

Trajectories of Romani Migrations and Mobilities in Europe and Beyond (1945–present)

Veranstalter: Prague Forum for Romani Histories, Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague; Seminar on Romani Studies, Department of Central European Studies, Charles University Prague; Faculty of Social Sciences and Economics at University of Valle; Columbia United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Jack; Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies; CEFRES Prague

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The conference has brought together scholars from across a variety of disciplines, who presented empirically grounded accounts of the multiple dimensions of Romani mobilities since 1945 and analyzed connections between forms of past mobilities and migrations and the most recent movements of various Romani groupings. Besides responding to a lack of reflection in the emerging field of Romani migration and mobilities studies on historical continuities and social trajectories, the organizers Helena Sadílková and Jan Grill identified the conference rationale in going beyond the trope of „nomadism“ still dominant in research concerning Roma, and in bridging the rupture caused by studies either ending or beginning with World War II. Panels have initiated discussion by mixing more historically and more contemporarily focused papers.¹

In the first panel *Displacement, Survival, and Migration in the Aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust: Romani Trajectories in the Arolsen Archives*, ELIZABETH ANTHONY (Washington D.C.) presented the records of the International Tracing Service (ITS) Digital Archive and their use for scholarly research on Romani victims of the Holocaust. The ITS that holds over two hundred million digital images related to a majority of non-Jewish victims has been opened to researchers since 2007 and is accessible in eight different locations. ARI JOSKOWICZ (Nashville, Tennessee) talked about how to re-

search Romani mobilities in the ITS archives that unites three bureaucracies: documents dealing with prisoners during National Socialism, the paperwork of international organizations dealing with postwar claimants, and finally the paperwork of an international NGO that certifies claims and aids victims' relatives based on the former two collections. The ensuing discussion led by Kateřina Čapková (Prague) and with the participation of Jo-Ellyn Decker (Washington D.C.) focused on methodological and ethical problems and concerns raised by an open access to the archives, namely, that the use of derogatory terminology, such as „Zigeuner“ or „Asoziale“ that appear in the sources reproduce prejudices, that the classification and categorization used in the archives need to be questioned, and that victim interviews cannot be read without taking into account the process of negotiation. Finally, the issue of privacy was a central concern that affects especially Romani victims and relatives, since, as Joskowicz has pointed out, unlike most of the surviving Jewish population, Roma have remained after World War II in the region where they had been persecuted.

Panel 2, *Manipulation of „Gypsy Nomadism“ in Post-War Europe*, looked at state-defined constructions of „nomadism“ in post-1945 Eastern and Western Europe. HUUB VAN BAAR (Amsterdam) analyzed the ambiguity in Western European histories of protecting nomadic cultures that materialized in irregularizing the citizenship of Roma. Going beyond the dilemma of how to protect no-

¹ The conference was followed by the Family History Workshop: Tracing the Fate of Individuals in the USHMM Archives – an event organized for family members of Romani Holocaust survivors to assist them in seeking information and documentation in the Roma-related records of the Arolsen Archives and holdings of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This program was co-organized by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Prague Forum for Romani Histories at the Czech Academy of Sciences, and the Seminar on Romani Studies in the Department of Central European Studies at Charles University in Prague. It has been made possible especially by the generosity of Corinne P. and Maurice R. Greenberg and the Starr Foundation to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, NYU in Prague, and the Isabel & Alfred Bader Fund of Bader Philanthropies, Inc., Milwaukee, Wisconsin. For more information, please visit ushmm.org/events/romani-migrations-nyu.

madic lifestyles while encouraging sedentarization, van Baar pointed to practices of governance (in the Foucauldian sense) through mobility and viapolitics as ways that have prevented settlement by encouraging nomadization. STEFÁNIA TOMA and LÁSZLÓ FOSZTÓ (Cluj-Napoca) showed how constructions of the mobilities of Roma in state socialist and post-socialist Romania served as a resource as well as an obstacle for their social integration. Categories moved from „nomadism“ to „social parasitism“ between the 1950s and the 1970s. In the 1990s, depictions entailed ethnicized conflicts between Roma and non-Roma, and finally, after the global economic crisis, Roma were pictured as migrants invading the country. Through two case studies from the 1990s Czech Republic, FILIP POSPÍŠIL (New York City) discussed how policies applied by local level actors in interaction with larger structural changes leading to the impoverishment of certain parts of the Romani population caused and governed the intrastate mobility of Roma. These have led to different mechanisms of segregation, including among others surveillance, discipline, omission, containment, and displacement. As Ari Joskowicz pointed out, the panel highlighted the role of regulation (regulating mobility and through mobility), shifting expectations of the desirability and undesirability of movement, and processes that created the intrastate mobility of sedentary populations.

Panel 3, *Negotiating Intrastate Policies during Socialism*, comprised three historically and analytically rich papers on how governmentalities in the state socialist period affected Roma and how Roma have reacted. In her case study from a Southern Romanian city's Romani community, ANA CHIRI-TOIU (Budapest) deconstructed the term „nomadism“ based on the responses of her interlocutors to this label. She showed that „circulation“ was a more accurate term to describe Romani mobilities than the ideologically-loaded notion of „nomadism,“ and that Roma celebrated their navigation of adverse circumstances throughout different political regimes, including those that defined them to be „nomads,“ as a proof of their „capability.“ MARKÉTA HAJSKÁ (Prague) discussed how

local Vlach Romani families from Žatec and Louny, who were forced to settle by law in 1958, viewed the assimilation policies of 1950s Czechoslovakia. She highlighted that in contrast to official reports families and descendants remembered the implementation of the law as violent and non-peaceful. JAN ORT (Prague), focusing on the controlled dispersal and transfer of Roma in mid-1960s Czechoslovakia through a case study of the Humenné district, argued for a complex interpretation of state efforts towards the „solution to the Gypsy question“ from the perspective of local developments in which there is place for narratives that perceived socialist policies as a chance for the social mobility of and a better housing for Roma. Implementation and eventual failure of the policy depended on the practices and interests as well as the relationship between actors at different state levels and locals, including Roma. One of the central questions that emerged in this panel, as László Fosztó pointed out in his comments, was what analytical structures there were to account for resistance without giving too much weight either to narratives of suffering or to narratives about „outsmarting“ the state.

Panel 4, *Challenging Borders and Closed Concepts*, continued this discussion with three papers addressing activism and organized action on behalf of communities and physical mobility as forms of resistance, opposition, negotiation and agency. LICIA PORCEDDA (Paris) presented the case of two Croatian Romani women forced to live in confinement because of racialized anti-Gypsy regulations under fascist Italian rule, who petitioned authorities and escaped from arrest. SABRINA STEINDL-KOPF and SANDRA ÜLLEN (Vienna) talked about the interconnectedness of activism and migratory experience among migrant Romani women in Vienna. They described the specific situation of women who have used activism as a way towards their personal empowerment too. DUŠAN SLAČKA (Brno) reflected on the work of the Czech and Slovakian Union of Gypsies/Roma and the territorial movement of community members in the Moravian-Slovak borderlands in the districts of Hodonín and Senica as negotiating the changing political and administrative con-

texts and limitations of movement imposed on Roma in 1970s Czechoslovakia. ESZTER VARSA (Regensburg) in her comments to the panel emphasized the connection of gendered forms of discrimination and exclusion with both the othering and racial discrimination of „Gypsies“ and the (re)negotiations of (stigmatized) „Gypsiness.“

The closing event of the second conference day was a forum inviting conference participants to critically interrogate analytical categories in terms of both pitfalls and promising tendencies in the emerging field of migration and mobility studies, and to reflect on the multi-layered concept of „trajectories“ with regard to the necessity of historicizing migration and mobilities. Four introductory remarks opened the discussion. MARTIN FOTTA (Frankfurt am Main) argued for the inclusion of the Atlantic space in talking about Romani migration. Not only because Roma were present in Central America before they had reached certain parts of Europe but because this location would enable a comparative perspective on Roma in relation to other racialized groups. YASAR ABU GHOSH (Prague) raised much controversy with his suggestion to search for a modern nomadological concept to describe what based on his anthropological research he saw as the readiness of Roma to move. Helena Sadílková engaged with Abu Ghosh's analytical framework by warning about the danger of reproducing the trope of nomadism and moving as related to Roma only. She pointed out that strong feelings of belonging to communities and places as well as the leaning on and use of established structures and institutions also characterized the experiences of Roma. Jan Grill argued for the necessity of a historical, transnational and intersectional perspective in combination with thinking through borders to analyze ruptures and connections in both geographical and social mobility. He drew attention to „migrating racialization“, a concept he uses to describe the circulation and reproduction of knowledge, and the continuing trajectories and adjustments of classificatory matrixes concerning Roma in transnational fields and states. The lively and engaged discussion among participants highlighted among others the need for local case studies with historical

depth and more comparative research in order to be able to test concepts and de-exoticize Romani mobility.

The last conference panel, *Beyond the Binary of Nomadism and Settlement*, dealt with contemporary migration and mobilities. In their case study of Romani migrants from Poland to the UK that examines how Romani migrants perceived mobility discourses and constraints, and how they adapted their migration strategies to this situation, KAMILA FIAŁKOWSKA, MICHAŁ P. GARAPICH and ELŻBIETA MIRGA-WÓJTOWICZ (Warsaw) argued that migrating as an extended family group is mutually produced by mobility regimes and strong moral obligations stemming from kinship ties. Interestingly, Roma perceive political changes such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall or the EU enlargement as links in the long chain of the persecution and problematization of their mobility. JUDIT DURST (London) and ZSANNA NYÍRÓ (Budapest) discussed the entanglement of geographic and social mobility in their paper on the role of kinship in migration among (trans)nationally mobile Roma factory workers from rural Hungary. They found that the use of family kinship as a resource in migration facilitating transnational movement distinguished the migration of local Roma from the migration pattern of non-Roma, and referred to „recurring mobility“ to describe the intermittent movement of Roma that always entailed periods of stasis. With continued focus on the alarming economic and social inequalities in EU countries, DANIEL ŠKOBLA (Bratislava), in a paper produced together with MARIO RODRIGUEZ POLO (Olomouc), presented the cyclical migration of impoverished Roma from Southern Slovakia to Austria as a way to retain control over their economic situation and resist oppression and discrimination. Huub van Baar, in discussing the papers, pointed out that the presentations showed how Roma circumvented, challenged and contested unequal power relationships through mobility as well as the price they paid for it, such as hiding their Romani identity, or the creation of new ethnic boundaries.

The conference provided an important step towards and pointed to the need for more

comparative, intersectional and historically rooted research in order to avoid both the exoticization and the marginalization of Romani migration and mobilities.

Conference overview:

Opening address

Helena Sadílková (Charles University, Prague) and Jan Grill (University of Valle and Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences): Introducing Trajectories of Romani Mobilities

*Panel 1. Displacement, Survival, and Migration in the Aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust: Romani Trajectories in the Arolsen Archives*²

Chair: Jo-Ellyn Decker (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.)

Elizabeth Anthony (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.): Using the Records of the International Tracing Service Digital Archive for Scholarly Research on Roma Victims of the Nazis

Ari Joskowicz (Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee): Romani Refugees between National and International Migration Regimes (1945-1960)

Discussant: Kateřina Čapková (Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences)

Panel 2. Manipulation of „Gypsy Nomadism“ in Post-War Europe

Chair: Yasar Abu Ghosh (Charles University, Prague)

Huub van Baar (Amsterdam Centre for Globalisation Studies, University of Amsterdam): The Ambiguous Politics of Protection in Post-War Europe: Irregularizing Citizenship of Roma through Mobile Governmentalities

Stefánia Toma and László Foszto (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities in Cluj-Napoca): The Mobility of the Roma as Resource and/or Obstacle for Social Integration in Romania

Filip Pospíšil (City University of New York): Nomads from the Neighboring Village – The

Intrastate Mobility of the Unwanted

Discussant: Ari Joskowicz

Panel 3. Negotiating Intrastate Policies during Socialism

Chair: Helena Sadílková

Ana Chiritoiu (Central European University, Budapest): „Capable“, „Free“, and „Universal“: The Circulation of Roma Between Idioms of Resistance and Difference. A Case Study from Southern Romania

Markéta Hajská (Seminar for Romani Studies, Charles University, Prague): The Assimilation Policies of 1950s Czechoslovakia Towards Itinerant Groups as Viewed by Romani Witnesses: The Case of Žatec and Louny

Jan Ort (Seminar for Romani Studies, Charles University, Prague): The Policy of „Controlled Dispersal“ of the Roma in the 1960s in the Former Czechoslovakia. A Case Study of Humenné District

Discussant: László Foszto

Panel 4. Challenging Borders and Closed Concepts

Chair: Ilse About (National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris)

Licia Porcedda (École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris): The Trajectory of Croatian Roma in 1940s and 1950s Italy. Citizenship, Social Control and Inclusion through the History of Rosa Raidich

Sabrina Steindl-Kopf and Sandra Üllen (Institute of Modern and Contemporary History, Austrian Academy of Sciences): Intersections of Participatory Action and Migration Biographies of Romani Migrants in Vienna

Dušan Slačka (Museum of Romani Culture, Brno): Effects of Political and Administrative Situation on Territorial Movement and Life of the Roma in Moravian-Slovak Borderlands – Example of Districts of Hodonín and Senica till 1970s

² This panel has been made possible by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Discussant: Eszter Varsa (Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies, Regensburg)

Discussion/Forum: Interrogating Analytical Categories: On Pitfalls and Hopefulness in the Emerging Research Field (Mobilities, Migrations, Trajectories and beyond)

Introductory remarks by: Jan Grill, Yasar Abu Ghosh, Helena Sadílková, Martin Fotta (Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main)

Panel 5. Beyond the Binary of Nomadism and Settlement

Chair: Jan Grill

Kamila Fiałkowska, Michał P. Garapich, Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz (Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw): Migration Regimes, Kinship and Ethnic Boundaries Impact on Migration Strategies and Practices: Case Study of Roma Migrants from Poland to the UK

Judit Durst (University College London), Zsanna Nyíró (Corvinus University of Budapest): Interrupted Continuity: The Role of Kinship in Migration among (Trans)nationally Mobile Roma Factory Workers from Rural Hungary at the Global Assembly Line

Daniel Škobla (Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences) and Mario Rodríguez Polo (Palacký University, Olomouc): Escaping Ethnic Traps. Cyclical Migration from Slovakia to Austria as a Way to Escape Poverty and Oppression

Discussant: Huub van Baar

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