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The 'Roma Problem' in the EU

Nomadism, (in)visible architectures and violence

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This article argues that the 'Roma problem' in the EU is often translated into a 'space problem'. The targeting of Roma spaces—camps, right to movement, Roma homes and palaces—ultimately challenges the Roma's right to settlement and insures their invisibility. By turning its attention to the recent politics of Roma expulsions in France, this article seeks to better understand their implications by looking at: a) the relationship between the Roma's sedentary vs. nomadic lifestyle; b) the Roma's use of space to secure both visibility and invisibility; and c) the state's problematic use of legal violence in order to control and police the Roma. The article strongly suggests that the Roma 'space problem' cannot be solved by attempts to either construct (settlement) or constrict (expulsion) Roma spaces by an outside authority, but rather through an acceptance of Roma's temporary presence—even if it involves a long-term temporality—in camps 'abroad' and continued support for Roma communities 'at home'.

Introduction

This article seeks to address the so-called 'Roma problem' in the EU by looking at the ways in which what is ultimately an economic and legal discrimination problem gets translated into a 'space' problem: expulsion from 'camps', rejection of 'nomadism' and the Roma's right to free movement as EU citizens and, more recently, increased fetishization of Roma palaces throughout Romania. By targeting the very 'space' that the Roma occupy—whether it be the camps that they live in 'abroad', their movement across borders or their homes and palaces—the more recent policies of expulsion in France and Italy,

but also continued policies of discrimination throughout the EU, are in fact targeting the Roma's right to settle, anywhere. If Romanians and Bulgarians were glad to see the Roma move abroad, their host countries are equally anxious to see them go 'home'.

By examining a) the relationship between the Roma's sedentary vs. nomadic lifestyle; b) the Roma's use of space to secure both visibility and invisibility; and c) the state's problematic use of legal violence in order to control and police the Roma, this article argues that potential solutions to the 'Roma problem' need to ultimately address the 'space problem' and accept the Roma's right to settle on their own terms, without attempts to either forcefully construct (Roma camps, Roma blocks of flats, Roma neighbourhoods) or constrict (expulsion, segregation, legal infringement) the spaces that they inhabit. If one dares to accept the 'Roma problem' as not much different from the problem of other economic migrants, then perhaps more patience, tolerance and time would provide a more acceptable long-term solution. Instead, the status quo appears to be dominated by quick fix policies that are doomed to fail.

Assessing the 'Roma Problem' in the EU Today

As of August 2010, more than 40 Roma camps throughout France have been dismantled, with over 700 residents scheduled to be returned to Romania and Bulgaria by the end of September (Associated Press 2010). After a similar move in Italy two years ago, France, which originally opposed Italy's attempt at the time to change EU legislation to allow the forceful repatriation of EU citizens, seems to have changed its mind (Plesa 2010). As EU members such as Italy, France, Germany, Austria, and Spain are getting increasingly frustrated with the socio-economic 'burden' that Roma migration puts on them, short-term solutions are becoming increasingly aggressive in spite of the historically proven inefficiency of their tactics.

As police presence and surveillance technologies are stepped up, improvements to current policies are based on attempts to better monitor the identity of the repatriated Roma—through fingerprinting—with the clear hope that future EU policies might allow for prosecution or tighter control over the movement of certain EU citizens. Although the EU has officially criticized both Italy and France for their forceful displacement of EU citizens, it has yet to take legal action against further displacements. While Jose Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, has threatened Paris with legal action if expulsions continue, his threat appears to have only emboldened Nicolas Sarkozy, the French President, who vowed to continue the expulsions as France's legal sovereign right (Castle & Bennhold 2010).

The comments by EU justice commissioner Vivienne Reding that compared the French Roma expulsions to Nazi ethnic cleansing have continued to inflame the situation, despite being met with some

reproach by other EU members, such as the UK, which cautioned against the use of such extreme parallels. The French president rebuffed the comments by saying that Angela Merkel had personally suggested during a recent meeting that Roma camps in Germany will soon be dismantled as well (Dempsey & Castle 2010). German ministers have since dismissed any such statement, although it is not entirely unlikely that Merkel would have informally supported the French actions and acknowledged a similar problem within her own borders.

As Tara Bedard of the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest argues, all this has however served to bring the 'Roma problem' to the forefront of the EU agenda, albeit perhaps not in the most positive manner (cited in Laurence 2010). No agreement has however been reached at EU meetings as of September 2010, with the French president determined to continue the expulsions and the EU Commission president unlikely to act on his threat for legal action. Solutions are likely to involve either an increase in aid for the Roma in Romania and Bulgaria or better management of how the money currently allocated is being spent, as well as increased pressures for better Roma integration and settlement policies in these two countries.

In a tightening economic climate in which the Romanian government has just cut the salaries of all government employees by 25% and clamped down on all social benefits, this is not likely to go down well. Further aid targeting the Roma in particular will only result in increased resentment and violence against the Roma, which will be perceived as gaining undeserved privileges. Pressures for a legal solution to the 'problem' are also not likely to go unheard on either side: while the EU may try to establish further legal guarantees of the right to free movement in its member states—forcing perhaps France to write the 2004 directive this into its national law—it may also cede to some of France's demands and establish more clear legal repercussions for those 'EU residents' who become an unfair economic burden.

In an attempt to appease the situation, the Romanian government is promising to make available Romanian police forces in France—as they did two years ago in Italy—in order to help with the tracking and repatriation process (Plesa 2010). All sides recognize however the short-term nature of these interventions, with over two thirds of those displaced in the past having already returned to new camps within France and Italy. Interviews with some of the Roma that just landed in Romania after the latest round of expulsions, reveal that many of them will return to France before the winter (Vidican 2010). With no jobs or houses of their own and promises of better fortunes abroad, there is little incentive to stay, especially as the process of marginalization intensifies within Romania as well (Davies 2010).

The 'Roma Problem' as Unique?

Despite Romanian and Bulgarian Roma often being singled out, studies show that 'not only are there striking similarities in the socio-demographic profiles of Romani and non-Romani migrants, but that the migratory routes of the two groups are very similar as well' (Sobotka 2003, p. 92). The Roma experience of post-communism has been in many ways not much different from that of other poor and marginalized Romanians: with many families forced to abandon their city accommodations and join extended families in rural areas due to the loss of jobs, the tighter Roma community has been slowly disintegrating, resulting in the emergence of 'new forms of power, influence and (dis)trust' (Pantea 2009, p. 28).

It should perhaps not be surprising then that desperate Roma and Romanian families would resort to desperate solutions: including trafficking, forced child labour and stealing. Yet if some of this behaviour becomes understandable if not tolerable when it comes to Romanians (and Bulgarians) under the aegis of the 'transition from communism' discourse, the same is not the case for Roma communities from Romania and Bulgaria. For them, such behaviour is no longer understood as connected to a wider socio-political transformation—the 'transition'—but rather to some kind of 'innate' attribute that has historically exhibited the same problems.

Given the wide exposure that the Roma issue has received throughout the EU through the rise of different Roma civil rights groups, it is unclear whether the singling out of the Roma communities in Italy and France is truly a 'Roma problem' or whether the 'Roma problem' is being used as an excuse to perhaps deal with the wider East-West migration within the EU—largely perceived now as the 'Romanian and Bulgarian problem'. Whichever is the case, for now at least, the 'scapegoats' remain the same. It is important however to recognize the 'Roma problem' as unique not so much in terms of its causes but rather in terms of its labelling. By labelling the 'Roma problem' as a 'unique problem' both France and Italy are doing nothing but reinforcing narratives that the Romanian (and presumably the Bulgarian) government have been employing for years. Looking to these same governments for solutions sends a clear message: 'The Roma mess is yours, deal with it.'

Who the 'Roma problem' belongs to brings us back to the idea of the 'problem' as mainly a 'spatial' one. Belonging, in this case, is clearly understood in terms of a set spatial border which delimits not so much an identity as a responsibility. Space, in this case national space—encompassing the Romanian and Bulgarian borders vs. the wider EU borders—denotes a sense of sovereign control and enforcement which is clearly limited by borders. Italy's and France's current politics of expulsion point out that the guaranteed 'freedom of movement' within the EU is in fact limited by the individual sovereign states continued responsibility for their citizens. Just like the Roma are 'free'

to move to other parts of the EU, the Romanian and Bulgarian police are also 'free' to control them outside of the Romanian and Bulgarian borders. Control, in this case, appears as the other side of freedom.

Questioning Roma Nomadism

The romantic idea of Roma nomadism, often fetishized in 'gypsy films' such as Tony Gatlif's or Emir Kusturica's (Dobrevă 2007), has been regularly challenged in the Roma rights literature which argues instead that the present condition of the Roma is 'adaptable out of necessity, itinerant out of lack of alternatives more than by choice' (Orta 2010, p. 12). The nomadism of 'travellers' is, for the most part, a thing of the past, with current nomadism fitting closely into the regular migration patterns of other Romanian and Bulgarian citizens looking for opportunities abroad. Continued cultural and political tendencies to aestheticize and fetishize the Roma contribute to the formation of particular stereotypes that are to be admired and even envied on film—for their perceived freedom and carefree lifestyle—yet dismissed and resented in reality. This, as Sigona explains, leads to a situation where the 'Roma do not exist as personae for the majority of Italians but only as stereotypes' (Sigona 2005, p. 747). As Fonseca argues 'The more exotic Gypsies appear to be, the more "genuine" they are considered and, paradoxically, the more acceptable they become' (Fonseca quoted in Sigona 2005, p. 747).

'The Roma', a homogeneous label that often fails to grasp the significant cultural, religious, linguistic and economic differences that exist between different groups (Klimova 2002), exist as a unified entity either in their status of fetishized Roma or in their status of 'enemy' (Sigona 2005, p. 747). This sometimes positive, sometimes negative identity appears to also correspond to the spatial location of the Roma: when far away, they can be easily romanticized, when close by, they become the enemy. The Roma camps thus become the ultimate enemy territory, enforcing a separation between the Roma and the rest of society, with the Roma inhabiting the urban fringes of often abandoned terrain, vulnerable both in front of the law as well as local violence. As Sigona explains, once located within the camp, independent of their proximity to other local groups, the Roma's relational space is constricted by an invisible border that makes contact between groups living in the same community almost impossible (Sigona 2005, p. 750).

Their location within the camp not only makes their demands appear illegitimate but also turns their judicial precariousness into existential precariousness (Sigona 2005, p. 751). The 'nomadic' label often attached directly to Roma camps—the Italians call them 'nomadic camps'—thus serves to justify dismantling as both a legal response—the state/law does not tolerate nomadism in the form of illegal temporary settlements—but also a cultural one—if they are nomads, settling can and should only be acceptable temporarily. It is the Roma's physical presence in the camps that makes them much more

vulnerable to the law than other 'nomadic' groups such as foreign workers. And yet their presence there is encouraged and shunned at the same time.

At the time of writing this, while some Roma are forced out of their settlements in France they are welcomed into others, with the local governments rushing to provide running water, toilets and basic infrastructure to support the incoming 'residents'. This apparent contradiction in policies does not appear to be unique to France, for camps are ultimately seen as the preferable temporary solution by many 'host' states: as long as the Roma are in a camp, they can be easily targeted and 'dealt with' at any point in time. Once integrated into the local community and living in 'flats'—even when those flats are provided by the local governments—the Roma become less traceable and are invariably perceived as less of a threat.

A case in point is Iancu Petru, a Romanian Roma who left the Roma camp to settle into the prefabricated village provided by the French authorities at Aubervilliers near Paris, learned French and started sending his children to French schools. His parents, still living in a nearby camp, are threatened with expulsion at any point, while he is now considered a legal resident (Staff Writer 2010). As it appears, the line between settling and nomadism is indeed very thin, often drawn on the basis of one's presence in a camp or a 'prefabricated' village. The rule appears to be: the more 'temporary' the structure the more 'nomadic' its inhabitants, independent of whether the inhabitants have a choice over the nature of the structure or not.

Just as Roma music, dancing and fashion are often fetishized in the movies, Roma architecture has itself become the target of fetishism. Lamenting that 'architects dream of nomadism, but build permanence' (Project 35 Architects 2010, p. 43) (post)modern architecture has often looked at Roma 'nomadic' lifestyle for inspiration. The Situationalists have long defended Roma nomadism and been inspired by Roma unusual use of outdoor/indoor space to create/imagine future cities and living quarters (Wollen 2001, p. 124). Architects like Pinot Gallizio, George Candilis and Constant Nieuwenhuys imagined the Roma to be the precursors of future world nomadism where nomadic camps would become the norm for world travellers.

Constant's celebrated New Babylon project—a city to be inhabited by transients only—plays to early attempts to glorify nomadism and the perceived freedom inherent in the nomadic lifestyle. The nomadic experience is often celebrated as 'a challenge [to] some of the foundations of Western civilisation and our entrenched views and categorizations' and a way of living that can inspire the construction of trans-national communities (Tzirtzilakis 2010, p. 14). Yet, this imagined architecture, something that Svetlana Boym labelled as 'off-modern', serves to further fetishize a Roma nomadic lifestyle that is often not a choice but a necessity. In fact, a majority of the Roma

today are settled, while the 'nomadic' ones often state their main goal to be to make enough money to settle (Vidican 2010).

The idea of nomadism as a form of autonomy and resistance to state control is particularly appealing for different critics of the state. However, fetishizing nomadism in relation to a particular group, such as the Roma, can be dangerous, risking entrenching a negative stereotype that often carries with it violent consequences. Fighting for nomadism as a right should not be mistaken for fighting for Roma's right to nomadism, as Roma's presence in 'nomadic' camps throughout Italy and France is certainly not an expression of their freedom and autonomy, but quite the opposite, of their vulnerability.

While the fetishism of Roma nomadism can in itself be dangerous, this is not to say that the question of nomadism as 'the right to belong to a society, and not to belong to it at the same time' (Orta 2010, p. 11) is not an interesting one. The challenge of choosing to belong on one's own terms appears ultimately to be a legal one, although its expression is often spatial: belonging to the modern nation is expressed through a residency status that is connected to the person inhabiting a particular space a majority of the time. That space signifies the state's ultimate power to regulate the individual: it is the space where one can be found and investigated, counted and taxed, surveilled and sent back to. By definition, a nomadic residence is unstable, creating significant challenges for the state's ultimate control mechanism.

The celebration of the new jet-set lifestyle is not a celebration of nomadism as such, but rather, a celebration of economic well-being, for even the jet-setters ultimately claim residence in a particular place, pay taxes and fall under the legal umbrella of a particular state. The nomadism that resists state control is hardly a status that many desire, for gaining a legal status through settlement is what secures access to state services. As such, most 'nomadic' groups fight for the right to settle—even if temporarily—precisely to gain access to such services. The trick then is to secure ways of access to such services while at the same time limiting the state's ability to control you.

This is perhaps where at least some of the Roma struggle can be identified: benefit theft, multiple residencies, fake ID's/passports, fake names. It is unclear however the extent to which this struggle to escape control while maintaining access to services is a result of the Roma fight for 'autonomy' as opposed to an instinctive protective mechanism derived from a historical track-record of being discriminated against. As Lucy Orta explains:

The concrete reality experienced by the Roma in most European countries speaks however of a tragic paradox: that of a people who are not allowed to take root and who are instead forced to live upon the discards of non-nomadic citizens, often refused a stable and regular lifestyle; but at the same time they are hindered in their movement. (Orta 2010, p. 11)

This is indeed the real struggle of many of the Roma people today: often refused the right to settle, they are also refused the right to move. Attempts to settle them are often half-hearted, within improper accommodations and without additional support services that would provide incentives to stay put. The response to the 'Roma problem' has indeed mainly focused on two solutions: either settlement or forced displacement. If displacement only pushes the 'problem' into other areas, attempts of settlement are always inevitably done on the cheap, providing only temporary and often inefficient solutions. Worse of all, the settlement is almost never driven by the communities involved but rather by government agencies. Indeed the most successful examples of settlement and integration are those where the families/communities were able to build their own spaces. Perhaps one of the most striking examples of this are the Roma castles in Romania. This newly constructed Roma architecture establishes a new regime of visibility in which the Roma communities can, for the first time, dictate the way in which they are going to be seen. Controversial due to their size and intricate aesthetics, the Roma castles send nonetheless a clear message that the Roma are ready to be seen on their own terms: not only as a victimized group that has been historically discriminated against, but also as a potentially successful one.

(In)Visible Architectures

The Roma camps are ultimately terrains of invisibility. As Fabrizio Floris explains 'the principle characteristic of these settlements is not poverty, violence, unemployment, or even architectural decay. Their fundamental characteristic is their invisibility' (Floris 2010, p. 55). Pushed literally to the edge of society, the Roma camps are often surrounded by fences that seek to physically separate them from the surrounding local communities. The presence of the camps is tolerated only as long as the invisibility is maintained. It is not surprising then that the dismantling of the camps often comes at times where the increasing visibility of the Roma gains negative connotations: often a crime committed by a member of the group.

Unlike the Roma caravans of the past, the Roma camps of today maintain little of the aesthetic appeal of the former. Makeshift homes in the camp are rarely decorated maintaining a purely functional, yet temporary style. Put together within a matter of days, the homes come apart just as easily. While the inside of the camp homes is intensely colourful (Orta 2010) and decorative, it remains invisible to the outside world. The camp, as Mariana Celac explains, is not a place where one can find:

a wealth of exotic folklore, a quest for identity or regional expression ... The new urban poverty is uniform, non-specific, highly banal, and non-ethnic. The determinants that bring ghetto people together are always similar: being born in a ghetto, having been left out in the process of economic restructuring and pushed

into poverty by a consumerist and segregative urban society. (Celac 2010, p. 101)

While alternatives to the camp often translate into 'box-like blocs of minimal flats or monotonous aseptic alignments of identical pavilions' (Celac 2010, p. 101) a new type of Roma architecture is on the rise throughout Central and Eastern Europe. These striking Roma palaces show a remarkable vitality of creativity, expression and identity: 'gigantic houses, with their unmistakable stylistic features: roofs with turrets and overlapping cornicing, a vague mix of Chinese pagodas and the gingerbread palaces of Bollywood melodrama' (Andresoiu 2008, Preface). Funded mainly through remittances from abroad these palaces function as intricate displays of wealth that are not uncommon amongst groups that have recently come into money (Petcut 2008).

Each palace has a meaning of its own, made in the image of its creator, a collection of decorative and architectural fairytales mixed with coded messages that symbolize the owner's source of wealth and oftentimes their actual trajectory during the foreign travels that allowed them to gather such wealth: Mercedes and dollar signs, lions, stags, even a model of the Brandenburg Gate. The roofs often list the family names of their inhabitants, and decorative elements such as exterior stairs, terraces, turrets or new tiling are constantly added and changed in an effort to maintain visibility and compete with neighbouring palaces.

Although imposing in their appearance, many of the palaces are not professionally built, often supported by a weak foundation that is not able to withhold the many structural additions tacked on in time. A majority of the palaces thus often appear unfinished, constant construction sites that risk suffering significant setbacks as parts of them collapse while others are added. The fragility of these castles defies the stability and longevity that most buildings aspire to, baffling architects who are growing increasingly interested in them. It is clear that this new kind of Roma architecture is something 'new', defiant of previously established architectural categories. As Mariana Celac beautifully writes:

Their penetrating spirit, dynamism, cumulative expressivity, the numerous challenges they pose, the attraction for distinctive features of various sources, the vitality and the large sums invested together with a social success that exceeds ethnic boundaries, the territorial dispersion and critical mass achieved—all these together have removed the kastell from under the sign of the picturesque. Kastells are supported by a substratum that can be compared, metaphorically speaking, with that which facilitated the journey of Jazz from the margins to a sub-species of high music with equal rights: hunger for identity, irreverence for what went before and authority, but an active mimetic spirit, freedom to take control over anything that can be used to realise your own design, the capacity to resonate with a growing audience, but also exclusion, sarcasm and negative publicity—as a vulgar, aesthetically crude, anti-

cultural phenomenon. All with the advantages of uproar as a vehicle of fame. (Celac 2008)

While Celac's optimism is infectious, it marks perhaps the perspective of an architect discovering a radically new approach to 'settlement'. The reality of the economic crisis, slow growth at home and abroad has however clearly caught up with even the wealthy Roma communities, leaving an increasing number of their palaces unfinished or in decay (Davies 2010). The ultimate expression of post-1989 capitalist growth mixed with a unique desire to reshape and control the way in which their community becomes visible, these castles could easily be seen as 'the symbolic expression of a minority group's search for legitimacy' (Stefan 2008). How successful this new visibility has been remains to be seen.

If anything however, this newborn Roma architecture has established a clear terrain of social visibility under which the Roma were able to impose their own vision of themselves and their post-1989 experience. As Petre Petcut argues: if 'the ability to switch between social visibility and invisibility was the main weapon wielded by nomads faced with constant controls by local and national authorities', today this has given way to a permanent visibility (Petcut 2008), perhaps a sign of a fearless defiance that clearly states: we are, and have been, here to stay and the sooner you acknowledge our presence, the better.

This increased visibility remains however, in many ways, guarded by a highly selective access to the inside of these palaces. Two recent collections of photographs: Renata Calzi, Patrizio Corno and Carlo Gianferro's *Gypsy Architecture* and Igloo Patrimoni Press's *Kastello* offer for the first time a view of the inside of the palaces and a glimpse of the lifestyle of an otherwise very private group of people. The grandiose rooms are for the most part sparsely furnished and hardly ever used, with the outdoors space continuing to play the most important role in the life of the family. The inside space, like the facades, is for the most part used to make a statement as opposed to actually 'house' the family. The Roma remain closely guarded despite their increased visibility. Perhaps what the castles—facades and interiors—provide is a sense of visibility that does not necessarily increase their vulnerability. They are a clear sign of their desire to establish their own terrain not only of visibility but also of degree and way of settlement.

Critique of Violence

The latest round of violence against the Roma through the widespread evacuations from France infringe precisely on the Roma's right to decide where and how to settle. France seeks to give legitimacy to their actions through the invocation of EU law, in particular the limitations to freedom of movement within the EU as laid out in Directive 2004/38/EC (European Commission 2010), turning a

fundamental EU right—the freedom of movement—into a legal limitation. Violent discrimination becomes protected here by a law that apparently seeks to protect the complete freedom of movement of those with the necessary economic means while offering grounds for legal removal of those who do not. Despite a vehement defence of the right of all EU citizens to free movement, France is doing nothing but expose and exploit the potential violent consequences of this law, which, while granting the right to free movement, closely limits and monitors the right to settle.

The fine print on the EU's 2004 directive that secures freedom of movement for EU citizens throughout the EU lists a series of important restrictions and responsibilities, including the right to settle for longer than three months in another EU state only if one can prove that they can support themselves without the help of the state. This presumably implies that they can support themselves to a standard of living that is acceptable to the state in question. If they fail to do so, which I suspect most economic migrants do at one point or another, then they can be refused residence/right to settle, which presumably includes the right to be expelled. It is on these legal grounds that France is justifying the current 'voluntary expulsions'.

Placing legal limitations on freedom of movement and freedom to settle have historically turned sour, and perhaps the 1968 Caravan Sites Act in the UK is a good precedent to consider. While it established the first legal precedent for acceptance of nomadism as legitimate cultural practice, it also limited this practice to authorized sites. This limitation effectively allowed the law to be used to evict Roma caravans from 'unauthorized' sites, control and limit their movement, while at the same time weakening the members of the caravans by cutting off their source of livelihood by limiting their routes and by forcing them into (in)visible authorized sites. The 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which effectively reversed the 1968 Act—by removing the UK government's duty to provide caravan sites and increasing the state's power to evict 'illegal settlers', thus effectively criminalizing the nomadic way of life—served as a reminder of the kind of violence that a legal double standard through limitations can inflict (Sandland 1996).

Inflicting violence in the name of law is certainly not new, for as Walter Benjamin argues, all aspects of the law—both law-making and law-preserving—are inherently violent. According to Benjamin, the state, as sovereign, has always sought to use the law both to establish itself as a legitimate ruler as well as to preserve its power in the face of constant challenges (Benjamin 1968). While the legal violence of the post WWI German state, the context in which Benjamin was writing, is certainly much different from the double standard of the EU's guaranteed, yet limited, freedom of movement, the consequences, particularly with regards to the Roma, are equally worrisome.

France, through its actions, is doing nothing but expose and exploit the double standard of the 'guarantee' of freedom of movement within the EU, in which settlement is only to be granted on the basis of a net economic contribution to the place of settlement. By distinguishing the 'freedom of movement' from the 'freedom to settle', the law is clearly distinguishing the burden of rights and responsibilities, with the 'home' state ultimately continuing to carry the responsibility for its 'economically challenged' citizens. This becomes even clearer in light of recent requests that the French authorities have placed with the European Commission that the Romanian state be responsible for 'settling' and better 'integrating' the Roma within Romania by making better use of EU funds and offering each Roma family money to set up a business (Crisan 2010). The writing between the lines could not be more obvious: the EU should pay to incentivize the Roma to settle in Romania as opposed to France.

And yet the freedom of movement within the EU has and continues to be utilized by a majority of EU citizens living outside of their home state as a means to better their economic situation and maximize access to jobs and opportunities. The freedom of movement is ultimately a freedom to pursue economic opportunities at all ends of the spectrum. If Romanian and Bulgarian citizens are legally allowed and encouraged to come pick strawberries, care for the elderly and clean the houses of their wealthier EU compatriots, then at least they should be respected for their willingness to work under difficult conditions in order to improve the economic situation of their families and their children. The logic that the same right should not apply to the Roma for the simple fact that they are not trusted enough to be given access to even the most menial jobs is ultimately embedded in a wider distrust in the Roma ability to ever 'integrate' or 'settle'.

If the EU has chosen to make available a decent proportion of its budget—through the European Social Fund, the European Regional and Development Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development—to tackling the question of Roma settlement and Roma integration, it is unclear why this money should target the settlement of the Roma community in particular countries as opposed to others. If one is to believe both the political, legal and moral discourse of the EU, the 'Roma problem' is not a Romanian, Bulgarian, French or Italian 'problem', but rather an EU one, which means both rights and responsibilities are to be equally shared, and the Roma should be free to choose where and how they want to be 'settled' and 'integrated'.

At the risk of being called an optimist, perhaps with a little bit of patience, a little less discrimination, more job opportunities and access to state services, this 'problem' would solve itself the same way other economic problems within the EU have solved themselves—see the Irish or Spanish or even Italian migration to wealthier parts of the EU. While identifying the vulnerabilities of particular groups and minorities is important, singling out the Roma as a unique 'problem' group also makes them more vulnerable in front of

the law. EU policies targeting the Roma need to be particularly careful at not separating Roma rights from the rights of other EU citizens, according them a unique status under the law. The current 'voluntary evacuations' are moving in the dangerous direction of seeking concrete enforcement powers to current limitations to the freedom of movement in the EU, something that can only be implemented through increased surveillance and monitoring of all EU citizens—most likely, with an increased focus on economically vulnerable groups.

Freedom of movement is ultimately the freedom to settle, the freedom to seek new opportunities, the freedom to choose where and how to live one's life. Individual criminal behaviour can and should be punished under the law, but sending an EU citizen 'home', should perhaps at this point be recognized as oxymoronic. As the EU continues to fight its demons, this could be an opportunity to truly defend its vision of an integrated community of states and problems, and perhaps learn to celebrate the right to both 'nomadism' and 'settlement' granted to all of its citizens, including the Roma.

Perhaps the one positive response to the most recent French evacuations will be a rising sense of solidarity with the Roma communities within Romania and Bulgaria, that is, if the fear of further restrictions to be imposed on all Romanian and Bulgarian citizens will not give way to increased resentment. The 'Roma problem' is ultimately a challenge to the state's control over rights of 'settlement' and 'nomadism' seeking to disconnect the application of legal rights and availability of state services from residence and a particular kind of 'settlement'.

Conclusion

Recognizing the 'Roma problem' as ultimately a spatial problem in which the question of settlement vs. nomadism needs to be debated in a way that includes the Roma is essential. This article has argued that the fetishizing of Roma nomadism, both in popular culture such as film as well as in (post)modern architecture, can lead to potentially dangerous assumptions about the Roma who are for the most part settled or seek settlement. Current state policies that focus on either forced settlement or forced displacement of the Roma population fail to understand the importance of their having a say in how they become visible to the rest of the world. The Roma camps are nothing but a sad reminder of the state's half-hearted attempts to temporarily settle a population, in the hope that they will seek a better future somewhere else. If Romania and Bulgaria are hoping 'their' Roma move abroad, their 'host' countries are hoping that they would move back 'home'.

Despite being caught in this loop of constant discrimination the wealthier Roma have found ways to assert their presence by settling themselves in magical palaces that resemble fairytales. These

palaces offer a glimpse of the Roma's intense desire to be recognized on their own terms. While their unique architecture appeals to modern architects, these palaces are less permanent than they may appear. Crumbling under a weak structure and diminishing funds they may soon disappear forcing their owners back into 'nomadism'. But before this happens, the Roma will have at least made a statement about their desire, just like everyone else, to be in charge of how and where they settle.

France's current attempt to displace the Roma communities living in camps, following in the footsteps of Italy, exposes important loopholes in the EU's guarantee of freedom of movement legislation, clearly singling out economically vulnerable groups such as the Roma and limiting not only their freedom of movement but also their right to settle. This article argues that attempts to seek EU-wide powers of enforcement of the limitations under the freedom of movement law will quickly turn into a dangerous monitoring and surveillance mechanism that defeats the very moral ground on which the EU claims to stand. The 'Roma problem' needs to be addressed on spatial terms to secure: 1) their right to choose settlement or nomadism; 2) their right to choose where to settle and how to make themselves visible; 3) their right to receive equal support and protection from their 'home' and 'host' states as well as the EU.

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