Scaling the Romani grassroots: Europeanization and transnational networking

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Introduction

Early in 2004, the Prague-based non-governmental organization Romea introduced an educational project that deploys the Internet to try to fulfill its aim of challenging the dominant, often stereotypical representations of the Roma in the domestic public opinion. By so doing Romea hopes to contribute to a better social and historical understanding of the Romani minorities in the Czech Republic. The educational section of Romea’s website provides information on Romani history, culture, and language. Furthermore, Romea features interactive discussions about the social issues and problems that the Roma are currently facing in the Czech Republic, such as the relatively large number of Roma youngsters who are addicted to drugs. The website also offers information that could be included in regular Czech school curricula. In the course of the spring of 2004,

1 Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Oxford Symposium on (Trans-) Nationalism in South East Europe (St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford, June 17-19 2005, a conference organized by the South East European Studies at Oxford in collaboration with the John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University) and at the conference Re-activism: Re-drawing the Boundaries of Activism organized by the Central European University, the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, the Open Society Institute, and the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania (Budapest, October 13-15 2005). Particular thanks go to Anikó Imre for constructive suggestions on the draft version of this article.
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Romea contacted more than eleven hundred schools throughout the country, including elementary and secondary schools in both the regular and the special school system. By the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, almost seventy schools had registered at Romea’s school website. Teachers at these schools began using the materials provided by Romea, which are not available in Czech history or language books. Additionally, in 2006, Romea extended its website services and initiated the so-called ‘burza práce’, an interactive job market, which lists available jobs and helps Roma (and non-Roma) find work.2

This article is concerned with the way in which we could interpret initiatives such as Romea’s. How does this Czech project relate to more general local, national, and European political efforts to further the socio-economic and cultural position of the Romani minorities in Europe? Are we dealing with an initiative funded primarily by a national government, whose scope remains local? Or could we, more generally, perceive this project as part of a Europe-wide tendency whereby different Romani organizations and their private and public partners collaborate transregionally or even transnationally to try to improve the socio-economic and political situation of European Romani communities?

In this contribution, I propose to consider initiatives such as Romea’s as part of a variety of post-1989 European inventive styles of government, which are developed to deal with the Roma in Europe. On the basis of poststructuralist approaches to social interaction and networking, I argue that we can understand these newly emerging ways of conduct along the lines of so-called European govern-mentalities.3 Before I analyze these mentalities and elaborate on the way in which they are interwoven with recent processes of Romani networking and Europeanization, I will sketch a number of European social actors who are involved in Romani minorities’ affairs.

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2 I would like to thank Jarmila Balážová and Zdeněk Ryšavý of the Czech Romani organization Romea for providing me with information concerning their projects and for discussing them with me.

3 Though I have discussed the issue of European governmentalities before (van Baar 2006), in the present paper I will deal with it more thoroughly and point to issues that differ substantially from those I put forward at the conference on (Trans-) Nationalism in South East Europe at the University of Oxford in June 2005. When we try to understand the scope of Foucault’s concept of governmentality, I believe we do not need the additional concept of countergovernmentality that Appadurai has introduced (2002:35-36, see also Luke 1996). Either the latter concept falls back on a classical binary opposition between a centralized power and peripheral forms of resistance. Or the forms of resistance to which Appadurai wants to point can be understood as already being in correspondence with Foucault’s understanding of governmentality as something that tries to overcome the drawbacks of thinking in terms of binary oppositions.
A New Decade of Roma Inclusion?

On 2 February 2005 in Sofia, Bulgaria, governmental and Romani 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 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (COE), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) support it. Most importantly, when it comes to questions of Romani representation and agency, the Decade project is backed up by Romani organizations in the region, as well as by international Romani organizations, such as the Brussels-based European Roma Information Office (ERIO).

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, which was organized by the OSI and the World Bank at the Central European University (CEU). Two weeks after the conference, on 16 July, the Romanian Romani 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 previous decade (1993-2003) had 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 Romani minorities 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 general definition of politics referred 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 2003).

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; the United Nations have their Belgrade-based Focal Point on Roma within the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; 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 Romani 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. 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” (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 national and supranational policy-making, are responsible for the threatening gap he perceived between Roma policy and politics.

Apart from his rather 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 a representational sense in which equal participation of Roma in institutions at all levels must result in a strong say in their own affairs. 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 & Gheorghe 1997:22). In his 2003 lecture, Gheorghe no longer mentioned the Romani 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 Romani grassroots communities.

Once we take seriously Gheorghe’s call to reconsider the policy-dominated agendas, 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 European integration in general. Though I largely agree with Gheorghe’s analysis regarding ineffective policy building and implementation, he does overlook a budding Romani grassroots movement. 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 (2001a, 2003), which both reflect on the shortcomings of Roma policy. 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 Romani grassroots. In particular, they show that the ethnicization of policy has resulted in 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 Romani 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” (2001a:110, emphasis added). 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” (2001a:110, emphasis added). 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]” (2001a:306, emphasis added).

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. Guy and Kovats 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 has to 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 & Walters 2004:14). To analyze the so-called politics of scaling in the political context under discussion we need to adopt a concept of government that takes into account the scaling effects of Europeanization.

European Governmentalities and Practices of Liberty

In a 1978 lecture at the Collège de France, entitled “Governmentality”, Michel Foucault introduced a concept of government that breaks with the prevailing understanding of government as something that is exclusively within the domain of politics or the state (1991). Based on Foucault’s restatement of the prevailing 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” (1999:11).

Foucault’s concept of governmentality gives an account of the different arts, technologies, 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 employed, see, for instance, Burchell, Gordon & Miller 1991; Barry, Osborne & Rose 1996; Bratich, Packer & McCarthy 2003). A Foucauldian 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 cultural studies. Governmentality studies analyze power and governing practices by linking them to different technologies. They allow for a genealogical approach to political rationalities and their paradigmatic or subtle changes over time. Governmentality is both historical and empirical in its focus. It encourages us to analyze political formations such as European or international institutions, regions, 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, as Nancy Fraser suggests, “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” (2003:167). However, I believe even 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 scaling: 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. In Fraser’s concept of governmentality, it is merely understood in line with classic multilevel governance theories, where levels are still predominantly considered as fixed. Here, however, I want to propose that governmentality breaks with any such approach and, additionally, that it enables us to reflect on styles and rationalities of governance.
Returning to the analysis of European policy, we need to shift our focus to the following questions: What are the particular rationalities and technologies involved in European governmentalities? How do they relate to issues of poverty and practices of aid and policy regarding the Romani 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 technologies of government. However, once we give an account of the differences in the trajectory from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) to the actual EU, we can 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, inclusion, and enlargement, and by its desire to speak more and more in the name of Europe (Walters 2004). The EU’s attitude entails that EU countries, but also those that are not (yet) EU-members, 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 zones) 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 specific European politics of scale, space, and time are interdependent. The desire to make the processes of European integration and development quantifiable involves a politics of scaling, 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. 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 politics of time, in which these areas could be framed, for instance, in terms of different speeds regarding Europeanization. In other words, tem-
poralizations and spatializations are both the medium and the outcome of the complex dialectic of European transformation we currently face. Europe is temporalized and spatialized, and space and time are Europeanized. Non-EU countries at the borders of or within the actual EU approach themselves and are approached increasingly according to EU standards. Subsequently, these countries are increasingly conceptualized in terms of regions – e.g. Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), South-East Europe (SEE) or Central Eurasia (CEA) – and targeted as such in policy documents (see, for instance, EC 2003). Furthermore, border regions have become a focal point of EU policies in the form of so-called euregions; cross-border territorial spaces that are conceptualized differently from the spaces of national states (Kramsch & Hooper 2004).

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, cited in Dale 2004:175).

These characteristics of the OMC point to a politics of scaling. They start from a multilevel 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 also represented 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 so-called 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 Romani 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, see also UNDP 2006:106). This attitude confirms what I have described above: it shows a calculating rationality inscribed in a governmentality designed to manage, develop, and discipline European populations. This governmentality is to be internalized not only by EU-member states, but also by candidate or non-members and by non-governmental and international organizations operating in Europe.

However, it would be too easy to consider European or international institutions as the new centers of power or as the only agencies of the production and politics of scale. It would be wrong to understand the underlying rationale as solely that of discipline (in its negative-exclusive meaning or even in its Foucauldian positive-productive understanding). 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” (2004:223, see also Walters & Haahr 2005:128).

This narrative of self-improvement returns in another important mentality of government I want to introduce briefly. It intersects with the discussed style of government, and is at stake in the international concern with poverty and aid. We only have to look at the title and the summary of a recent report on the Roma by the UNDP – Avoiding the Dependency Trap – to become aware of the ways in which various “developmental approaches” to the Roma come together, such as capacity development, community or grassroots development, and human or sustainable development. 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” (UNDP 2002:11). Hence, the narrative of self-improvement is projected onto Roma policy making by considering projects viable if and only if they produce respon-
sible, independent, and self-controlling subjects. As Cristina Rojas (2004) shows convincingly, 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, such as subjects, organizations, national governments, and communities, are increasingly considered as either capable of self-reform and development or not. Those agencies that are seen as not capable of self-reform 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 Romani communities – once they are considered subjects of self-improvement and approached by means of technologies of representation as well as quantifiable comparison – will be able to produce 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 scaling 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 and relations? Foucault already took into consideration the ambivalent 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” (1997:203). Over the last few years, there has been a growing awareness among Roma that new forms of collaboration are needed to challenge the discussed governmentalities. In the next section, I will focus on a case study to illustrate this new tendency.

Networks as the Intersection of Technologies of Agency and Performance

Krina Palanka is a town in North Macedonia, close to the borders of Serbia and Bulgaria. The Romani mahala or neighborhood, in which about 2,000 Roma live (almost ten percent of the town’s 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 Romani mahala when the Roma could not pay their bills. Before the company was privatized at the end of the 1990s, electricity had been supplied in exchange for votes. Because most of the members of the Romani 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 manager. After several unsuccessful attempts, the Romani community consulted Fundatia Avundipe, a small-scale regionally operating Romani 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 roundtable 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.

This is not the end of the story, for it describes only a moment in the self-mobilization of this Romani 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 Romani communities, but also, importantly, to its involvement in the European Roma Grassroots Organizations network (ERGO), established in 2002. ERGO is a transnational network of Romani grassroots organizations from Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Moldova, and Slovakia, which has been gathering experience in local Romani community building for a few years. A Serbian Romani partner 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 Romani community development in the region, mostly by means of contracts and loans, and on the basis of projects that are invented, prioritized, and agreed upon by the local Romani communities.4

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 Romani 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 in projects informed by state,

4 I would like to thank Jef Helmer, Ruus Dijksterhuis, Froukelien Yntema, and Marcel Dediu of Spolu International Foundation, as well as the representatives of Fundatia Avundipe (Macedonia), Združenie Spolu (Slovakia), Association Integro (Bulgaria), and Khetane-Zajedno (Serbia) for the encouraging discussions on the ERGO network and for providing me with information concerning their activities in Central and Eastern Europe. I am familiar with the fact that in the mean time Fundatia Avundipe has left ERGO and will maybe be succeeded by Bairska Svetlina from Bitola and Roma Progress from Rancovce.
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 initiatives to mobilize a particular Romani community; they are also central to the ways in which the network itself operates (Schuringa 2005). Moreover, the very structure of the network enables actors to vary strategically their position in the network in coordination with other more or less autonomous actors or to transform temporarily 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 locally oriented, the local does not bind it. To the contrary, 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 Romani 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 these communities to change from a predominantly context-driven into a context-generative neighborhood in which the Roma start to deal with the construction of their locality practically and discursively.5

Arturo Escobar suggests that this politics of “self-empowerment” could 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 apparatures 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” (2001:169).

5 For an accurate theoretical background of the production of locality, see Appadurai (1996).
Escobar’s understanding of networks avoids the problematic dichotomy between top-down or bottom-up approaches to policy implementation, as well as the questionable dichotomy between civil society and state apparatuses. Moreover, his concept of network enables a consideration of politics of scaling, which is distinct from approaches that start from a reified notion of governmental levels. This does not imply that such reifications do not take place in governmental practices. Rather than presupposing reified levels and agencies, however, this concept of network expresses how identifiable agencies and group identities are produced, performed, and strategically organized on a non-permanent basis and according to specific rationalities of government. It is at the intersection of the scaling effects of networks and strategies aimed at, for instance, Romani community or grassroots development, that two important types of governmental technologies intersect as well, namely technologies of agency and those of performance:

“[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, see also Dean 1999:167-70).

Governmental technologies of agency contain all the different ways to encourage and organize our possibilities of agency. They have an important feature in common: government is supposed to be the use of techniques for the release of forms of capital (e.g. human, social, cultural) that have to be produced in a domain outside of what is generally considered government.

Anna Yeatman (1998) and Barbara Cruikshank (1999) have specified the scope of these technologies of agency within two distinct but interrelated fields. Yeatman points to the relevance of technologies that are based on extra-juridical or quasi-juridical types of contract, which are found, for instance, in the “contracting-out” of public services to private or non-governmental agencies. The contracts between the NGO Romea and Czech schools I introduced in the beginning of this article, for instance, could be considered as examples of the technologies involved. The agreement between the Macedonian Roma organization Fundatia Avundipe, the Roma community of Kriva Palanka, the municipality, and the electricity company is another example of this new contractualism. At a different scale, we may consider the Decade Action Plans initiated within the Roma Decade project as quasi-contracts, insofar as these plans specify, on the one hand, the requirements they impose on a variety of agencies involved, and, on the other, the results
in the fields of education, health care, housing, and employment that have to be achieved by 2015, the end of what we might call the “contract period”.

The technologies of agency also include what Cruikshank (1996, 1999) describes as technologies of citizenship: strategies for the transformation of subjectivity from mere powerlessness to active citizenship. These include the numerous ways of empowerment, of self-esteem, and of negotiation and consultation that are employed in activities such as the combating of dependency, community building, health promotion projects, women’s participation programs, and commemorations or other memorial practices. These technologies of citizenship engage us “as active and free citizens, […] as members of self-managing communities and organizations, as actors in democratizing social movements, and as agents capable of taking control of our own risks” (Dean 1999:168). Through the use of these technologies, agency is brought into being and interlaced with a specific system of purposes. The central approaches of the ERGO network, such as issue solving, self-organization, and “learning by doing”, could be subsumed under these technologies of citizenship. In the case of the Roma, the two kinds of technologies of agency are often combined, most of all in the government of the unemployed. In the example of the Roma of Kriva Palanka and the arbitration of Fundatia Avundipe, the unemployed Roma of the community made an agreement to subject themselves to particular technologies of citizenship, such as free labor offered to the electricity company and counseling by Avundipe and the company to improve self-esteem and to reduce the risk of “wasting energy”. In such cases, the extra-juridical contract acts as a kind of obligatory step: the Roma have to agree to a variety of training procedures invented to empower them, increase their self-esteem, and improve their changes to enter the labor market ultimately.

However, the governmental technologies in question are not only those of agency. As Haahr puts forward:

The practices of government “also set norms, standards, benchmarks, performance indicators, quality controls and best practice standards, to monitor, measure and render calculable the performance of [the] various individuals and agencies. Thus the concept of a ‘free subject’ has […] taken on the meaning of a potential technical instrument in the achievement of governmental purposes and objectives, of being an entity, which can be constructed and shaped by governmental practices” (2004: 216).

Taken together, governmental technologies of performance are those that indirectly and in a certain sense at a distance aim at regulation and quantitatively or qualitatively effective performance. These are the numerous technologies devised to subject important domains of, for instance, medical, educational, psychological or social expertise to new
formal regimes in which professionals are transformed into “calculating individuals” within “calculable spaces” (Miller 1992, Rose & Miller 1992). The privatization of services that used to be public, the decentralization of budgets and their supply, the launch of commercial and semi-commercial service providers, the setting of benchmarks and performance indicators, and the tools to compare best practice could all be considered illustrations of techniques to include the shaping of conduct into the optimization of performance. In the previous section, I already referred to the ways in which the Roma Decade project is both committed to and complicit in these governmental technologies of performance. We can perceive of the same tendency in the UNDP’s so-called *human development* approach, which seeks “to assess development levels of groups or communities according to a broad set of criteria. With the ultimate goal of expanding people’s choices, human development looks at indices of life expectancy, education and per-capita income, which provide a broader perspective on the options available to groups such as the Roma” (UNDP 2002:1). In the conclusion of this UNDP report, the authors point to the relevance and necessity of performance: “Whenever possible, standardized assessment systems for evaluating the impact of Roma projects in the field, with internally consistent, measurable benchmarks and indicators, should be introduced” (2002:85).

The discussion of governmental technologies of agency and performance allows me to analyze the ways in which they intersect in network structures. Roughly, we can distinguish two kinds of intersections. First, by using technologies of agency, actors in a network can try to establish institutional spaces as self-managing local centers (Dean 1999:169). Here, we may think of decentralized governmental departments or offices, private or privatized service providers, and NGOs of different kinds. With regard to the Roma, we can distinguish many of these kinds of self-managing local centers. Apart from the hundreds of NGOs that deal with Romani issues in Europe, we need to mention in

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6 When Gabriela Hrabaňová, one of the Romani representatives of the Roma Decade project in the Czech Republic, introduced this project to the audience at a seminar in Prague, she spoke exclusively in the language of benchmarks and performance indicators (International seminar *Minority Policy in the Member States of the EU 25 regarding the Roma and Sinti Minority*, Prague, May 14 2005).

7 The UNDP has also introduced so-called *Roma Human Development Indices* as one of their governmental technologies of performance. These Roma HDIs are introduced in the following, rather dubious way: “The material deprivation experienced by Roma and their limited development opportunities can be measured by computing human development indices (HDIs) for Roma populations. Due to data inconsistencies [...] the standard methodology cannot be applied directly. Initial attempts have been made to estimate HDIs for Roma living in Romania. These are crude estimates, but they are consistent with other sources of information and case studies” (UNDP 2002:17). Put differently, despite data inconsistencies, the deprivation and reduced opportunities of Roma could still be “computed” in the form of performance indicators that would be in line with other sources of information and case studies (which are not mentioned in the report). This is a classic example of a circular argument.
particular the Romani community centers that have become such a central institution in the post-1989 condition of Romani minorities. We may also think of the Hungarian Romani minority self-governments, which are a result of the Hungarian Minorities Law of 1993, but which have simultaneously become the subject of many extra-juridical contracts between various kinds of actors.\(^8\)

On the other hand, technologies of performance establish these local centers as self-regulating and accountable units for the regulation of services and the management of cultural, social, human, and economic capital. In the UNDP report on the Roma mentioned above, we read that “donors should invest more into investigating the background of NGOs, as well as monitoring their activities. Developing ‘who’s who’ profiles of potential partners and exchanging information would help increase transparency and accountability, and reduce opportunities for corruption in the third sector” (UNDP 2002:85). A recent report of the World Bank on the Roma illustrates in a single sentence this kind of intersection of technologies of agency and performance: “Responsibility for policy development on Roma issues, coordination, and implementation has been distributed among a number of government bodies, leading to challenges in transparency, accountability, and coordination” (World Bank 2005:152).

The second type of intersection of technologies of agency and performance concerns the ways in which different kinds of rights of citizens as critical consumers and users regulate the internal management of companies, bureaucracies, governmental offices, and other kinds of service providers. The agency of citizens or groups of citizens can enter into contestation with professional knowledge and practice. The numerous ways in which the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and a variety of Roma press agencies monitor professional divisions, illustrate how the national government, including the police and employment offices, as well as companies, shopkeepers, and international agencies are critically interrogated in their turn as well. In no way I want to overestimate the impact of these developments, but I believe it is time to suggest that the rights of Roma have increasingly also become contributory criteria for the evaluation of the performance of professionals and, furthermore, have provided ways in which different kinds

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8 Studies on the Hungarian Romani minority self-government system often focus on its legal aspects and side effects as well as on the state-minority relation (Danka & Pallai 2003), while it could be productive to look at it more extensively from the perspective of the extra-juridical (semi-contractual) bonds the Roma in question have with all kinds of different social and cultural agencies (Pallai 2003 goes into this direction). Yet, as Kovats has convincingly illustrated in the context of the Hungarian minority self-government system, we need to be on the alert to the ways in which initiatives of Romani self-management and self-government could also go together with a serious loss of effective mechanisms of accountability (see Kovats 2001b:343, 2001c:17-20).
of authorities can be open to a source of policy innovation and important information about changes among the Romani minorities.

As Appadurai (2002) has shown in the context of the Indian metropolis Mumbai, new forms of self-organization by marginalized groups 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 and may lead to policy changes as well. Once organizations can set a precedent – for instance by legally registering in land registers – other communities might also mobilize themselves 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 Association Integro, the Bulgarian Romani partner in the ERGO network. In this particular case, and perhaps more generally, we may 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 of research and development space within which poor communities, activists, and bureaucrats can explore new designs for partnership” (Appadurai 2002:34).

Concluding Remarks

The emergence of transnational Romani networks is itself embedded in a field of different and opposing forces, of which some are effectively centrifugal and others dramatically implosive. This could be illustrated by the protests in Eastern Slovakia in February 2004. The curtailing of social benefits by the Slovakian government mobilized the poor, among whom were many members of Romani communities, in a manner that was both spontaneous and intentional. After the effective ethnic framing of the protests 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 monitor intensively Romani communities and settlements in the eastern part of the country (Magdolenová 2004). In the course of 2004, many Romani families who could not pay their rents due to cuts in their social benefits were evicted from their apartments and moved into so-called substandard housing or even worse – a practice in-
creasingly popular among Czech municipalities as well (ERRC 2004, Višek 2003). In this context, we are clearly beyond discussing whether we are dealing with the self-regulation or self-mobilization of the Roma or with their brutal repression. Roma policy here has become the equivalent of policing the Roma.

Yet even in this 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 Romani communities to so-called counterframing to rebut stereotypical representations (Benford & Snow 2000), to legal defense strategies, and to the formation of alliances with other involved partners. Not only does this agency operate on a local and regional basis, it also participates in Rrommedia, a transnational Romani media network of about twenty members, which was established in 2004 in 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 formulated their own code of conduct (Rrommedia 2004). Comparable initiatives to collaborate transnationally in the field of Romani cultural organizations have been undertaken, for instance, to challenge mainstream representations of the Roma's history and to actively construct their own historical conceptualizations (van Baar forthcoming).

Consequently, we have to admit that the governmental interferences in Slovakia in the winter of 2004 do not appear in a vacuum or exclusively in a field of disciplinary technologies. As Foucault has suggested himself, “in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-governmentality, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security” (1991:102). In other words, even while the Roma are often faced with repressive measures, we still need to try to unravel the relation of these measures to the post-1989 condition of European governmentality. Therefore, to address the case of the European Roma, we may need to focus on the relevance of the second part of Foucault’s claim. To what extent can we consider Romani minorities as “targeted populations” involved in governmental technologies that aim at security? In this paper, I have problematized the prevailing approach to this question in terms of state/civil society or top-down/bottom-up polarizations. I have argued that we have to look at governmental rationalities and technologies differently and in the context of emerging networks. Issues such as those of “security” and “targeted populations” need to be approached from another angle. Dean has clearly formulated these issues:

“Today the appeal for freedom is made because security depends on the constitution of individuals, professionals, communities, organizations and institutions as sites for
the exercise of a ‘responsible autonomy’ that can be indirectly regulated by the technologies of performance. In this sense one might say that freedom, agency and choice become artifacts of particular governmental practices’ (1999:196).

Following this line of reasoning, the Roma have become a “targeted population” in the sense that they have to be empowered and have to empower themselves in partnerships with NGOs, governmental offices and bureaucracies, activists, international organizations, and other kinds of service providers in order to become self-managing citizens capable of taking control of their own risks. In this specific context, Romani community or grassroots development means that, by strategically deploying technologies of agency in partnership with the different types of agencies and specialists, groups of Roma are encouraged to manage, mobilize, and secure their own communities. One of my questions is how the vocabularies of security and risk appear implicitly or explicitly in relation to the situation of the Roma minorities and the dominant discourses of development and integration in Europe. Again, the UNDP report on the Roma can serve as an illustration. The word risk is omnipresent. In relation to the Roma the report speaks of poverty risks, (money) lending risks, undernourishment risks, HIV/AIDS risks, starvation risks, malnutrition risks, health risks in general, and high-risk behaviors (see also UNDP 2006). Moreover, it explicitly relates these risks to the inclusion of the Roma in mainstream Central and Eastern European societies:

“The risk is that, if [the productive integration of the Roma into their home societies via employment, education and political participation is] postponed, the cost of finding solutions for marginalized groups will be immeasurably higher and will have few chances of success. The human security costs of exclusion will spiral, potentially resulting in political extremism and setbacks for the democratic process” (UNDP 2002:5, emphasis added).

Yet we need to interrogate critically the discourse of communities and partnerships, in particular when the community scale and related technologies of community (community centers, community workers, and the like) imply new ways to marginalize groups of Roma (for a general critique of the community concept, see Rose 1999:167-96; for a critical reflection on the community concept in the context of the Roma, see Hirt 2004, see also below). Similarly, we need to analyze the scope and use of the notion of partnership. Wendy Larner and Maria Butler have observed a “shift from partnerships as localized initiatives emerging out of activities of a group of like-minded organizations and/or individuals, to partnerships working as a ‘mandatory tool’ in the broader social sector” (2004:10). In the context of European governmentalities and the ways in which they affect Romani issues in Central and Eastern Europe, we can also notice a tendency to consider the building of partnerships as a more or less mandatory tool to deal with Romani minorities (as for the EU’s rhetoric of partnerships and civil society, see EC 2000, 2001).
Here, risk clearly does not appear as a naturally occurring entity; it is, rather, considered a form of calculation about reality. As modern political theorists (Beck 1992, Ewald 1991, O’Malley 1996) have argued, risk is a form of modern rationality, a way of representing and thinking about issues and events in terms of their calculability, even when they cannot really be calculated in the mainstream understanding of that term.

On the basis of my analysis of technologies of agency and performance, I believe we have to interrogate critically the appearance of risk in relation to the development of Roma-specific governmental techniques, such as the World Bank and OSI’s Roma Decade benchmarks and the UNDP’s Roma Human Development Indices (see note 7). While these international organizations construct local Romani community centers as the crucial intersections of technologies of agency and performance, their politics of scaling tends to render Romani communities responsible for their own development. Both the production of the community scale as a central territorial level of Roma-related government and the requested transparent and accountable performance of the local Romani centers often make these organizations sidestep the question whether these centers are by any means equipped with the necessary representational and developmental tools.

Almost a decade ago, when Nicolae Gheorghe and Andrzej Mirga wrote that “[t]he Romani community itself needs new ideas to govern and mobilize itself,” they concluded that the “Roma must […] take the risk [to be changed by their integration into mainstream society] if they are to overcome their present marginalization and underdevelopment” (1997:22). Now perhaps we should put it the other way around and ask what the self-governing and risk-taking of the Romani minorities could imply under the conditions of the current European governmentality.
References


