‘Western Gypsies and Travellers’ – ‘Eastern Roma’: The Creation of Political Objects by the Institutions of the European Union

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I. Introduction[*]

The situation of Roma was one of the most prominent considerations made by the Commission of the European Union in its annual reports accompanying the recent accession negotiations. Both the Commission and the European Parliament repeatedly called for an improvement in Roma living conditions. The media also began to take an increasing interest in the situation of this group. In general, the issue rose tremendously in public consciousness so that the political category 'Roma' is now quite prominently inscribed on the political agenda.

This paper is concerned with how the discourse of EU institutions on 'Gypsies'/'Roma' developed over time and how political space was and continues to be opened up. Based on documents published by these institutions as well as interviews with Members of the European Parliament, officials from the Commission and NGO representatives conducted during May 2004, it will analyse continuities and discontinuities in EU discourse on Roma since the European Community started to touch upon the issue in the 1970s. For the purposes of this analysis, the category of 'Roma' is not taken as an unchallenged starting point for further considerations, as this would mean following the "realism of the group" (Brubaker 1998: 292) as applied by the political actors. Instead of taking "categories of practice as categories of analysis" (Brubaker 1996: 15), the paper will explore precisely the process of constructing this category and will reveal the relevance of language in this process. To achieve this, the paper concentrates on constitutive assumptions underlying the discourse and interpretative patterns guiding it. Within the scope of this paper, the wide variety of strands within the discourse will only be used for the purpose of illustration.[1]

Rather than following a public (and partly also an academic) debate that externalizes 'the other' by concentrating on situations in certain ('non-western') Eastern European countries or regions, my research focuses on the discourse in the core institution of 'Western Europe' itself, the European Union. It takes into account that "[t]he 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'" (Bhabha 1990: 4).

II. The relevance of language: Some theoretical considerations

Sensitivity to the relevance of language in the construction of the social world has been growing in the political sciences in recent years, in both International Relations and European Integration studies. While this shared sensitivity is only the starting point for a variety of

[*] I want to warmly thank Graeme Currie, who not only revised the language of this paper, but whose comments and suggestions helped me clarify and further develop my thoughts.

[1] These strands are analysed in more detail in the course of the ongoing PhD research from which this paper derives and which has been made possible by the German Foundation for Peace Research.

diverse research undertakings, all agree on the more widely shared ontological assumption that the social world is not externally and objectively given, but constructed in a process of human interaction. More specifically, there is a focus on the constitutive role of language in this process. Language is not simply a mechanical transmission belt linking the physical and the social worlds; the "language of politics is not a neutral medium that conveys ideas independently formed; it is an institutionalized structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions" (Connolly 1974: 1). By rejecting epistemological realism, discourse-analytical approaches are part of a broader post- or anti-positivistic project.

Although the proclamation of a 'discursive turn' is often added to the many turns in political theorizing, what is meant by 'discourse' and what methodology should be used to investigate discourses varies: While some approaches draw more on cognitive science (Rein and Schön 1993; van Dijk 1996; Donati 2001), others owe more to sociolinguistics (Fairclough 1995; Wodak 1996); some are more constructivist (Wæver 2004) and others more post-structuralist (Gottweis 1998) in their approach. Within the scope of this paper, I am not concerned with tracing the variety of different and overlapping approaches.[2] Instead, I will focus on the aspects most relevant to the investigation at hand.

For the purposes of this analysis, discourse is understood as the articulation of a specific set of ideas and categorizations that evolve around a central concept that is itself developed in the discourse. Discourse thus evolves in communicative interaction. In this process of exchange, meaning is relationally constructed: It may be upheld or challenged. This process of ascribing meaning to the physical and social world, i.e. the discourse itself, is subject to permanent change and instability: Rather than a crystal grid it is a fragile chain of statements that can endlessly be amended and altered (Diez 2001: 15). Even though discourses might appear to be stable at the surface, this does not indicate a lack of fluidity. Rather, meaning is produced and reproduced in a constant and active process of engagement which perpetuates the appearance of the surface as stable. Stability is thus not a static but a dynamic state.

A specific discourse does not operate in a void, it is part of the system of discourses that forms an overall societal discourse. Meaning may be borrowed from other, more established discourses. A discourse shapes institutional structures and is at the same time shaped by them in a circular flow of perpetual exchange.

As the category of 'discourse' is so broad, for purposes of analysis, it would be helpful to also consider smaller analytical units, which could be called "strands of discourse" following Siegfried Jäger (2001). In such a strand the general topic of the discourse is combined with a specific topic, for example 'Roma' and 'education'.[3] The metaphor of a

[2] Attempts to provide an overview of the diversity of approaches in this area have been undertaken by, for example, Milliken (1999) and Langer (1998). The differences in categories used in these comparisons are evidence of the complexity of such an endeavour.

[3] Other authors also differentiate between analytical units on different levels of scale. Diez for example distinguishes between "discourses" and "discursive formations". According to his model, different discourses can centre around the same object while having different rules, while all discourses on the same topic constitute a discursive formation (Diez 1999a: 45).

strand encapsulates the dynamics of discourse and lend itself to diachronic as well as synchronic analysis. Strands can be woven more tightly or loosely, they can become thinner or thicker or they can become entangled with other strands.

But discourses do not only enable by creating space for a flow of discursive strands, at the same time, they also constrain: Discourses "are understood to work to define and to enable, and also to silence and to exclude, for example, by limiting and restricting authorities and experts to some groups, but not others, endorsing a certain common sense, but making other modes of categorizing and judging meaningless, impracticable, inadequate or otherwise disqualified" (Milliken 1999: 229). To reflect this fundamental idea in our model, a further type of element needs to be added: elements which separate an inside from an outside, which delineate what is sayable from what is not sayable. I therefore propose to add a dimension of conduits as elements that create and sustain space on the one hand, while limiting this space on the other. Conduits, too, can change course or erode, but do so much more slowly than living strands of discourse.[4] They are the interpretative patterns channelling the strands. It is hoped that such a model will assist the following investigation.

The aim of the analysis is to trace the makeup of the central category of discourse and its evolution over time, to investigate which concepts are linked to this category and which are tied together as "necessarily companions" (Wæver 1998: 116). Special attention is devoted to the terms used to designate the central category and related concepts. Underlying this procedure is the notion that assigning a term to a concept is not an innocent act antecedent to politics, it "is not a prelude to politics but a dimension of politics itself" (Connolly 1974: 3). Naming means bringing into existence – bringing into existence in a specific way. "The terms of political discourse set the frame within which political thought and action proceed" (Connolly 1974: IX). Whether it is intended or not, the "chief function of any political term is to marshall political support or opposition" (Apthorpe 1996: 20). Apart from focussing on the terms designating the central category, it might also be fruitful to consider "words that may stand in opposition to it" as the "content of a word is fixed by the concurrence of everything that stands in opposition to it" (Williams 1999: 39).

In addition to developing a sensitivity regarding naming, it is necessary to investigate related strategies such as numbering or mapping to see how they uphold or challenge specific conceptions of the central concept. Moreover, illuminating insights may not only be gleaned from what is explicitly stated, but also from tacit statements: "More interesting than arguments made are the assumptions not stated but necessary for the argument to be meaningful" (Wæver 1998: 116).

In carrying out research, one has to keep in mind that what holds true at the level of political discourse being studied also applies at the level of policy analysis: One must also avoid considering scientific nomenclature to be a matter of neutral description, but rather

[4] In his model of layered structures of discourse, Ole Wæver (1998) develops the idea of discourse levels arranged in a hierarchy according to their persistency. Compared to his metaphor of depth, surface and sedimentation, I hope that the metaphor of strands and conduits makes it easier to grasp the dynamic nature of discourse and reveal the entanglement of different strands.

recognize that it also influences the construction of its object. For political actors and researchers alike, the same impediment persists: What we don't have a term for, we can't express, and what we can't express, we can't think. To use Wittgenstein's famous citation: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein 1921: 5.6).

Given that we are all prisoners of language, we can only try to come as close to an "emancipatory reading" as possible, and the major challenge of discourse analysis is probably "to curb the constitutive power of a text to formulate the reader it requires" (Green 1983: 18). We can probably never completely escape from "conceptual blinders", blinders which affect those "who simply use established concepts to get to the facts of political life, those who act unreflectively within the confines of established concepts", thereby having "the perceptions and modes of conduct available to them limited in subtle and undetected ways" (Connolly 1974: 1). But we can try to be as aware of them as possible and "to translate tacit judgments embedded in the language of politics into explicit considerations more fully subject to critical assessment" (Connolly 1974: IX). According to this view, discourse analysis is not so much "aimed at explanation, but at […] a 'critical understanding'" (Diez 2001: 30). It is not about finding 'real causes' but aims to reveal how some 'truths' are privileged over others. Consequently, the researcher is not an external observer looking for the most appropriate way to describe the socially constructed world; she is always entangled with the discourse. The work of construction does not take place exclusively outside the portals of academia; academic research is itself an intervention in this construction, and the only aim of the researcher can be to be as reflexive as possible regarding her own position. Science always "takes part in the struggle to fix meaning" and is by virtue of this a political act (Diez 1999b: 604).

III. Gypsies, travellers, and Roma: The making of political objects in EU discourse

This section analyses how the discourse on gypsies, travellers and Roma unfolded over time and tests the explanatory power of the model developed above. The investigation reveals that the discourse is structured by two interpretative patterns, i.e. two conduits that have consecutively channelled the debate. Moreover, the discourse as a whole is constituted by a largely unarticulated assumption:

1. The unspoken assumption of the discourse: 'Gypsies'/'Roma' as an essentialist category

The unspoken assumption constituting the discourse under investigation lies in the fact that the category of 'gypsies', 'Roma' or whatever it is called, is taken for granted. This assumption remains largely unarticulated but must necessarily be shared for the statements

that constitute the discourse as a whole to be meaningful. From the point of view of analysis, this non-utterance may be even more telling than articulated statements (Wæver 1998: 116). No matter what terminology is used, it is beyond all question that the category *per se* exists and can be clearly distinguished from others. Consequently, a decision is possible (and required) on whether a person is to be assigned to this category or another one. The process of assigning people is, however, not articulated, so that the difficulties that arise in this are hidden from sight.

The unspoken agreement to treat the category of 'Roma' or 'gypsies' as objective is the founding moment of the discourse, and the creation and maintenance of this category is at its heart. Consequently, challenging the existence of this category would represent a challenge to the discourse as a whole. To prevent the discourse from being put at risk, such lines of argumentation must be silenced: The "limits and boundaries of a particular discourse are established by the exclusion of a discursive exteriority that threatens the discourse in question" (Torfing 1999: 43). The success of such a procedure determines the persistence of the discourse.

It is therefore no accident that only one example is to be found in relevant EU documents of a text which puts the essentialist nature of the category into question by stating that attempts "to analyse the specific features of this ethnic group run into problems of definition […] since there is no objective category for deciding who is and who is not a member of the Romany population" (European Commission and Government of Hungary 2003: 10). Only once in the 19 interviews conducted so far did an official of the Commission problematise the essentialist assumption: "One of the difficult things about the whole Roma issue is of course what and who is Roma. […] It's not so black and white being a Roma" (Post 2004). Despite this ontological problem, however, the category forms the basis on which political instruments such as action programmes are built. These run into trouble if the category as a whole is challenged.[5]

The most obvious example of how the idea of Roma as an objective category becomes manifest in the discourse is the strategy of numbering, e.g. the ubiquitous search for numbers, data, and facts about the purported 'object'. It is only the shared assumption that Roma form an objective category that allows and at the same time requires the search for the objective facts defining this category. This demand for facts was present at the beginning of the EU institutions' 'discovery' of Roma in the 1970s when a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) asked the Commission: "Does the Commission know: (a) how many itinerant people there are in the Community? (b) whether they are concentrated in any particular countries or regions and what origins they have? (c) what nationalities they have and whether they have any problems in relation to nationality? (d) to what extent they benefit from social services in

[5] In the interview, Roelie Post described how, on the one hand, the category of Roma had to be part of a certain action programme in order to fit into the accession conditionality, but, on the other hand, she and her colleagues were unhappy at designing measures exclusively dealing with Roma, as this raised the problem of defining who is and who is not a Roma. In addition, they did not want to "oblige people to put a stamp 'Roma' on their head in order to benefit from programmes". Finally, therefore, the title of the proposed education project was changed, making it a programme "for disadvantaged groups with a special focus on Roma" (Post 2004).

the Member States?" (Kavanagh 1975b). And this fact-finding mission has continued unbroken until today. With regard to Slovakia for example, the Commission laments that the precise numbers of Roma living in this country are unknown and requests of the government that: "An effort to improve the accuracy of the next census in this respect should be undertaken" (European Commission 2000a: 20).

Underlying the desire for facts is the conviction that objective data exist – it is only their collection that poses difficulties. Difficulties in uncovering them only lead to an intensification of the search, which may therefore continue indefinitely. That this search is supposed to be carried out in a scientific manner goes without saying: Knowledge is to be gathered *about* gypsies, not *from* them. For example, Jean-Pierre Liégeois, a consultant on Roma issues for the Commission for some 20 years stresses that there are special "Gypsy education methods" within the gypsy community and that finding out more about these methods "is a task for ethnographers" (Liégeois 1987: 160). Making the people themselves participants in the discourse by asking *them* about such issues is not even considered as an option. In sum, the very technique of asking for facts, data, and numbers is a powerful mechanism for turning human subjects into objects of discourse, objects which must not resist their dissection.[6] Of course, turning human subjects into objects is not unique to the case of 'gypsies'. Rather, it is an essential component of modern thinking in general, which also unfolds its power in the case of 'gypsies' (Dressler 2004).

To refer to our model, the agreement on treating Roma as an objective category forms the outermost border of what can and cannot be articulated in the discourse: It is the border of the discourse itself. In the following, we will have a closer look at what falls within the discourse and what might be excluded.

2. Conduits channelling the discourse

On taking a closer look at the discourse and its various strands, it emerges that there are shared premises guiding it below the most general level just explored. These underlying interpretative patterns influence which questions can be meaningfully asked, which answers are heard, which arguments can be made and which topics and points of view are regarded as relevant and legitimate. The analysis reveals that there are basically two conduits that have consecutively acted to channel the strands of discourse.

2.1. 'Nomadism – the relevance of a life style'

In its earliest stages, the discourse was structured by the category of nomadism: Nomadism was the conduit that enabled and at the same time limited the direction followed by the discourse and its strands. It did so in four key ways: The idea of nomadism had a strong

[6] This object creating strategy is vehemently rejected by some Roma NGOs. As one representative put it: "I don't want to be a frog on the dissection table any longer."

influence on terminology; sometimes it was the unarticulated assumption that had to be shared for articulations to carry meaning; sometimes it was explicitly named as the most characteristic particularity of gypsies, whereas in other moments nomadism was taken as the feature defining a broader group encompassing more than just 'gypsies'. So while the arguments made on the basis of nomadism differed, the same category was regarded as decisive in each case.

If, as I have argued, the process of labelling determines the contours of the emerging category, it is essential to examine how the central category of the discourse is named during its gradual emergence from the inchoate mass of the overall societal discourse: In the mid-1970s, members of the European Parliament started to raise a matter which had not been articulated within the sphere of the EC institutions before. It centred on a category which was diffusely named 'itinerants', 'travelling people', 'gypsies' and to a lesser extend also 'nomads' or combinations of these terms. Sometimes these words were coupled with terms such as 'groups', 'community' or 'population'. Of course, none of these designations were invented by the actors under investigation; all of them were taken from more general discourses, which were sometimes also shaped by national peculiarities, e.g. in texts drafted by Dutch MEPs the term "caravan dwellers" is used, corresponding to the word "woonwagenbewoners" as commonly used in the Dutch-speaking context (e.g. European Parliament 1984a; Miert 1984).[7] At the level of the EC, different national variations of discourses met.

Two of the three most prominent designations in the first phase of the emerging discourse – 'traveller' and 'itinerant' – refer to a social phenomenon: a mobile way of life. Labelling the category in this way already entails its central characterization: These people travel, and can consequently be contrasted with "settled people" (Desmond 1991). In this sense, everyone who lives the traveller's lifestyle can be named a traveller. But the terms 'traveller' and 'itinerant' carry a second dimension of significance: They may also imply historical depth, applying only to people whose travelling lifestyle is *traditional*, i.e. to those whose ancestors also travelled. In the extreme case, travelling is understood as a permanent aspect of people's identity, meaning they would remain 'travellers' even when they are settled.

The semantic multidimensionality of the terms 'traveller' and 'itinerant' becomes extremely relevant within the discourse itself: For instance, in an answer to an MEP's question, the Commission mentioned a project proposal relating to the situation of "itinerants" (Answer of the Commission to Kavanagh 1975b). When the Commission was questioned on the progress of this project some three years later, it explained that it was a "project on the rehabilitation of itinerants" and that "this project is not concerned with itinerant communities such as the gypsies but with individuals without a settled way of life, mainly single men" (Answer of the Commission to Kavanagh 1978). The difference imposed here is that the former live an itinerant lifestyle in a social group, whereas the others do so individually. What

[7] The complexity of labeling is even enhanced as in the Dutch context, 'woonwagenbewoners' are distinguished from 'gypsies'; the former are considered to be domestic, the latter, foreign (see Lucassen 1996: 175).

this differentiation implies is that individual itinerants should not be part of the central category of the discourse. Using the very same formulation of “rehabilitation of itinerants”, another MEP again combines both categories (O'Connell 1980), before the category of individual itinerants is successfully banished outside the boundaries of the discourse.

In utilising the term ‘gypsies’, EU discourse employs a widely shared linguistic usage. Different derivations of the term are offered in the literature: The term ‘gypsies’ and its equivalents in other languages (e.g. gitano, gitana) is most commonly considered to derive from ‘Egypt’ – believed to be the origin of these people when they first arrived in Europe (e.g. Weyrauch 2001: VII). With regard to another group of terms such as Zigeuner, zingaro, cikán, tzigane, Cigano, cigány, sigøyner reference is made to ‘Athinganoi’ used in Greek sources for a sect meaning “the untouchables” (e.g. Reichert 1998: 159). At the same time, other authors reject this explanation as they believe it rests on a confusion between the name of the sect and ‘Atzinganoi’, a term used in Byzantine times for ‘gypsies’ (White 1999). However, the term ‘gypsy’ is an exonym, a name imposed by people who do not consider themselves to belong to the group, and the boundaries of the group are thus also imposed from outside. While these boundaries are conceptualised in different ways, most of the time no evidence is provided at all as to where they are drawn. As a result, the central category of discourse remains of indefinite shape. Moreover, the fact that the category is considered to be self-evident means that this silence is not disturbed by requests that it be made explicit: “There seems to be a *communis opinio* about who they are” (Willems 1998: 17).[8] The general silence regarding the criteria employed to determine the course of the border corresponds to the unspoken assumption of the existence of the objective category in general: As the underlying assumption that ‘gypsies’ (as well as ‘Roma’) form an essentialist category is not explicated, neither do the criteria for distinguishing this category from others have to be disclosed. The assumption that agreement exists on who is and who is not a ‘gypsy’ can only be held up by an eloquent silence on this issue. Only on this basis can the discourse be continued.

The three dominant designations, ‘itinerants’, ‘travellers’ and ‘gypsies’, are quite frequently combined. This is done in four different ways: First, one term is used to explain the others, for example the expression “Itinerant or Travelling People” is footnoted “commonly known as gypsies” (Kavanagh 1975a). Or, second, different terms are listed in a coordinative enumeration such as “gypsies and itinerants” (Answer of the Commission to Ramírez-Heredia 1988). While the former type of combination regards the terms as constituting a single group, the latter constructs them as two different ones. Third, one term is mentioned as an example of another one, e.g. “Itinerant communities such as gypsies” (Kavanagh 1978). Or, finally, one designation is followed by another, which is used to open up the group: “Gypsies and other itinerants” (O'Connell 1980). In these last two cases, ‘gypsies’ is understood as a subset of ‘itinerants’, in the first case going from the more general to the more specific; and in the

[8] Willems’ diagnosis refers to the academic curriculum rather than to political actors. So, taking the category of political practices as a category of analysis (Brubaker 1996: 15) is a widespread exercise in ‘gypsy studies’. (For further critical reflections on ‘gypsy studies’ see Willems 1996, Baldauf 2000, Dressler 2004).

second, from the specific to the general. All combinations except for the second necessarily imply that all gypsies travel. The combination of the terms result in a situation where one designation is ‘explained’ by the other using circular reasoning.

A new expression appears in 1984. For the first time, reference is made to people “with no fixed abode” (European Parliament 1984a). This expression is used in the drafting process for a resolution that was initially intended to deal with “educational problems of circus and fair children” (European Parliament 1982). As the drafting process continued, the group covered was enlarged by also including ‘caravan dwellers’. Nomadism, as a characteristic that these groups are assumed to share, is considered to demand a common policy approach: “the educational problems confronting circus and fair children affect all children whose parents have no fixed abode. We can distinguish three categories of children within this group: children of caravan dwellers, fair and circus children and barge children” (Explanatory Statement, European Parliament 1984a). This is a perfect example of how nomadism is employed to constitute a broader group.

Following William’s advice to look for terms that stand in opposition to the ones under consideration, it became clear that hardly any contrasting terms are used. As the meaning of a word is also fixed by its complement (Williams 1999: 39), maintaining silence with regard to the complement keeps the term itself elastic. Furthermore, this also serves implicitly to keep the group in question in isolation from its surroundings, as applying a contrasting term would establish a connection with the surroundings. While the heterogeneity of designations keeps the boundary flexible from the inside, the near total failure to designate what stands in opposition to the main term does the same from the outside. Together, both procedures create a conceptual border *corridor* rather than a clearly defined boundary *line* between people considered to be objects of the discourse and those who are not. Attempts are sometimes made to narrow the corridor as shown in the case of ‘itinerants’ where “individuals without a settled way of life” (Answer of the Commission to Kavanagh 1978) were moved from the border corridor to the outside of the discourse. However, the grey area remains.

The aim of these illustrations was to show how the interpretative pattern of nomadism found its way into the labelling of the category of discourse, how the unquestioned assumption prevails that all gypsies travel (expressed in formulations such as “gypsies and other nomads” (Answer of the Commission to O'Connell 1980)) but also how categories more encompassing than ‘gypsies’ are constructed on the basis of this pattern (people “with no fixed abode” (European Parliament 1984a)).

While nomadism serves to create categories broader than ‘gypsies’ it is, at the same time, stressed as the most prominent particularity of gypsies – something that distinguishes them from the rest of the population. In this respect, nomadism is not regarded just as “a key element in the lifestyle of caravan dwellers”, but as a constant of identity: “It determines not just the conditions in which they live but also their way of thinking and way of life” (Explanatory Statement, European Parliament 1984a: 9). This line of argumentation is a recurring feature of the discourse. Liégeois for example, the longstanding advisor to the Commission already mentioned, states in a study carried out on behalf of and published by the

Commission: "A Traveller is someone who remains detached form his surroundings, who is able to pick up and move whenever it is useful or necessary to do so, when he needs to or simply fells like it." He sums up: "A Traveller – even a 'housed' Traveller – is a Traveller still." Accordingly, a "'settled person', when moving about, remains 'settled' in spirit" (Liégeois 1987: 34-35).

The interpretative pattern of nomadism ascribes to the object a sense of space that is entirely relative. This relativity can then be generalised to their entire culture and lifestyle: "Caravan dwellers have a relatively casual attitude towards space and time. They live in the present and give little or no thought to the future. They do not live according to a fixed scheme of hours, days and weeks, etc. Work is integrated into the normal rhythm of the day so that there is no difference between work and leisure as such" (Explanatory Statement, European Parliament 1984a: 9). This passage clearly owes something to the European romanticism of the 19th Century. It paints an idealised picture of people who serve as the personification of freedom, childlike in their lack of concern about the future, who live in an idyllic world of their own, untroubled by alienation from their labour: "the Gypsy worldview emphasises the present moment" (Liégeois 1987: 34).

It should be added that, apart from the figure of the nomadic lifestyle, another formulation is also used frequently to characterise the group: Compared to nomadism this category is (even) more vague. It stresses these people's 'specific way of life'.[9] Here, a particularity is highlighted without being specified. It is thus an invitation to the reader to fill out the expression using her imagination. Accordingly, it may be associated with nomadism but is not necessarily. Such vagueness makes it possible to reach apparent agreement and therefore to proceed with the discourse. Vagueness is therefore related to the more extreme strategy of remaining silent mentioned before.

While being itinerant is not always accepted as a feature constituting the group, as shown in the case of itinerants, it is, on the other hand, hard to imagine a 'settled gypsy' being included either. That nomadism is the all-dominant interpretative pattern of the discourse can be detected not only in the designation of the overall group but also within the various discursive strands. In the context of education policy, for example, methods of distance teaching are highlighted, based on the assumption of a nomadic existence (e.g. Liégeois 1987; Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council 1989). Discrimination, the topic of another strand of discourse, occurs on grounds of "their way of life" (European Parliament 1984b) or "their specific circumstances" (European Parliament 1987). In the discursive strand on what is usually called 'housing', questions regarding halting sites for caravans dominate (European Parliament 1980, 1981, 1984c; Patterson 1980).[10]

[9] The variations being: "their way of life" (Kavanagh 1975a; European Parliament 1984b), their "own way of life" (European Parliament 1981), life in "specific circumstances" (European Parliament 1987).

[10] One MEP's question concerned the very specific matter of fire-safety standards of materials used in the manufacture of caravans, as caravan fires cause "a number of tragic deaths" contributing "to a situation where Irish travellers have a life expectancy which is ten years shorter at all ages than in the case for settled people" (Desmond 1991).

2.2. A new conduit channels the discourse: 'Roma – the minority in Eastern Europe'

In the first half of the 1990s, a new interpretative pattern slowly develops while the older one continues to exist: The term 'Roma' is increasingly used, the characterization as 'minority' gains importance, and the boundaries of the discourse are geographically drawn around 'Eastern Europe' – with reference either to the region as a whole or to the various countries within it. From being very much a niche topic, the 'Roma' issue now became increasingly prominent and, by being highlighted in the Commission's Progress Reports in the course of enlargement, it reached the agenda of everyday politics.

With the term 'Roma' a new designation appears and gradually gains importance in the discourse. In contrast to the formerly used exonym 'gypsy', an endonym is now employed: 'Roma' means 'man' or 'human being' in Romani. In the discourse, it is frequently combined with 'minority' but also supplemented with 'community'. With regard to 'Eastern Europe', the term 'gypsy' is nearly always used until the middle of the 1990s, whereas afterwards 'Roma' prevails. The most noticeable shift in terminology is the change from the Commission's use of 'gypsies' in its opinion on the applications of the different countries in 1997 to 'Roma' from the first round of Regular Reports in 1998 onwards.

Adopting the endonym allows for a new mechanism in drawing the category boundaries: It provides justification for shifting responsibility for the task of boundary drawing to the designated themselves. As the term is taken from Romani, Roma are also expected to define the extent of the term's application. In the case of 'gypsies' such an inversion is not possible as the exonym implies a boundary drawn by an external agency. The fact that no exact definition is provided is presented as an anomaly, even though struggles over the definition of group members and outsiders is common in other communities as well.[11] Underlying this view among people who do not consider themselves to be 'Roma' is a pre-existing implicit idea that such an exact borderline exists and runs in a certain direction: The group is constructed *a priori*, the boundary is drawn in advance. Only then can it appear odd that the group does not constitute itself according to the boundary, which it is believed to have drawn itself. Only then can the following judgment on Roma political structures be passed: "divisions among the Roma population and corruption hamper successful political organisation" (ESC Delegation to the EU-Bulgaria Joint Consultative Committee 2002: 8).[12] Just as in the case of 'gypsies', criteria for distinguishing 'Roma' from 'other people' are not provided.[13]

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[11] See for example differences of opinion in Germany on whether 'Russlanddeutsche' should be considered German or Russian.

[12] The exercise in boundary drawing is of course not only undertaken by the EU and other international organisations but also by Roma themselves. For an analysis of the latter, see Vermeersch 2001.

[13] The only exception in the large volume of documents analysed is when the term Roma was footnoted with the explanation that it is used as a "generic name for the group of people who speak a Romani tongue and/or share a common ethnic identity, culture and history" (European Commission 2003: 4). In no other instance are any explications to be found.

In general, the variety of terms for the core category has been reduced over time and neither 'gypsy' nor 'Roma' tends now to be used in combination with other terms to establish a broader category based on a shared characteristic. Although variations such as 'Roma minority' or 'Roma community' continue to exist, these do not call the representation as a uniform whole *per se* into question. But one must not overlook the fact that a certain amount of terminological room for manoeuvre remains: While plural formulations like "Roma communities" (e.g. European Commission 1999a: 17, 2001b: 30) allow for the most heterogeneous perception, the common formulation "the Roma" (e.g. European Commission 1998b: 7, 2002b: 19) is the most homogenizing one. With the dying off of the multitude of shifting designations the border corridor narrows to a precise – though nowhere explicitly defined – line, which is no longer open for negotiation. The group is constructed as more internally homogeneous and more clearly distinguished from the outside. To put it the other way round, heterogeneities within the group and homogeneities with outsiders are written off.

The change in the interpretative pattern of the discourse took place in the first half of the 1990s, at a time when a discourse centering around the category of 'minorities' was growing tremendously in prominence. In the EU context, this prominence became manifest in the Copenhagen Criteria, which require "respect for and protection of minorities" from the candidate countries. The Copenhagen Criteria set the frame for the Regular Reports, and Roma were, from the very beginning, clearly positioned in the minority section of these annual documents accompanying the accession negotiations. As a result of the overarching presence and legitimacy of the discourse on minorities, partly created by its "securitization"[14], the conceptualization as 'minority' prevails over alternative ones such as a 'disadvantaged group'[15].

Two of the three contrasting terms used under this interpretative pattern, 'majority' and 'other national minorities', also point to the discourse on minorities. While all minorities are clearly distinguished from the majority population, there is a striking dichotomy between 'Roma' on the one hand and 'other minorities' on the other. The formulation 'national minority' is sometimes used to distinguish them from 'Roma' ("national minorities and the Roma" (e.g. European Commission 2001c: 24)), sometimes Roma are subsumed under this category, e.g.: "It appears that in many areas national minorities do not make use of the rights granted under the law due to lack of information. For instance, no Roma village has apparently taken advantage of the possibilities to use the Romany language" (European Commission 2000a: 20). This dichotomy becomes especially obvious in the Regular Reports. Symptomatic is a summarising and contrasting characterisation of the situation of these groups, such as the following: "While the situation of other minorities continued to be satisfactory, the situation of the Roma has not really improved" (European Commission

[14] The discourse on minorities is not the focus of this paper. Therefore, it is only a cursory impression that mechanisms of "securitization" (Wæver 1995) were applied effectively to this discourse.

[15] Nevertheless, such conceptualizations are not completely absent, e.g. the Commission speaks of "children from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, of which many are Roma children" (European Commission 2000b: 77) or of "education of socially disadvantaged children (such as young Roma and children living in remote areas with insufficient access to education facilities)" (European Commission 2001a: 69).

1998a: 10). Always, 'the other side' remains nameless. The term "other minorities" (e.g. European Commission 1999b: 15, 2001c: 27) does not carry any meaning on its own. It only receives meaning when combined with 'the one' minority and is therefore not a self-contained conceptual category. The difference between 'Roma' and 'other minorities', a difference upon which so much stress is laid, is only explicated at the level of symptoms, comparing vaguely their situations, and not on a conceptual level.

Although the Copenhagen Criteria referred to the situation of minorities in general, the situation of the Roma minority came increasingly to the fore within the discourse on minorities. The Commission's opinions on the candidate countries' applications, which were published in 1997, included a kind of stocktaking exercise on what minorities live in the country, their numbers (see above) and relevant legal regulations. The situation of Roma is already highlighted at this point, but from 1998 onwards, the Roma issue clearly dominates the minority sections of the reports. Only with regard to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the Turkish minority in Bulgaria do we find regular reporting on minorities other than Roma at all. Today, 'minority' is quite often used as a synonym for 'Roma'. Under the headline "minority (Roma) issue" (ESC Delegation to the EU-Bulgaria Joint Consultative Committee 2002) for example, the focus is entirely on the Roma issue. Another example is the demand for a Commissioner with special responsibility for the integration of minorities. When this demand, which was first articulated by MEPs of the Austrian delegation of the Socialist Group, is explicated, it routinely refers exclusively to Roma (Swoboda 2004).

The rise to prominence of the category 'Roma' within the discourse on minorities is also demonstrated by the term used to designate its opposite: The 'other minorities' are also labelled "non-Roma minorities" (e.g. European Commission 2001c: 24, 2002a: 30), which is a makeshift designation by negation. The category 'Roma' is not only used to define those people who are placed inside the boundary of the target group but also those who are placed outside. 'Roma' or 'non-Roma' – reality is classified according to this binary schema. In this, the second term does not provide any clarification of its complement, but merely refers back to it.

IV. Separating 'Western Gypsies and Travellers' – 'Eastern Roma': Some concluding remarks

This paper traced the discourse on 'gypsies', 'travellers', 'Roma' – and other terms used to designate its central concept – within the sphere of the institutions of the EC/EU and identified a shift at the level of conduits channelling the discourse. When speculating about the relationship between these two patterns beforehand, one might have imagined that – from the 1990s on – the institutions would refer back to their – admittedly rather small – corpus of earlier activities, especially as the designation used was the same at the beginning of the second phase. One might have assumed that the EU would want to stress the continuities and

to portray itself as a benevolent organization that had anticipated the upcoming challenges very early on.

But, in fact, the main continuity that could be found was in the discursive strand concerning discrimination. This strand has made a triumphal progress in the EU discourse on 'Roma' since the 1970s. Recently, the principle of non-discrimination was further institutionalized in the Council Directive "implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin" (Council of the European Union 2000).[16] This continuity, however, has to be put into perspective, as non-discrimination is a deep-seated principle of the EU, applied far more broadly than only in the context of Roma or minority issues, or with regard to the social sphere in general: Indeed, it is foremost a guiding economic principle – one that aims at equal treatment. This finds expression, for example, in the Four Freedoms. Non-discrimination is thus the central principle for ensuring the further integration of the European single market.

In general, the discourse is characterized more by discontinuity than continuity. Under the second interpretative pattern, which conceives of Roma as a minority in Eastern Europe, there is no reference to be found to the first phase at all. The terminological continuity is broken; 'nomadism' ceases to be a point of reference; the dimension of culture (a specific 'gypsy culture'), present, although not dominant, under the first interpretative pattern, also vanishes: The two interpretative patterns are kept strictly separate. The geographical association of Roma issues with Eastern Europe serves to uphold the separation of 'Eastern Roma' and 'Western gypsies and travellers', allowing the establishment of 'Roma' as a category that refers exclusively to 'the East'.

Beyond the issue of Roma minorities, the phase of enlargement – and especially the Regular Reports – serve as a screen for the construction of Eastern Europe in general, something that Larry Wolff (1994: 1-16) characterizes as a construction of a space of ambiguity: A space between Europe and Asia, between Enlightenment and barbarism, between inclusion and exclusion. Although this ambiguity can be analyzed with regard to various aspects of the representation of Eastern Europe within the enlargement process[17], the discourse on Roma is particularly telling, as it is itself the locus of considerable vagueness and ambivalence within 'Western' European tradition of Enlightenment: On the one hand, these people are construed as pre-modern, as resistant to paying homage to the achievements of modernity while, at the same time, they are considered as objects of tolerance in line with Enlightenment values. Rather than providing reflection on this ambivalence within a 'Western' tradition, Roma are used as a screen to further augment two central features of the construction of 'the East': They are presented as the personification of the backwardness of

[16] In EU slang, this document is called "Race Directive", although one of the most redundant exercises in the document itself and in documents referring to it, is to state: "The European Union rejects theories which attempt to determine the existence of separate human races. The use of the term 'racial origin' in this Directive does not imply an acceptance of such theories." This reference to the category of 'race' serves as a good example that a discourse ('racist') and its main counter discourse ('anti-racist') have much in common, as they share certain central categories (Wæver 1998: 111; see also Laclau and Mouffe 1985: chs 3, 4).

[17] For analyses of this kind, see, for example, Kovács 2001, 2003; Kovács and Kabachnik 2001.

Eastern Europe, e.g. via the application of descriptions known from representations of the ‘Third World’[18]; and, at the same time, they serve as the embodiment of the ‘ethnic principle’ assumed to predominate in ‘the East’.

[18] For example, the description of Roma housing areas as “slum-like” (European Commission 2003: 8), but also pictures e.g. of Commissioner Verheugen showing him with ‘poor but happy’ Roma children.

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