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The Centripetal Dimension of the EU's External Border Regime

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Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, all over the world borders and border regimes seems to have proliferated, rather than diminished, even though in significantly different ways than before the collapse of communism. In the previous issue of *Etnofoor*, several scholars compellingly reflected upon contemporary practices and mechanisms of bordering around the globe, as well as on how persons as diverse as 'migrants', 'citizens', border guards, and traffickers have experienced, challenged, or economically mobilized novel and restructured border regimes. One of the key themes that many of these scholars have underscored, is the blurring of the social, material, and symbolic dimensions of borders and processes of difference-making more generally (see, most notably, the contributions of Holzlehner 2014; Komarova 2014; Konopinski 2014; and Wagner 2014). Another recurring

topic relates to the limited use value of the binary opposition between 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'. Patrick Hönig (2014), for instance, has emphasized that irregularized migrants in the European Union (EU) are currently confronted with a layered system of borders and boundaries that filters them on the basis of political and economic requirements. Similarly, though at a different level of abstraction, Natalie Konopinski has elucidated how mechanisms and practices of bordering include a temporal dimension, due to the fact that border-crossing often implies not so much a crossing of a physical line, as a series of interrupted passages through a securitized network of checkpoints.

I will bring these topics in dialogue with a hitherto under-researched aspect of the EU's external border regime, which I call its 'centripetal dimension', that is, the effect that this regime has on 'intra-EU' processes of

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bordering Europe and its populations. I will clarify this dimension by focusing on the position of Europe's Roma minorities. Since the fall of the 'old' iron curtain, they have been confronted not only with new physical walls – such as those built to separate them from others in Central and Eastern Europe – but also with new social, material, and symbolic 'screens' that tend to include them as 'Europeans' only under ambiguous conditions.

It has been a while ago when the large-scale expulsion of Roma from France caused indignation and incredulity. In 2010, these deportations led to a heated public debate in many European political, intellectual, and media circles (van Baar 2011b; Parker 2012). At this moment in time, not many seem to be interested any longer in the still on going, largely 'normalized' French practices of deporting Romanian and Bulgarian EU citizens with a Roma background. It seems that a practice that silently began in 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria entered the EU, and that caused much tumult in 2010, when Sarkozy explicitly politicized the position of Roma migrants, has stopped to bother mainstream European citizens – if it has ever bothered the mainstream.

Yet, these on-going practices of expulsion are some of the most blatant manifestations of the unequal treatment of citizens in contemporary Europe (van Baar 2014a). Therefore, and because of its complex, non-linear relationship with Europe's colonial and genocidal pasts, these practices should continue to bother all of us. More generally, the position of Roma minorities in contemporary Europe tells much about the ways in which we ambiguously demarcate Europe and, consequently, about how much we should bother scholarly

and ethically about newly emerged mechanisms of bordering Europe.

One of the canonized stories about the EU is that, with the introduction of the Schengen Treaty in 1985 and its incorporation in the EU system in the 1990s, the EU has internally become 'borderless'. Accordingly, the EU has been rhetorically re-conceptualized as an easily traversable space and EU citizenship been based on the paradigm of freedom of movement. Critical scholarship of the EU and its migration and border policies has contested this story and conception and shown that the 'traditional' relationship between internal and external security of the EU has been reshaped substantially since the early 1990s and led to, among other phenomena, the proliferation of new, yet ambivalent, mechanisms and practices of bordering Europe. Mutually reinforcing processes of Europeanizing migration and border policies have gone together with the securitization and intensified management of migration and borders in and beyond the EU and, at the same time, with ever new human practices of border-crossing, border-shifting, and the contestation of borders and boundaries.

Several migration and border scholars have convincingly argued that the Europeanization and securitization of migration and border policies in Europe have led to practices and techniques of population management that have constituted a questionable divide between EU and non-EU groups (Huysmans 2006; Vaughan-Williams 2009), as well as between different non-EU populations (Bigo 2008; van Houtum 2010). Usually, these scholars have focused on how these developments have ambiguously impacted on the physical, legal, symbolic, and bio-political regulation of populations within the increasingly 'exteriorialized'

EU's external border regime. What these scholars have described as, for instance, the 'offshoring' or 'export' of the EU's border regime to, most notably, northern and sub-Saharan Africa, involves an examination of 'the movement of the border to the exterior' (Kasperek 2010: 128) and, thus, of what could be considered as the 'centrifugal' impact of the EU's border regime.

Much less frequently, though, scholars have reflected upon what I call the 'centripetal' impact of the EU's border regime. Indeed, the discussed securitizing processes and transnational governmentalities have also impacted on the largely under-researched, 'intra-EU' divide regarding irregularized EU citizens, such as Europe's Muslim and Roma minorities. Consequently, these minoritized, religionized and ethnicized groups have been faced with, for instance, having the adequate exercising of their citizenship – including their right to free movement in the EU – impeded. Let me limit myself, for the sake of space – but certainly not for that of the argument and need for comparative research – to the position of the Roma. Examples such as the present-day deportation of Roma from France show that, despite the institutionalized promise of their 'integration' and European citizenship, they are dealt with differently to other EU citizens.

This trend represents a tangible paradox related to what, elsewhere, I have discussed as 'the Europeanization of the representation of the Roma' (van Baar 2011a). The Europeanization of Roma representation refers to the post-1989 tendency to represent the Roma as a 'European minority' and to devise for and (sometimes) with them Europe-wide programs meant for their integration, human development, and empowerment. This Europeanization marks a new phase in

Europe's history. During the Enlightenment, nineteenth and early-twentieth century processes of nation state formation, and under Nazism and communism, the Roma were frequently considered as non-European, foreign, alien, and barriers to 'progress' and 'civilization' in Europe. However, since '1989', European institutions and NGO's, alongside state agencies, Romani activist networks, and various media have increasingly represented them as a *European* minority. This development represents a unique case, as no other minority has become the target of such wide-ranging processes, discourses, and mechanisms of Europeanization, nor of the involved large-scale inclusion programs.

On the one hand, the Europeanization of Roma representation implies, thus, a shift from considering them as the externalized and orientalist outsiders against which Europe defines itself to representing them as the internalized outsiders to be integrated as 'true Europeans'. On the other hand, however, this shift does not represent a decisive, but a highly ambivalent turn toward considering the Roma as 'true Europeans'. Current practices, such as the expulsion of Roma from France and Italy, show that they often still end up in the symbolic or terminological cloud of 'non-Europeans' or 'third country nationals' – despite their Romanian and Bulgarian and, consequently, EU citizenship. These contested categories of administrative action are currently 'serving as organizing principles at the borders and boundaries of the new ... Europe' and 'have come to shape core understandings of "Europe"' (Stewart 2012: 18) which, once again in Europe's history, tend to exclude the Roma, though, at the current moment in time, through a political system that propagates their inclusion.

Yet, the impact of the Europeanization of migration and border policies runs deeper, for it affects not only migrating Roma. This impact becomes clearer when we look at changing border practices in the EU. The removal of the EU's internal national borders has not gone together with the disappearance of intra-EU borders. Instead, it has been argued, the removal of these borders has been accompanied by their relocating and proliferation along the lines of alternative processes, sites, and technologies of population management in which particularly networks of security experts – the police, the gendarmerie, anti-terror units, migration officials, Europol, Frontex personnel, et cetera – are playing a prominent role (Bigo 2008). The parallel Europeanization and securitization of borders has gone together with a shift of focus from classic borderlines and correlated practices of controlling border crossings to border zones and newly emerged practices of controlling particularly 'suspicious' population groups who are often framed along the racializing lines of their ethnic, national, and religious background.

Sites that are traditionally considered as 'dangers' to the state project, such as ghettos, *banlieues*, and poor neighbourhoods, have increasingly been affected by the transnationalized securitization of borders (Fassin 2013). As Arjun Appadurai (1996: 190–91) has argued, 'for the project of the nation-state, neighbourhoods represent a perennial source of entropy and slippage; they need to be policed almost as thoroughly as borders.' I want to take this comparison a step further, to relate it to the European project, and to suggest that poor and 'coloured' neighbourhoods have become border zones and crucial sites at which contemporary forms of population regulation, including harsh and 'intelligent',

'stealthy' forms of policing, are ambiguously articulated (see van Baar 2014b).

The blurring of the boundaries between internal and external security and the de-territorialisation of border control have resulted in a situation in which mechanisms developed to guarantee the state's and, by extension, the EU's sovereignty and external security have also been mobilized to deal with domestic minorities such as the Roma. One example is related to Frontex, the EU's external borders agency. Frontex operates not only at what is commonly understood as the EU's external borders, or far away from them – at the EU's 'offshored' borders in Africa. Frontex also operates in the EU's interior, for instance to assist German authorities with their on going policies of 'repatriating' Kosovo Roma who asked for asylum in Germany during the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Another example is the mobilization of 'anti-terror' and 'emergency' measures and discourses to deal with the situation of Roma in countries as diverse as Italy, Slovakia, Lithuania, and – most recently – France. The legal or rhetorical declaration of the state of emergency to deal with Roma has been used to articulate crisis and warlike narratives and practices. A 2008 newsletter of the trade union of the Hungarian police, for instance, described Hungary as a 'crumbling country, torn apart by Hungarian-Gypsy civil war.'¹ And when, in 2004, Slovak Roma began to protest against austerity measures affecting their social benefits, the Slovak government, for the first time since the fall of communism, mobilized the army to 'monitor Roma settlements' and 'restore public order' (van Baar 2012). Last but not least, on 28 October 2014, the French Senate adopted a controversial anti-terror law in which 'terror'

has also been defined to ban EU nationals from entering France if their presence 'causes a serious threat to a fundamental interest of society, in terms of public order or security, because of their personal behaviour.'² Human rights organizations have protested against this law for it would primarily be mobilized to legitimize the banning of Roma.

A final example is related to the Europol taskforce on so-called 'itinerant criminal groups.' In 2012, the EU requested its members to 'make more systemic use of the Europol Information System' in what the EU calls 'the fight against itinerant criminal groups' (Council of the European Union 2012: 4). Though Europol does not give a clear definition of who exactly these groups are, a recent communication on the EU's internal security states: 'Bulgarian and Romanian (mostly of *Roma* ethnicity) ... are probably the most threatening to society as a whole. *Roma* organised crime groups are extremely mobile, making the most of their historically itinerant nature' (Council of the European Union 2011: 14). It is alarming that the Roma ethnic background is mentioned and not only because the reference to ethnicity violates the EU's own human rights principles. What is equally startling is that their background is fully de-historicized by dint of the phrase that they would make 'the most of their historically itinerant nature.' This example also illustrates that the relocated border can start wherever threat is perceived. It can begin, for instance, where migrants or minorities end up in 'suspicious' zones or ghettos and where, consequently, 'the fight against itinerant criminal groups' has questionably started to overlap with 'targeting Roma.'³

In contemporary Europe, migration and poverty – and their problematic development along the lines of

ethnicity – have become inextricably connected with securitizing practices. As the contributors to Etnofoor's previous special issue on borders have compellingly demonstrated, the enactment of material and political borders cannot easily be distinguished from that of symbolic, social, and ethnicized boundaries (see also Fassin 2011). Patrick Hönig (2014: 141) rightly remarks that, in the EU, 'the unauthorised migrant is confronted with a layered system of borders and boundaries.' Yet, in particular now that European citizenship tends to be increasingly 'stripped of any social and progressive meaning' (Mezzadra 2014: 132), we need to reflect on how this 'layered system' affects human subjects beyond the contested binaries of authorized and unauthorized, regular and irregular, EU and non-EU migrants. Sandro Mezzadra (2014: 124) has touched the sore spot when he emphasizes the importance of not isolating the struggles and movements of the undocumented or unauthorized from 'other conflicts involving "legal migrants" and even autochthonous populations in order not to replicate the language and taxonomies of migration policies and governance.'

In line with scholarship which is critical of the narratives of 'inclusion' versus 'exclusion', we need to challenge the 'idea of a clear-cut distinction between inside and outside' (Mezzadra 2014: 130) and to analyse the troublesome conditions under which the incorporation of humans in the socioeconomic, political, and cultural fabric of the EU has become the equivalent of the production and preservation of a substantial number of highly precarious lives. The case of the Roma shows that their 'differential inclusion' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012), most problematically through the

maintenance of their state of deportability, has resulted into a situation in which hard physical borders and reified ethnicized boundaries have exhaustively merged.

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Notes

- 1 English translation quoted in Rorke (2009: 11).
- 2 *The Local*, 23 October, 2014.
- 3 *Statewatch Online*, <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2012/mar/08itinerant-crime.htm>.

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