

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Wemyss, Georgie and Cassidy, Kathryn (2017) 'People think that Romanians and Roma are the same': everyday bordering and the lifting of transitional controls. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40 (7). pp. 1132-1150. ISSN 0141-9870

Published by: Taylor & Francis

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1267381>  
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1267381>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/28193/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

## **‘People think that Romanians and Roma are the same’: everyday bordering and the lifting of transitional controls**

Georgie Wemyss<sup>a</sup> and Kathryn Cassidy<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Social Sciences, University of East London, London, UK; <sup>b</sup>Department of Geography, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK.<sup>1</sup>

Received 02 11 2015; Accepted 03 05 2016.

### **Abstract**

On 1 January 2014 the transitional controls on free movement adopted by the UK when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, ended. This paper demonstrates how the discourses of politicians relating to their removal, amplified via news media contributed to the extension of state bordering practices further into everyday life. Based on ethnographic research into everyday bordering during 2013-2015 the paper uses an intersectional framework to explore how this homogenizing, bordering discourse was experienced and contested from differently situated perspectives of Roma and non-Roma social actors from established communities.

**Keywords:** Roma; bordering; London; Dover; transitional controls; European Union migration

### **Introduction**

On 1 January 2014 the local *KentOnline* headline stated that the County Council leader was ‘set for thousands of migrants from Bulgaria and Romania as working restrictions lifted’. The opening paragraph read:

More pressure will be put on Kent's education, health and crime workers as thousands of Bulgarians and Romanians are expected to come into the county over the next few years.

That's the message from the leader of Kent County Council [...], as the county sees working restrictions for those countries lifted from today.

---

<sup>1</sup> CONTACT: Georgie Wemyss, g.wemyss@uel.ac.uk

Despite the Government implementing tough new benefit restrictions on migrants who wish to live and work in Britain, [...] believes Kent is still an attractive option for young Bulgarian and Romanian workers who wish to earn higher wages.<sup>1</sup>

Below was a picture captioned 'Three Roma children in Romania'. Later on in the same article a local woman stated:

I am concerned about the restrictions being lifted, many of them are taking council homes from people like myself. "We can't get on the council list to get a house, because they are being offered to foreigners first."<sup>2</sup>

This report signalled the end of 'transitional controls' for Romania and Bulgaria (known as the 'A2' countries) that had joined the European Union seven years earlier. Transitional controls are one of a range of everyday state bordering technologies used to restrict the access that citizens of European Union countries have to the UK labour market and welfare benefits. Whilst the EU legislation that established these controls does not discriminate between the ethnicities and genders of citizens of specified countries, this paper demonstrates how the discourses of politicians, amplified via news media contributes to the extension of state bordering practices further into the everyday lives of Roma and non-Roma UK residents.

Following an introduction to the concept of 'everyday bordering', the paper traces the context to the removal of the transitional controls on A2 migrants to the UK. After a methodological discussion, the paper then examines political and media discourses in the period prior to January 2014. The subsequent section draws on ethnographic interviews to explore how a number of social actors across London and the South East including Slovak Roma, Non-Roma Romanian and Slovak and local white women and men from established communities including public sector professionals - differentially experienced and contested these discourses.<sup>3</sup>

### **Everyday Bordering**

Border studies over the last two decades has been characterised by two key developmental avenues: theoretical developments which have increasingly come to frame them as complex processes rather than static lines at the edge of nation-states (Brambilla 2015); and shifting

political and policy agendas in the Minority World, which have moved border controls away from geographical borders and into the everyday life of communities within these states (Balibar 2002). Consequently, scholars have been responding to a growing need to understand both their proliferating forms and practices (Green 2013) and the ways in which they have become embedded in everyday life (Johnson et al 2011, Johnson and Jones 2014). For the UK, this has led to an increase in legislation since the mid-1990s, which has multiplied state-sponsored bordering practices within society. In this everyday context, ordinary people have become involved in 'borderwork' (Rumford 2008) as agents of the state or as Vaughan-Williams (2008) argues in the role of the 'citizen-detective'. In the UK, such roles are enforced by punitive regimes including fines levied against employers, landlords, health and educational institutions. Transitional controls imposed on A2 nationals by the UK in 2007 formed part of this policy agenda of what we term 'everyday bordering' (Yuval-Davis et al, forthcoming). In exploring state bordering in its everyday context we follow de Certeau's (1984) argument that in cultural productions the everyday functions as the foundational context for practices that clearly move beyond the everyday. It is within this construction of everyday life that we explore selected practices and discourses surrounding the lifting of transitional controls as racialized forms of everyday bordering, which have had a particular impact on Roma in the UK.

### **Transitional Controls**

When Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union in January 2007 the British government placed controls on labour market engagement for Romanian and Bulgarian (A2) nationals coming to the UK. Unlike those who had come to the UK exercising treaty rights following the 2004 (A8) enlargement, A2 nationals were restricted in accessing both the labour market and state welfare benefits. The use of transitional controls had arisen as a response to the migration of high numbers of A8 nationals after the 2004 enlargement and an approach towards border securitization, which had been increasing in the UK since the 1990s involving the movement of policing the UK's border away from border crossing points and into the heart of communities across Britain. A2 nationals had to gain worker authorization for employment and after 12 months of paid employment were discharged from the scheme and gained the 'right to reside', which enabled them to claim state benefits. A2 nationals also had to pass the Habitual Residence Test, (HBT) which in addition

to 'right to reside' sought to establish intention to remain in the UK for the foreseeable future. Without the 'right to reside' A2 and A8 nationals had no recourse to public funds. To continue this approach following the removal of the controls, the UK government again enacted the 'right to reside' mechanism in the 2014 Immigration Act. This legislation gave EU nationals looking for work in the UK access to Universal Credit (which is gradually replacing a range of welfare benefits) for three months. If they fail to find work in this period they do not gain the 'right to reside' and are unable to access state support. Those who find work have the 'right to reside' after this period and are able to claim benefits, such as Child Benefit.<sup>4</sup> Poole and Adamson (2008, 33) describe this approach as consistent with those taken by previous British governments in that it attempted to 'maximise the benefits of labour migration without incurring its costs'.

In addition to the differentiated categories of EU nationals created by the transitional controls, the impact of these controls is also filtered through the situated gazes of those who administer them and of differently situated migrants (Yuval-Davis 2013). This paper examines the complexity of these processes as well as their sometimes abstract sometimes very concrete nature, that could lead to the label of 'the border multiple', composed of multifarious, contested and contradictory narratives at different levels of practice. They include individuals and the practices of their everyday lives as well as discursive-material actors which can collude, contest and interfere with each other across or on the same side of the border (Johnson and Jones 2014, 5-7). In this paper we are arguing that whilst transitional controls continue to be visible technologies of the state bordering regime aimed at restricting access to the UK labour market of citizens of specified EU member states, the negative political and media discourses that contributed to their implementation when Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 and surrounded their ending on the first of January 2014 worked as a bordering process to exclude Roma already settled in Britain and potential Roma migrants regardless of citizenship. These hegemonic discourses were experienced in the day to day lives of Slovak Roma and non Roma settled in Dover as well as Romanian migrant workers settled in London.

## **Methodology**

The data in this article was gathered around the specific 'ethnographic moment' of the ending of transitional controls on New Year's Day 2014 that occurred during the wider

EU Borderscapes research project that covered the period 2013-2015. The wider project was focused on a number of different sites, including the Schengen/non Schengen territorial border of Dover/Calais and two boroughs in the London metropolis. The study began in the run up to local elections in Dover in May 2013, seven months before the ending of transitional controls and continued through the EU and London local elections five months after their ending. It finished soon after the UK general election one year later. The punctuation of the two years by local, national and supranational elections gave us the opportunity to observe how discourses about Roma migration to the UK in national media were experienced differently at varied times by local Roma and non-Roma residents and professionals who interacted with local Roma. In order to understand their complex experiences, we employed a situated, intersectional analysis that accounts for different views or 'situated gazes', by exploring how the varying positionality of social agents is connected to their relationships with different social, economic and political projects. To capture these complex negotiations, we use what Lesley McCall (2005) calls inter- and intra-categorical approaches. The inter-categorical approach focuses on the way the intersection of different social categories, such as race, gender and class affect particular social behaviour or distribution of resources. However, our study also pays attention to intra-categorical processes, which are concerned with the shaping of the meanings and boundaries of the categories themselves.

As we collected ethnographic data relating to UK state borders, including participant observation, focus groups and interviews of differently positioned Roma and non-Roma UK residents and analysed local and national media discourses, the everyday bordering processes of not only the instruments of the transitional controls but also, significantly, the political and media discourses surrounding the ending of those controls emerged as key issues amongst many participants. We were able to explore how different groups entered into dialogue with media and public discourses that emerged about the ending of the transitional controls. The analysis combines a Foucauldian theorization of the dominant discourse as a 'regime of truth' (1980, 131) employed by Clark and Campbell in their media analysis of UK press discourses about Czech and Slovak 'asylum seekers' at a particular moment in 1997 (2000) with Gramsci's dynamic notion of 'common sense' (1971) achieved through struggles between forms of knowledge associated with competing groups.

In this paper we focus on the situated intersectional gazes of a range of individuals affected by political and media discourses that peaked around the ending of transitional controls for A2 citizens on New Year's Day 2014. We were able to explore how, at the moment of the ending of the transitional controls, political and media discourses extended their reach, working as everyday, filtering bordering processes before and after their withdrawal.

### **Everyday bordering: political and media discourses surrounding the end of the transitional controls**

The everyday bordering processes of transitional controls, whilst rooted in UK and EU equality legislation have been targeted at, and experienced differently, by diverse citizens of A8 and A2 countries as well as by people from the Global South who have settled across Europe and moved to the UK. In this section we draw on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) to track and analyse some of the key political and media discourses in the run up to and after January 2014. In focusing on the contexts of these discourses we show how they work to extend the border further into everyday life. In examining the texts and how they are contested, we contribute to debates that frame hostility against Roma as an expression of historical anxieties about immigration or of contemporary concerns about the principle to free movement in the EU and that question the taken for granted homogeneity of Roma populations (Guy 2003; Guy et al 2004; Sigona and Trehan 2009; Bunescu 2014).

In this paper, temporality is central to the understanding of bordering discourses in two significant aspects. First, in terms of dominant political and media discourses, the time frame of electoral cycles leads to peaks in the immigration 'scare stories' which impact on the everyday lives and situated gazes of those who are associated with those negative representations. Several studies have shown that repetitive media discourses about the 'crisis' of asylum and refugees, including Roma, have influenced government to introduce policies that aim to limit the number of asylum seekers in the UK (Clark and Campbell, 2000, 42; Guy 2004; Buchanan et al., 2003 cited in Philo et al 2013, 7). A range of participants in public sector meetings, interviews and focus groups commented on media discourses about the lifting of transitional controls building up during 2013 to peak as their ending approached and as the political campaigns around the 2014 European elections developed. Secondly, each phase of migration informs the situated gaze of those who have experienced

earlier phases of migration and associated discourses. Border narratives in the media, created from complex and chaotic events shape viewer/reader's perception of the border as well as those who cross and enforce it, they tend to invisibilize the historical, socio-economic and political contexts of migrants' lives (Jones 2014). Therefore, in understanding the Roma and non-Roma situated gaze in relation to discourses and technologies of everyday bordering, we include in the analysis the historical context of past life experiences as well as negative media discourses about the Roma in local, UK national and other European media as discussed by Yuval-Davis et al. in this special issue.

### ***National media and the end of transitional controls***

In the run up to the ending of transitional controls, a BBC report referred to a 'storm of British media coverage and political debate over an expected surge in immigration from Bulgaria and Romania' (BBC News website, December 18, 2013). The 'storm' included headlines from the tabloid press that accompanied photographs of anonymous 'immigrants' at passport controls. Whilst some, such as those below, did not include references to 'Roma', many included pictures which were either captioned as being of Roma people or used photographs of people who fitted a visible stereotype of 'Roma'.<sup>5</sup>

**A TIDAL wave of Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants is threatening to swamp Britain — and flood our overstretched jobs market.**

An EU law means that from 2014, more than 29 million people from the two countries will be entitled to apply for any UK job (*The Sun*, November 2013).

**385,000 Romanians and Bulgarians will flock to UK**

AT LEAST 385,000 migrants from Romania and Bulgaria will head to Britain to find work over the next five years, a new report claimed yesterday (*The Daily Express*, December 2013).<sup>6</sup>

Echoing an earlier, process whereby the words 'refugees' and asylum seeker' became 'generic terms for what is perceived as bad behaviour by new groups of people' (Philo et al. 2013, 133) in 2013-2014 the discursive slippage between the categories of 'Bulgarian', 'Romanian' and 'Roma', via the juxtaposition of headlines and photographs with words and images that suggest Roma otherness, poverty and criminality have contributed towards them becoming generic negative terms for an undesirable group around which the scare stories are spun.<sup>7</sup> In the following section we examine how this discourse about the



ending of transitional controls was reproduced in local contexts and the specific similarities and contrasts in the ways it was experienced by differently situated Roma and non-Roma residents.

### **Conflation and contest: dominant discourse surrounding the ending of transitional controls and the situated intersectional gaze**

We begin with examples drawn from Kent where the contemporary perspectives of residents need to be understood in the context of earlier Roma migrations. As Yuval-Davis et al. mention in this special issue, Roma from the Czech Republic and Slovakia first arrived as asylum seekers in Dover following the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993. Some lost their asylum claims and were deported whilst others stayed and were later joined by family members. After the 2004 EU enlargement, some of those previously deported returned and others came and settled in Dover, many working in a local factory and as cleaners. Local Roma and non-Roma told us that they chose Dover because their families already felt settled there and it was accessible for annual trips home. During that period Dover became increasingly diverse as A8 migrants found work and men from, for example, Iraqi Kurdistan and Afghanistan claimed asylum and settled. The legislative ending of the bordering mechanism of transitional controls did not directly affect the Roma community living in Dover and Folkestone since they were citizens of A8 countries. However, their lives were impacted by the political and media discourses, such as the examples above that used their presence in Dover to imply that greater numbers of Roma from Bulgaria and Romania would migrate to the area after 1 January 2014. In the context of Kent, the conflation of diverse populations of different nationalities into a single category of 'Roma' associated with specific social 'problems' was reproduced in a local council report that, building on earlier and existing discourses (Clark and Campbell 2000; Guy 2003 and 2004), made generalizing statements about Roma communities. It was picked up by local and national media, whose coverage was contested by diverse state and NGO-employees as well as by local Slovak Roma whose everyday lives were directly impacted. In this section we explore how this discourse was reproduced, experienced and contested by these differently situated actors.

#### ***Local government report: the contested situated gaze of the political leadership***

In April 2013 Conservative and UK Independence Party (UKIP) councillors of Kent County Council (KCC) commissioned a report into potential additional demand on local services arising from the ending of transitional employment restrictions on A2 countries (Kent County Council 2013). The report drew on experience of post 2004 A8 migration in Kent to plan future impacts. Whilst the report was focused on Romanian and Bulgarian migration generally, specific references to Roma migration made assumptions about Roma cultural homogeneity<sup>8</sup> and included estimates of the total Roma populations of Europe, the two A2 countries and the UK.<sup>9</sup> Another referred to discrimination experienced by Roma, patterns of chain migration and the extra resources their migration may require from public bodies.<sup>10</sup> Further paragraphs focused on Roma involvement in child trafficking<sup>11</sup> and the role of the media in reducing misinformation about Roma, referring enquiries to the KCC's own Gypsy and Traveller Unit.

Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors opposed the report as 'pointless' and 'electioneering', one argued that reliable information was not available locally or nationally and another that the announcement of its commissioning was linked to the local elections two weeks later (BBC Kent April, 2013).<sup>12</sup> The councillors' concerns about the reliability of data on Roma was shared by the authors of a report commissioned by Home Office funded South East Partnership for Migration (SEPM) from November 2013. This report into the profile and distribution of A2 migrants in the South East explicitly avoided generalizations in not mentioning Roma migration beyond the introduction to its remit:

A key concern for many local authorities in the South East particularly relates to the inflow of Roma community members. Given that the key data sources that this report draws on do not include information to separate out such migrants, no attempt has been made to specifically address Roma migration. As well as responding to economic and network drivers of migration, Roma communities also adjust to discrimination and racism across Europe (Nygaard et al 2013, 3).

The report demonstrated that whilst local authorities wanted to address specifically Roma migration the researchers were not willing to do so due to lack of data.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Media amplification: extending the gaze of the political leadership***

The KCC report was cited on 1 January 2014 in the *KentOnline* article above. In that article, as well as the use of images of Roma children in Romania, references to the report were

interspersed with quotes from the commissioner of the report, the leader of KCC that slipped into direct references to Roma as a 'problem'. For example:

Politicians and councillors in Kent have expressed concern that increased migration will only stretch the demand on local government services and could create 'township ghettos' in some towns like Maidstone. [Council leader] added: "I think more people looking to work here will only put added pressures on education, health and sadly crime. "A significant amount of criminality is being carried out in parts of Kent by people from Eastern Europe. "Everyone's seen the Roma issues in Boston and in Sheffield, in those places it's putting significant additional burdens on those local authorities and we have a significant problem in East Kent.<sup>14</sup>

The Conservative leader of the council used local media at the moment of the ending of transitional controls to link local Roma with criminality and pressures on welfare, making direct references to negative discourses about Roma elsewhere in Britain. In this case the gaze of the political leader and the local media had much in common. In another example, the SEPM report, which explicitly did not focus on Roma migration, was publicised by the *Mail on Sunday* using stereotypical 'Roma images' familiar since media coverage from the 1990s (Guy 2003, 70). The heading 'Exposed: What they DIDN'T tell you about new wave of migrants heading for booming Britain' (*Mail on Sunday*, December 28 2014), combined references to the report which did not include evidence about Roma with 'Roma' images to sharpen the negative focus onto supposedly visibly identifiable Roma people.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Situated gaze of local borderworkers***

The dominant discourses that generalized Roma lives into a homogeneous category which was then conflated with other Eastern European categories was challenged by state and NGO employees who engaged with local Roma in their everyday work. The A2 migration issue and the KCC report were on the agenda of a meeting attended by local authority and NGO stakeholders in December 2013. The meeting was asked 'how are you feeling about the A2 migration issue?' A local government employee said that 'the media are trying to whip up a storm that may not happen. They are looking for a teacup'. He argued that 'Roma are very heterogeneous' and others agreed. Whilst they challenged media assumptions of Roma homogeneity and criminality, some generalisations made in this meeting and in interviews of health and policing professionals shared other strands of the report's

discourse. For example, in focusing on discrimination experienced by Roma that acts as a 'push factor' and their 'lack of compliance' being due to their previous experiences and vulnerability to criminals when they can't find work.

We interviewed local professionals who contrasted their awareness of the complexities of Roma and other minority communities, learned through their everyday work, with the ignorance of the media and of local white people. A long standing Community Liaison Police Officer remarked on a local anti-migrant discourse that groups diverse minorities into the single category of 'Slovak':

There is this general generic term called 'Slovak' which relates basically to anyone who is Eastern European. But whether they would differentiate between an asylum seeker, any other sort of migrant, an EU Roma, pretty well not.

The other day we had a crime report of a guy who verbally abused a Roma. And he said 'You bloody Slovaks, why don't you go back to Pakistan?!' and that just sums it up really.

Whilst the police officer pointed out the term 'Slovak' was used to abuse diverse minority groups, interviews with local people discussed below demonstrated that it was also used to specifically reference the local Roma population.

### ***Contrasting gazes of Roma and non-Roma young people***

When the media 'storm' was at its height in December 2013 we visited a youth club in Folkestone, which worked to integrate local Roma and non-Roma young people. Although youths from both groups used the building on the same evenings, Roma and non-Roma young people rarely mixed. We therefore carried out separate group interviews. Discussing the local area, the white teenage men referred to local Roma, including those who used the same youth club, by their assumed nationalities and in using the labels 'Slovak' and 'Czech' drew on the familiar discourses of Roma criminality and welfare abuse:

JS: We get a lot of Slovaks and Czechs. They like to cause trouble.

NK: Mainly around the Harbour areas of Folkestone that's mainly where they are, that causes quite a lot of crime here.

JS: If you walk up and down [...] Street once or twice a day you see a drug deal. Or prostitution, yeah. Quite a few of them just scrounge off the government.

Not surprisingly the perspectives of the Roma young people in the youth club challenged such discourses. GN, a teenage Slovak Roma female college student came to join her parents working as cleaners in 2005. Her spoken English was indistinguishable from the non-Roma young people in the youth club. In earlier parts of the discussion she had spoken about how, in contrast to her experiences in Slovakia, she did not have racist teachers in Kent. However, her experiences of racism differed depending on whom she was with:

When I started being more with English people at college and stuff, I'd go out with them, no-one looks at me differently when I am with them, but when **we** are in a group like now, um, that's when it gets hard, when **we** are in a group [her emphasis].

GN was referring to racist comments that she was subjected to when with other local young Roma people. As part of a diverse group of students (whom she referred to as 'English') she was able to avoid the negative meanings associated with the label of 'Roma' or Slovak'.<sup>16</sup> However this changed whenever her 'Roma' identity became visible when with family and Roma friends. Referring to local people's reactions to media reports about the ending of transitional controls she said:

... they don't care where you are from, they don't care whether you are Romanian, they are just racist to anyone and when they see something on the news that is why it affects **us** as well. It doesn't matter if it is about Romanian people because they think it is **us** as well and they say to **us** 'you are getting our money' so it does affect **us** [her emphasis].

From GN's perspective, the media discourses about A2 migration that conflated 'Romanian' with 'Roma' into a single negative and historically visible category directly affected her community's experiences of racism.

### ***Contrasting gaze: Slovak Roma and Slovak non-Roma women***

During a focus group discussion, Slovak Roma women in Dover reflected on the impact of media reports about Bulgarians and Romanians in the period running up to the end of transitional controls.<sup>17</sup> Like the young Roma woman above, they noted an impact on them, particularly in relation to presumed criminality:

T and others: We feel that store detectives are suspecting us and following us around the shops and it is very unpleasant, and the second thing is the people think that Romanians and Roma are the same people because we look similar, but it is far from the case [...].

Interviewer: Did this happen before as well?

T and others: It never happened to me before.

One woman suggested that the negative media was impacting on the ability of Roma to gain access to paid work through a particular employment agency:

They also have more strict criteria about who and when to register to the agency for employment. I am not going to name the agency, in my personal experience, but I know that they are now more fussy about the people they register there.

The perspectives of other Slovaks in professional employment reveal different experiences to the Roma women above. KS is a non-Roma, Slovak woman, who has been living and working with local Roma people in Dover for a number of years. She suggested that she has shared some of their racist experiences:

I took a taxi once, I still have quite a strong accent I think, and the taxi driver asked me where I was from, and I said Slovakia and the taxi driver asked me to leave the taxi.

In this case she had stated her background and been questioned by the driver based on her accent. This differs from the experiences of the Roma women, who found themselves harassed on shopping trips because of assumptions around criminality based on their appearance. In contrast to Roma experiences of the period leading up to the removal of the transitional controls KS stated 'I haven't noticed to tell the truth, I haven't noticed at all', suggesting that KS' whiteness shaped her gaze towards the removal of the controls as being unproblematic. AC, a Czech woman living in Dover, was critical of the focus on Roma and criminality in the local media:

In the local newspaper there were some articles in the past about Slovak Roma but no one was very positive. They were only about problems about rowdiness, rubbish, criminal offences, fraud and so on.

She referred specifically to Slovak Roma in a way that both contested other local white discourses that grouped all outsiders together as ‘Slovaks’ and situated herself outside of that category. This process of Roma othering was shared by non-Roma Romanians in London, who under the glare of the media discourses surrounding the ending of the transitional controls, also developed strong discourses excluding Roma from their own national project of belonging.

### ***Non-Roma Romanian gaze***

The discourses associated with the removal of transitional controls were experienced in complex ways by non-Roma Romanians in London. Media representations of Romanians in the period prior to the removal of the transitional controls led to heightened anti-Roma discourses amongst non-Roma Romanians (see also Pusca 2010). These discourses reflected a Romanian national project of belonging, which historically excludes the Roma and highlights the racism many encounter in Romania. Away from the glare of the media there was often a high level of ambiguity surrounding the definitions of Roma/non-Roma. The wider political and media discourses surrounding transitional controls had initiated the emergence of new forms of everyday counter-discourse, which due to the particular situated gazes of the non-Roma migrant workers, were grounded in the historical exclusion of Roma in Romanian society. For these workers, Roma came to embody threats to their freedom to move and, consequently, their livelihoods (Guillem 2011; Pusca 2010).

In October 2013, we visited SS, a Romanian woman who had moved to London in 2008. During a visit from her younger brother (AS) they were watching a news item on UK television about the end of transitional controls.

AS: I don't understand why they always show pictures of 'gypsies' (tigani). Do they think all Romanians are gypsies?

SS: Yes, everyone at work thinks we all live like those pictures they show of gypsies in Romania. They think we have nothing. Seriously, my work colleagues think I live in some kind of shed. I don't tell them I have a house and land there. They think we are all living like gypsies.

SS' comment revealed that the discourses were impacting on her interactions with colleagues evidencing the role of everyday bordering technology in disrupting relations in

multicultural communities. Later that month, whilst watching television at AS' apartment, there was a report on the UK news about the Romanian Roma from Botosani who had been removed but returned to Marble Arch. AS became frustrated throughout the broadcast, saying:

They're gypsies, not Romanians! Why are they calling them Romanians? Every time I see Romanians on television here or a programme that is supposed to be about Romanians, when I watch it there are always gypsies. OK, sometimes there are Romanians as well, but they are mostly gypsies, because these are the people who are stealing and begging for money. This is what they want you to think of Romanians. [...]

AS echoed many of the comments and everyday racism aimed at Roma people in Romania, where they are characterised as lazy, workshy and thieves as justifications for exclusion from the Romanian national project of belonging (Pusca 2010). This is evident in the meanings embedded in the Romanian verb 'to gypsy oneself'.<sup>18</sup> In contrast our informants did not use that verb to describe another Romanian national, who systematically exploited them through his employment agency.

During the period prior to the removal of the transitional controls there was an intensification of discourses amongst non-Roma stressing the non-belonging of Roma in Romanian society. Yet there was no reflection or recognition of the exclusion and marginalization Roma suffered within Romania.<sup>19</sup> In spite of the very strong discourses of non-belonging present in Romania and which emerged during the period prior to the removal of transitional controls in the UK, when not discussing this issue or responding to media representations of Romanians, there was often significant ambiguity in how Romanians living in London referred to Roma. This illustrates that it was the broader political and media discourses that were shaping counter-narratives. DZ, a young Romanian man, had moved to the Newham from South London in 2013. He and AS discussed finding a new place to live:

DZ: I spoke to the gypsy about moving back into his place. He said he has a free place.

AS: I thought you said he wasn't a gypsy but his wife is?

DZ: Well he doesn't look it but he is a sort of gypsy, you know? He's sly [*smecher*] like a gypsy.



Whilst many Romanians would claim to 'know' Roma from their appearance (this was often the means for identifying Roma in the media representations described above), here this is not the case. DZ claimed to know the man is Roma due to his character. However, there was another reason for him considering his former landlord to be Roma and that was his wife. Again, suggesting that Roma and non-Roma are mutually exclusive categories and denying that a Romanian would be married to a Roma woman is part of an understanding, which sets Roma apart from Romanians. Such marriages were considered to be taboo in some Romanian communities. ER was a migrant sex worker, who came to London for six months each year to work. In March 2014, she explained why she was frequently isolated from her peers:

You know I am a gypsy? Well my husband is a gypsy. Some of the other girls they don't like that but [her friend] is OK.

ER considered herself to be Roma through marriage and the other women treated her as if she were Roma, with many of them refusing to speak to her or work the same area. Whilst many of the Romanian street sex workers looked after one another, ER was excluded from these networks by all but one woman.

Media representations of Romanians in the period prior to the removal of the transitional controls had a clear impact on Romanians living in London. Discourses of non-belonging for Roma embedded in the historic exclusion of Roma in Romania itself (Woodcock, 2007) emerged. Nationally, these discourses reflected a supposed threat to Romania's very place within the EU, for Romanians living in London the concerns surrounded the impact these representations had upon their relationships and interactions with British people in everyday life. As such, the emergent anti-Roma narratives were an attempt to counter media representations, which were dominated by the poverty and criminality of Romanians living in the UK. Nonetheless, as we have shown, away from the context of media representation, there was greater ambiguity surrounding discourses of Roma/non-Roma amongst Romanians living in London, which pointed to complexities in defining Roma as separate or distinguishable from Romanians as a group.

## Conclusions

We began this paper with the concept of everyday bordering and describing transitional controls and welfare regulations as filtering state border technologies that work to create divisions and inequalities by restricting access to the labour market for 'less desirable' EU migrants. We then showed how these technologies work in conjunction with powerful discourses about their ending, to extend the border more deeply into the everyday lives of EU migrants and most intrusively into the lives of Roma residents. What emerges are specific and closely related processes of everyday bordering, which weave together the past, present and future in the ways in which the actors interviewed responded to and often attempted to challenge. In his analysis of 'Border Wars' the documentary-style show about the US Border Patrol, Jones (2014) noted the disjuncture between the official representations of a 'clean picture of right and wrong and good and evil at the border' that structured the series and the glimpses of complex lives of diverse individuals and families, pursued by the Border Patrol, as they sought better lives across borders. He concluded that 'in "Border Wars" there are two competing stories of the border; which image remains in the mind is open to question' (2014, 203). The dominant media discourses about the ending of the border technology of transitional controls for A2 migrants also included two connected narratives, which conflated the heterogeneous fuzzy categories of Romanian and Roma into a homogeneous, fixed category of 'Roma'. One narrative focused on Roma criminality and welfare abuse in the UK and the other on poverty and discrimination in their home countries. Using intersectional analysis to understand the gaze of a range of differently situated people, we have not only shown which stories about A2 migration 'remain in the mind' of Roma and non-Roma individuals but also the diverse and complex ways that they experience and contest the repetition of those racialized bordering narratives in their everyday lives.

The paper indicates how the symbolic use of 'Roma' in political and media discourses works as a discriminatory bordering process to exclude both non-Romanian Roma and non-Roma Romanian EU citizens from experiencing belonging in their local communities. In the context of the 2014 European Elections and the national media focus on the ending of transitional controls, local politicians in Kent sought to demonstrate to the electorate that they were addressing the 'Roma issue' but were unable to do so directly due to the invisibility of valid 'Roma' statistical data. Nonetheless, the discourses around the ending of

transitional controls became racialized through broad statements about ‘Roma’ populations in the KCC report and in the media coverage of it and other reports, through the use of photographs of ‘Roma’ that resonated with earlier reporting and experiences of local populations. The impact of these racializing discourses was more acute on the everyday lives of local Roma Slovak women than on local white Slovak women. Whilst it attempted to challenge some of the stereotypes, there was discursive continuity between the KCC report and the views about Czech and Slovak Roma expressed by the white young people in Folkestone. For Romanians in London, the reporting of the ending of the controls had shifted their relationships with their colleagues and led to frustration, anger and anti-Roma discourses, often embedded in those permeating Romanian society. This was in spite of the fact that there was, at times, recognition of the heterogeneity and distinct ambiguity surrounding Roma and non-Roma.

Our examples emphasise the ways in which such wider discourses are not innocuous and have direct but differential impacts upon the way that groups and individuals living in multicultural Britain experience everyday life, be that in their workplace, the shopping centre or the local youth club. Romanians living in London tried to use anti-Roma discourses to separate themselves from the criminalising assumptions underlying UK-based reporting on the end of transitional controls because they feared Romania’s very place in the EU was being threatened. What has become apparent in the time since our research is that for many people and communities in Britain, such discourses have underpinned a growing sense of the need to separate the UK from the European Union, as the only way to prevent the challenges that migration has been discursively constructed as presenting.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *KentOnline*: ‘KCC leader [...] set for thousands of migrants from Bulgaria and Romania as working restrictions lifted’, 1 January 2014. Accessed 22 June 2015.

<http://www.kentonline.co.uk/deal/news/county-set-for-influx-of-10736/>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Identity categories we use are those that arose during interviews, see the introduction to this Special Issue for a discussion of terms used.

<sup>4</sup> After 3 months, when putting in a claim they become subject to a more stringent HBT and a ‘genuine prospect of work’ test. To meet the requirements EEA nationals must pass the minimum earnings threshold, based upon paying National Insurance contributions for the previous three months.

<sup>5</sup> The stereotype included pictures of ‘women in colourful traditional dress while begging with children’ as noted by Guy (2003, 70).

<sup>6</sup> BBC News: ‘Romanian and Bulgarian migration debate - views in Europe’, December 18 2013. Accessed 15 June 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25429420>. The press examples are as cited in the BBC report.

<sup>7</sup> 18 months later the dominant focus shifted from EU migration back to ‘refugees’ and ‘asylum seekers’ crossing the Mediterranean and the Balkans to reach EU countries.

<sup>8</sup> The simplification of complex experiences of Roma populations contrasts with other reports addressing this theme nationally for example Glennie and Pennington (2013).

<sup>9</sup> For example ‘Romania and Bulgaria have a fairly high number of people who identify themselves as Roma. There are thought to be an estimated 10 to 12 million Roma living in Europe. Estimates of the number of Roma in the UK vary widely from 100,000 to one million.’ (Kent County Council 2013)

<sup>10</sup> For example ‘It is possible that nationals from Romania and Bulgaria who identify themselves as Roma will choose to migrate to Kent, but it is not possible to estimate or model this due to a lack of reliable data. Should Roma communities from Romania and Bulgaria settle in Kent, it is possible that some will require more support and resources from public services, partly due to the background of discrimination and deprivation that some Roma people come from’ (KCC 2013).

<sup>11</sup> For example ‘Conversations with KCC officers [and others] have identified some concerns that Eastern European Roma children in Kent [...] are becoming victims of trafficking, exploitation and prostitution (KCC 2013).

<sup>12</sup> BBC Kent Online: ‘Council leader in immigration impact report call’, 10 April, 2013. Accessed 22 June, 2015. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-22101490>)

<sup>13</sup> See Varju and Plaut in this journal for the historical context for the lack of data.

<sup>14</sup> *KentOnline*: ‘KCC leader [...] set for thousands of migrants from Bulgaria and Romania as working restrictions lifted’, 1 January 2014. Accessed 22 June 2015. <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/deal/news/county-set-for-influx-of-10736/>

<sup>15</sup> *Mail Online*: ‘Exposed: What they DIDN'T tell you about new wave of migrants heading for booming Britain’, 28 December 2013. Accessed 22 June 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2530503/Exposed-What-DIDNT-tell-new-wave-migrants-heading-booming-Britain.html>

<sup>16</sup> She also referred to the group including friends from Congo.

<sup>17</sup> The interpreter was a white Slovak woman.

<sup>18</sup> In earlier fieldwork on the Romanian border a woman reluctant to become involved in the cigarette trade said: ‘I don’t want to gypsy myself by getting involved in trading cigarettes across the border’

<sup>19</sup> In 2013 in Romania, DS, an educated businesswoman, suggested that Romania has a high population of Roma because they are more tolerant of Roma than other European nation-states. As Woodcock (2007) has argued, DS’ comment reflects broader political discourses, framing the Roma as a ‘European problem’.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all research participants in Kent and London who were so generous with their time and willing to share their experiences and insights. We are grateful to our partners in the EUBORDERSCAPES research project for their intellectual engagement and to the two anonymous reviewers for their scholarly and constructive feedback.

## Funding

---

This work was supported by EUBORDERSCAPES [290775] funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme [FP7-SSH-2011-1] Area 4.2.1 The evolving concept of borders.

## References

- Balibar, E. 2002. *Politics and the Other Scene*. London: Verso.
- Brambilla, C. 2015. 'Exploring the critical potential of the borderscapes concept' *Geopolitics* 20(1): 14-34.
- Bunescu, I. 2014. *Roma in Europe: The Politics of Collective Identity Formation*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Buschoff, K. S., and C. Schmidt. 2009. Adapting labour law and social security to the needs of the 'new self-employed'—comparing the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 19(2), 147-159.
- de Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Clark, C and Campbell, E. 2000 "'Gypsy Invasion': A critical analysis of newspaper reaction to Czech and Slovak Romani asylum-seekers in Britain, 1997" , *Romani Studies*, series 5, 10 (1): 23-47.
- Craig, P., & De Búrca, G. 2011. *EU law: text, cases, and materials*. Oxford University Press.
- Fairclough, N. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.
- Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge* (selected works edited by Colin Gordon), Brighton: Harvester.
- Glennie, A. and Jenny Pennington. 2013. *In transition: Romanian and Bulgarian migration to the UK*. London: Institute of Public Policy Research.
- Gower, M. and O. Hawkins. 2013. Immigration and asylum policy: Government plans and progress made. *House of Commons Library Note*.
- Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. Reprint, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2010.
- Green, S. 2013. Borders and the Relocation of Europe. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 42, 345-361.
- Guillem, S.M. 2011. 'European Identity: Across Which Lines? Defining Europe Through Public Discourses on the Roma' *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 4(1): 23-

---

41.

Guy, W. 2003. "'No Soft Touch": Romani Migration to the U.K. at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century' *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 31(1) 63-79.

Guy, W., Uherek, Z and R. Weinrova (eds) 2004. *Roma migration in Europe: Case Studies*. Münster: Lit Verlag

Guy, W. 2004. 'Recent Roma Migration to the United Kingdom' in *Roma migration in Europe: Case Studies*, Guy, W., Uherek, Z and R. Weinrova (eds) 165-210. Münster: Lit Verlag

Johnson, C., Jones, R. Paasi, A., Amoore, L. Mountz, A., Salter, M and C. Rumford 2011.

Interventions on rethinking 'the border' in border studies. *Political Geography* 30: 61-69.

Johnson, C. and R. Jones 2014 'Where is the Border?' in. *Placing the Border in Everyday Life*. by R. Jones and C. Johnson (eds), 1-11. Farnham: Ashgate.

Jones, R. 2014. 'Border Wars: Narratives and images of the US-Mexico Border on TV' in *Placing the Border in Everyday Life*, by R. Jones and C. Johnson (eds), 185-204. Farnham: Ashgate.

Kent County Council, 2013. *The potential impact on Kent public services of the ending of transitional restrictions on Bulgarians and Romanians: Final Report October 2013*.

Nygaard, Christian, Adam Pasierbek, and Ellie Francis-Brophy. 2013. *Bulgarian and Romanian migration to the South East and UK: profile of A2 migrants and their distribution*. Report prepared for the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration. University of Reading.

Poole, Lynne, and Kevin Adamson. 2008. *Report on the Situation of the Roma Community in Govanhill*, Glasgow. Oxfam School of Social Sciences, University of the West of Scotland

Pusca, A. 2010. 'The Roma problem in the EU' *Borderlands* 9(2): 1-17.

Rumford, C. 2008. *Cosmopolitan spaces: Europe, globalization, theory*. Routledge.

Sigona, N. 2005. 'Locating 'The Gypsy Problem''. The Roma in Italy: Stereotyping, Labelling and 'Nomad Camps'' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(4): 741-756.

Sigona, N. and Trehan, N (eds).2009. *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe: Poverty, Ethnic Mobilization and the Neoliberal Order*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vaughan-Williams, N. 2008. Borderwork beyond inside/outside? Frontex, the citizen-detective and the war on terror. *Space and Polity*, 12(1), 63-79.

---

Vermeersch, P. 2012. 'Reframing the Roma: EU Initiatives and the Politics of Reinterpretation' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38(8): 1195-1212.

Woodcock, S. 2007. 'Romania and EUrope: Roma, Roma and Tigani as sites for the contestation of ethno-national identities' *Patterns of Prejudice* 41(5): 493-515.

Yuval-Davis, N., 2013. 'A Situated Intersectional Everyday Approach to the Study of Bordering '. EUBORDERSCAPES Working Paper 2 August 2013.

Yuval-Davis, N., G. Wemyss and K. Cassidy. Forthcoming. *Bordering* Polity Press: Cambridge.