level[s] …' (Guy 2001a: 306).

Both authors criticize Roma policy in an illuminating way for its internal ambiguity and insufficient focus on the wider context, and both recommend the improvement of policy building, the channeling of policy through state-level structures, and the strengthening of the institutional infrastructure that guides policy implementation. These far-reaching recommendations have to be taken seriously, but they are insufficient in questioning the powerful policy machinery discussed by Gheorghe. The authors in question tend to understand institutional and organizational levels as preexisting. In addition, since they deal with a reified notion of these levels, they consider them to be the main channels in and through which policy can be built and implemented. In so doing, they do not take into account 'the complex geographies of power that give rise to "scales" and indeed space more generally' (Larner and Walters 2004: 14). To analyze the 'politics of scale' in the political context concerned we need to adopt a concept of government that takes into account the scaling effects of Europeanization.

European Governmentalities

In a 1978 lecture at the *Collège de France*, entitled 'Governmentality', Michel Foucault introduced a concept of government that removes it from what is often understood to be the domain of politics or the state (Foucault 1991). Based on Foucault's restatement of the governor-governed relationship, Mitchell Dean has succinctly reformulated the concept of governmentality as the 'conduct of conduct'. In his view, it is:

> any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes (Dean 1999: 11).

Foucault's concept of governmentality gives an account of the different arts, techniques, programs, apparatuses, and numerous other sites in and at which governing as the conduct of conduct is actually practiced. This practicing occurs through and by environmental security or 'museological' techniques, as well as by practices of risk management, therapy, self-esteem, childcare, etc. (for the different fields in which Foucault's concept is taken into account, see e.g. Burchell *et al.* 1991; Barry *et al.* 1996; Bratich *et al.* 2003) The intended analysis concerns in particular regimes of discourse and practice that are involved in historically variable or intersecting governmentalities.

An approach to government based on a concept of governmentality has a number of advantages. First of all, it avoids both the positivism that dominates much social scientific research and the textual focus of many poststructuralist studies. Governmentality studies analyze power and governing practices by linking them to different techniques and apparatuses. They allow for a genealogical approach to rationalities and their paradigmatic or subtle changes over time. Governmentality is here both historical and empirical in its focus. It encourages us to analyze political formations such as European or international institutions and NGOs 'not by projecting them against a given field of political-economic forces (for example, globalization), nor slotting them into conventional categories of political forms (federalism, confederalism, etc.), but by interrogating the particular subjects, objects, arts and spaces that they bring into existence' (Walters 2004: 156). Furthermore, the locus of governmentality is 'unbundled, broken up into several distinct functions, and assigned to several distinct agencies which operate at several distinct levels, some global, some regional, some local and subnational' (Fraser 2003: 167). However, I believe even Nancy Fraser's understanding of governmentality should be taken a step further so that it allows for a critical dealing with what we may call 'a politics of scale': the ways in which scales are themselves discursively and practically mobilized to govern, shape or transform particular places and populations. Governmentality should not imply the reification of an understanding of government as practiced at, for instance, preexisting and distinct levels, but should be grounded in a perspective where a politics of place and scale is critically interrogated.

Returning to the analysis of European policy, we accordingly need to shift our focus to the following questions: What are the particular rationalities and technologies of European governance? How do they relate to issues of poverty and practices of aid and policy regarding the Romany minorities? While studies concerning Europeanization are characterized by a multifarious focus, they often omit an analysis of Europe's discursive framing, its changes over time, as well as its accompanying rationalities and techniques of governance. However, once we give, for instance, an account of the differences in the trajectory from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) to the EU, we can genealogically notice the different manners in which 'Europe' has been discursively and geo-politically framed. While the

ECSC 'geo-graphed' Europe as a unitary space of coal and steel production in order to reconstruct the 'continent' in the aftermath of the Second World War, and while the EEC was dominated by the Cold War discourse of security, modernization, and economic development, the EU is predominantly led by the language of integration and enlargement, and by its desire to speak more and more in the name of Europe (cf. Walters 2004). Above all, the latter attitude entails that the EU countries, but also the ones that are not (yet) EU-members—the South-Eastern European countries in particular—are measured and increasingly perceive themselves in terms of their compatibility with EU norms. This leads to the question of how authority is actually constituted, and what particular governmentalities we can differentiate in light of the actual processes of European integration.

William Walters (2004) distinguishes three interrelated grids of intelligibility by which European integration is inscribed in its apparatuses: tabulations, temporalizations, and geo-spatializations. By means of tables, graphs, charts, and scoreboards the degree of integration is made calculable; by means of timetables, deadlines, and agendas integration is split up into different trajectories and made 'processable' over time; and by means of differentiating levels of progress (e.g. towards accession or with regard to the stability pact or the entrance into the Euro or Schengen zone) integration has acquired a spatial dimension, in which regions or countries can be distinguished.

These grids, included in a governmentality of European integration and harmonization, are inextricably interwoven and express the ways in which the production of particular European politics of space and time are interdependent. The desire to make the processes of European integration and development quantifiable involves the production of a particular politics of scale, in which scales are predominantly framed as levels or sizes and in which European institutions are consequently considered the highest or largest scales among other, lower or smaller levels and areas of governance. Moreover, Europe's spatial representation in terms of regions, urban zones or countries that are more or less developed and integrated involves the production of a particular politics of time, in which these areas could be framed, for instance, in terms of different speeds regarding Europeanization. In other words, temporalizations and spatializations are both the medium and the outcome of the complex dialectic of European transformation we currently face.

When we take a closer look at recent conceptualizations of European government, such as the influential open method of coordination (OMC) introduced at the EU's Lisbon summit in 2000, we can perceive a decisive turn in the 'conduct of conduct' toward 'the systematics of peer review, the systematization of comparisons and evaluation, and the repeated call for performance indicators, for the quantification of objectives and hence for the establishment of their measurability' (Haahr 2004: 219). Under the Portuguese presidency, it was concluded that the OMC involves:

> fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium, and long terms; establishing … quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks … as a means of comparing best practice; translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional

differences; [and] periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review as mutual learning processes (European Presidency 2000, § 37, quoted in Dale 2004: 175).

These characteristics point to the above-mentioned politics of scale, for they depart from a multi-level approach, in which places and areas in 'Europe' are considered sites into which benchmarks can be translated top-down by means of policy building and implementation. This intensified governmentality of harmonization is exemplified by the ways in which the EU monitors its candidate member states. Regarding the Roma, these techniques of government are represented also in the Roma policies introduced by countries in the region (such as, for instance, the short, medium and long-term Roma national action plans that Gheorghe mentioned). Remarkably, in the 'concept note' written in preparation for the Decade project, it is suggested that governments first have to plan 'Decade benchmarks in their particular country'; then they and Romany delegations have 'to agree on benchmarks and timelines'; and finally they have to 'define measures to monitor, evaluate and report on progress', to find 'agreement on monitoring mechanisms for the period 2005-2015' (Decade project 2005). This attitude affirms what I have described above: it shows a calculating rationality inscribed in a governmentality designed to manage, develop, and discipline European populations, which is to be internalized not only by EU-member states, but also by candidate or non-members and by non-governmental and international organizations.

However, it would be too easy to consider European or international institutions predominantly as the new centers of powers or the only agencies of the production and politics of scale. It would be wrong to understand the underlying rationale as solely one of discipline (in its negative meaning). The practices and technologies at stake could be considered as 'practices of liberty': 'practices which establish and facilitate liberty, but which also discipline and constrain the exercise of it' (Haahr 2004: 216). Both the ability to implement new policy strategies and the attitude of monitoring and 'self-monitoring' countries on the basis of successful policy implementation, are part of a dynamic specific to the governmentality in question: to produce and perform multi-layered identifiable agencies that can subsequently be considered responsible for forming and implementing policy. Hence, the governmentality at stake is inscribed within a wider narrative, accurately described by Jens Henrik Haahr:

> This is a narrative of self-improvement via purposeful self-control and conscious self-management, and it reflects at the level of national and international agencies and bureaucracies a predominant construction in contemporary societies of subjects as responsible, rational and self-controlling entities, responsible also in the sense of having responsibility for their own destinies and being both able and obliged to turn themselves into 'successful' achievements (Haahr 2004: 223).

This narrative of self-improvement returns in another important governmentality I want to describe briefly. It intersects with the dominant one described so far, and is at stake in the international concern with poverty and aid. We only have to look at the title and the summary of the latest extensive report on the Roma by the UNDP—'Avoiding the Dependency Trap'—to become aware of the complex yet clear ways in which the

development of policy and of the Roma come together. In its summary, interestingly called 'Towards a common code of conduct', the report mentions that Roma-related 'projects should not promote dependency cultures, and should elaborate a phase-out strategy at the very beginning' (Ivanov *et al.* 2002: 11). Hence, the narrative of self-improvement is projected onto Roma policy making, by considering projects viable if and only if they produce responsible, independent and self-controlling subjects. As Cristina Rojas (2004) has convincingly shown, this narrative of self-improvement goes hand in hand with the governmentality concerning representations of poverty and the distribution of aid that has been dominant over the last decade. Identifiable agencies (e.g. subjects, organizations, national governments) are increasingly considered as either capable of self-reform or not. The latter ones are consequently perceived as living in a situation of poverty or disorder, which can only be relieved by structural, less peaceful 'adjustment reforms'.

We need to ask whether Romany communities—once they are considered 'subjects of self-improvement' and approached by means of techniques of 'voice' and 'representation' as well as quantifiable comparison—will be able to produce and reproduce their own contexts. So far, we have not yet dealt with the ways in which the Roma themselves try to challenge the current attitudes used to approach them. How, for instance, do they deal with the 'politics of scale' inscribed in the European governmentalities? If the practices and discourses implied by these governmentalities are really 'practices of liberty', how do they guarantee resistance to dominant power structures? Foucault already took into consideration the ambivalent and double character of governmentality, which includes 'on the one hand, rational forms, technical procedures, instrumentations through which to operate, and, on the other, strategic games that subject power relations they are supposed to guarantee to instability and reversal' (Foucault 1997: 203). Over the last few years there has been a growing awareness, partly due to the frustration of the Roma with the current mentalities of government, that new forms of collaboration are needed to turn the opportunities these governmentalities offer 'against themselves'. In the next section, I will focus on a particular case study to illustrate this new tendency.

Transregional and Transnational Networking

Kriva Palanka is a town in North-Macedonia, close to the borders with Serbia and Bulgaria. The Romany 'mahala' or neighborhood, in which about 2,000 Roma live (almost ten per cent of the town population), is situated in a valley that is accessible only with difficulty. The mahala lacks basic infrastructure and its inhabitants live in deplorable social circumstances. Late in 2002, the electricity company ended the power supply of the Romany mahala when the Roma could not pay their bills. Before the company was privatized electricity had been supplied in exchange for votes. Because most of the members of the Romany community are unemployed, they could not pay their debts. The cut-off mobilized the community more or less spontaneously. After a few internal meetings, they agreed to form a delegation, which subsequently went to negotiate with the company's manager. After several unsuccessful attempts, the Romany

community consulted Fundatia Avundipe, a small-scale regionally operating Romany organization based in Kriva Palanka and known for its constructive collaboration with local and national authorities. Avundipe organized a meeting with the mayor of the town and representatives of the mahala and the company. This round table discussion was successful in the end: electricity was reconnected in exchange for labor offered by members of the community to the company; electricity meters were installed to see who was able to pay and who was not (thus making the Roma accountable individually rather than collectively); and the company advised the Roma on how to save energy.[2]

This is not the end of the story, for it describes only a moment in the self-mobilization of this Romany community. With the assistance of Avundipe, pre-school activities have been organized and attempts have been made to include Kriva Palanka's Roma in the regular school system. Furthermore, Avundipe has improved its own expertise and extended its scope to a few other villages. This is due not only to Avundipe's pioneering work in the region and its positive interaction with local Romany communities, but also, importantly, to its involvement in the European Roma Grassroots Organizations network (ERGO), established in 2002. ERGO is a transnational network of Romany grassroots organizations from Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia, which has been gathering experience in local Romany community building for a few years already (Serbian and Moldavian Romany partners will probably also join the network). Spolu International Foundation, a Dutch NGO, provides the administration for the network, but has no voting rights. From its beginning in 1995, Spolu has intensively supported processes of Romany community development in the region, mostly by means of contracts and loans, and always on the basis of projects that are invented, prioritized, and agreed upon by the local Romany communities themselves. In Spolu's practically oriented philosophy projects and the very issue of mobilizing Romany communities take their departure from what the Roma already know themselves, from the assumption that 'no one knows more about how to survive poverty than the poor themselves' (Appadurai 2002: 28). To a great extent, ERGO has emerged from Spolu's supportive role in the processes of community building in the communities in question. However, the initiatives of the network are taken by the participating Romany organizations and communities, not by Spolu.

The ERGO network has found and still develops alternative ways to combine local initiatives and activism with experiences and knowledge shared on the basis of 'horizontal exchanges' between Romany communities in different districts and regions. Increasingly, the participants in the network recognize the common problems and issues they face in their own communities. The strong distrust of many Roma against projects informed by state, NGO or even EU and UN-based standardized practices is challenged by a politics of locality and self-empowerment. While processes of issue solving, self-organization, and 'learning by doing' are the key elements in every initiative to mobilize a particular Romany community, they are also central to the ways in which the network itself operates (cf. Schuringa 2005). Moreover, the very structure of the network enables particular actors to strategically vary their position in the network in coordination with other autonomous actors in the network or to temporarily transform its structure to achieve particular aims more effectively. 'As part of its strategy, ERGO has started to work towards different, more open network structures. … This way, the entire network or

some of its members can enter into temporary alliances with organizations and people that do not have a formal relation with the ERGO member, but face the same problem' (Spolu 2005: 12).

Though the network is strongly locally oriented, the local does not bind it. Quite the opposite, the very ability to organize and affect the network transregionally or even transnationally illustrates 'the extent to which local groups, far from being passive receivers of transnational conditions, actively shape the process of constructing identities, social relations, and economic practice' (Escobar 2001: 155). While the self-organization of Romany communities is still often initiated by negative impulses—cut-offs, reduction of social benefits, segregation in education or housing—small successes in trying to turn the tide contribute to the Roma's self-esteem and enable the concerned communities to change from a predominantly 'context-driven' into a 'context-generative' neighborhood, in which they themselves start to deal with the construction of their locality practically and discursively (for an accurate theoretical background of the production of locality, cf. Appadurai 1996). These small successes differ in their degree of stability and vary from the improvement of the local infrastructure, the involvement of parents in the school attendance of their children, and the organization of garbage collection, pre-school activities or running a community center, to the refurbishing of a medical point and the setting up of small economic activities, sometimes on the basis of microcredits. Not only do the network members often collaborate productively with local, regional, national, and sometimes even international authorities or NGOs to solve particular problems, these members also establish trust and respect among authorities and politicians at different levels.

As Appadurai (2002) has shown in another context, new forms of self-organization by the poor, and techniques to convince potential social and civil partners of their local projects and encourage them to invest in these projects, are key elements to the functioning of networks such as ERGO. Once they can set a precedent—for instance by legally registering in land registers—other communities might mobilize themselves too in temporary or permanent links with the network to try to achieve the same. This has already happened successfully as a result of mediating work done by a Bulgarian Romany partner in ERGO. In this particular case, and perhaps more generally, we can conclude:

> [The strategy of precedent-setting might turn] the survival tactics and experiments of the poor into sites for policy innovations by the state, the city, donor agencies, and other activist organizations. It is a strategy that moves the poor into the horizon of legality on their own terms. Most important, it invites risk-taking activities by bureaucrats within a discourse of legality, allowing the boundaries of the status quo to be pushed and stretched—it creates a border zone of trial and error, a sort or research and development space within which poor communities, activists, and bureaucrats can explore new designs for partnership (Appadurai 2002: 34).

Here, policy innovations do not result from imposing benchmarked policy measures through particular state-levels, but from bottom-up initiatives and from the free association of particular actors in the network. In constructing such networks and

mobilizing the interactions within them, a socio-political movement from this signature might gradually contribute to the democratization of social relations and to processes of Romany identity formation, which are no longer predominantly informed by the pessimisms and cynicisms due to the various marginalizations of Romany communities.

Arturo Escobar has suggested that the concerned local politics of self-empowerment has to be found at the intersection of the emergence of new and renewed identities, on the one hand, and the scaling effects central to networking on the other:

> Networks can be seen as apparatuses for the production of discourses and practices that connect nodes in a discontinuous space; networks are not necessarily hierarchical but can in some cases be described as self-organizing, non-linear and non-hierarchical meshworks … They create flows that link sites which, operating more like fractal structures than fixed architectures, enable diverse couplings (structural, strategic, conjunctural) with other sites and networks. This is why I say that the meaning of the politics of place can be found at the intersection of the scaling effects of networks and the strategies of the emergent identities (Escobar 2001: 169).

It is in this particular understanding of networks that the local politics can be turned into a 'politics of scale from below' for here the effective production of locality, the strategic formation of alliances by traveling back and forth between particular actors in the network, and the bottom-up enforcement of innovative Roma-related policy intersect crucially.[3]

However, we have to be on the alert not to generalize too easily and quickly. We still deal with a rather small-scale movement and with an issue that will not be solved overnight. As the example of the protests in East-Slovakia in February 2004 illustrates, the emergence of transnational Romany networks is itself embedded in a field of different and opposing forces, of which some are effectively centrifugal and others dramatically implosive. The curtailing of social benefits by the Slovakian government mobilized the concerned poor, among whom were many members of Romany communities, in a manner that was both spontaneous and intentional. After the effective ethnic framing of the protest by some influential Slovakian media and politicians, and a couple of incidents of looting in shops and supermarkets, the Slovakian government decided to mobilize a considerable military and police force to intensively monitor Romany communities and settlements in the eastern part of the country (cf. Magdolenová 2004). In the course of 2004, many Romany families who could not pay their rents due to cuts in their social benefits were evicted from their apartments and moved into 'substandard' housing or even worse—a practice increasingly popular among Czech municipalities as well (cf. ERRC 2004; Víšek 2003). In this particular context, we are clearly beyond discussing whether we are dealing with the self-regulation or self-mobilization of the Roma in question or with their brutal repression. Roma 'policy' here has become the equivalent of policing the Roma.

Yet even in this extremely dramatic example there appears to be a growing awareness among the Roma that they need to share and exchange their experiences on the basis of regional and transnational collaborations. Pioneering work has already been done, for instance, by the Slovakian Roma Press Agency (RPA), established in Košice in 2002, in

connecting the initiatives of local Romany communities to so-called 'counterframing' to rebut stereotypical representations (cf. Benford and Snow 2000), to legal defense strategies, and to the formation of temporary alliances with other involved partners. Not only does this agency operate on a local and regional basis, it also participates in Rrommedia, a transnational Romany media network of about twenty members, which was established in September 2004 in Kotor, Montenegro. As part of their strategy to challenge stereotypical representations of the Roma in mainstream European media and by populist or right-wing politicians, members of the Rrommedia network have strikingly formulated their own 'code of conduct' (Rrommedia 2004). Comparable initiatives to collaborate transnationally in the field of Romany cultural organizations have been undertaken, for instance, to challenge mainstream representations of the Roma's history and to actively construct their own historical conceptualizations (cf. van Baar forthcoming).

Conclusion: Towards Opportunities of Countergovernmentality

One of the challenges of a Foucauldian approach to government is to call for a critical and genealogical interrogation of the rationalities and techniques at stake. In conclusion, I would like to discuss the relation between the European governmentalities and the emerging networks at stake in the Roma's case. We can ponder whether the discussed governmentalities open up a space, in which we can deal differently with the dominant techniques of integration, development, and government. As I have tried to show, it is central to the intersecting European governmentalities to encourage free association of a variety of partners within Europe. As Haahr suggests, these mentalities of government can indeed be characterized by an ambivalence:

> [G]overnment is at one and the same time an activity which enables and enforces agency, involvement, deliberation and the creation of partnerships through technologies of agency, and an activity which conditions this agency, its involvement and deliberation, and subjects it to certain standards of rationality through the application of a range of technologies of performance (Haahr 2004: 226).

Hence, we need to ask whether the emerging ways of self-mobilization are not merely a way to internalize the development approach, now at the level of poor communities. Does the tendency to speak in terms of fashionable words like 'empowerment' and 'community development' not illustrate that we are dealing with a delicate intersection of power formations dominated by governmentality on the one hand and discipline and self-surveillance on the other? Such a line of reasoning, I believe, does not account for the inventive and strategic modifications of the scalar rationales of the network actors. Such actors, in their local yet not place-bound struggles, can jump from one scale to another. They can redefine their position in the scalar organization temporarily and contest constructed scales of governance, such as the ones central to European integration politics. By introducing the Romany case study I have tried to illustrate that politics is not only located in the supra-levels of regional, national and supranational government,

but also in places and settlements rendered powerless too often. Framing and practicing scales as network relations, in which local and global forces are inextricably interwoven, implies strategic ways to avoid established hierarchy. Due to networking survival struggles of Romany communities might turn into territorialized tactics to enforce policy bottom-up. When Gheorghe and Mirga wrote that '[t]he Romani community itself needs new ideas to govern and mobilize itself,' they added: 'and it is the Romani elites who must fashion those ideas' (Mirga and Gheorghe 1997: 22). It is this addition that expresses the misunderstanding of the ways in which self-mobilization of Romany grassroots and government could be combined productively.

Once we realize that 'the meaning of the politics of place can be found at the intersection of the scaling effects of networks and the strategies of the emergent identities' (Escobar 2001: 169), we need to ask whether we cannot describe the potential of the networks at stake as a sort of 'countergovernmentality', as Appadurai (2002) has proposed. I am not suggesting a new paradigm on the basis of the early successes in transnational Romany networking, yet the emergence of these networks is in correspondence with a growing critical interrogation of development and integration politics and discourses, not the least in European contexts (Diez 1999; Fagan 1999; Nederveen Pieterse 2001). I wish to suggest in conclusion that the combination of community development and mobilization; transregional and transnational networking on the basis of a strongly place-oriented politics, and the strategic and productive formation of alliances within the networks, has to be considered a countermovement to European governmentalities dominated by development and integration approaches. Perhaps not yet a post-development politics entirely, this kind of countergovernmentality is important for potential future forms of alternative governments within Europe.

Notes

1   Gheorghe puts forward an understanding of the relation between the Romany elite(s) and the Romany grassroots that is to some extent debatable. While he suggests that 'we' are losing the contact with the Romany grassroots or communities, he also presupposes a past in which they were systematically or effectively related to the Romany elite(s) in one way or another. I would like to thank Anikó Imre for bringing up this point.

2   I would like to thank Jef Helmer, Ruus Dijksterhuis, and Froukelien Yntema of Spolu International Foundation and Robert Salimov of Fundatia Avundipe, Macedonia for the encouraging discussions on the ERGO network and for providing me with information concerning Spolu's partner organizations in Central and Eastern Europe.

3   However, we cannot simply juxtapose the politics of scale, which is dominant in many European and national governmental approaches to the Roma, to the 'counter-politics' of scale, which is mobilized by the networks in question (van Baar 2005 deals more extensively with this issue). Indeed, both politics are inextricably interwoven. Further research has to be done to clarify their mutual relation. Furthermore, we need to investigate whether transnational and transregional networks (such as ERGO) do really contribute to the democratization of social relations and offer viable alternatives to practices that are standardized by NGOs, national governments or international organizations.

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