'Culture' and 'integration' in the making of Roma students: the contribution of a critical and engaged ethnography

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1. Introduction

This study intends to give an insight into how a cross-cultural, critical and engaged ethnography can contribute to the analysis of cultural (and not) integration in the case of Roma students through the deconstruction of concepts related to "culture" and "integration". When talking about the "Roma[1] question" in education, culture and integration emerge not only in policy discourses, but also in everyday conversations among teachers or activists. The analysis of these terms' appropriation, their connection to local experiences and own competences of local actors, can help us understanding the processes in which categories supposed to interpret complexity or bring positive change become instruments of producing or reinforcing discriminative practices when they encounter the lack of resources, complex hierarchies, conflicting interests and multi-level pressures on local actors. The case of education and Roma students offers a wide range of possibilities for capturing how different terms related to culture and integration get sense in local practices. This article, based on a PhD research that takes the periphery as a central experience, gives an insight into how an engaged research position can contribute to problematizing categories taken for granted and to the analysis of culture in the educational practice, therefore it discusses mainly methodological questions and shows a few examples from the research process, contextualizing them with remarks from similar ethnographic works on the topic.

2. About the research

The PhD research that gives the basis of the this study focuses on the narratives and strategies of Roma children and young people who live on the urban margins of Naples (Italy) and Pécs (Hungary) and tries to understand the effect of Roma policies on them. It looks not only at the experiences of Roma students but the narratives and practices of different local actors: including teachers, educators of afterschool activities, families and students. The way local actors respond to, resist to, redesign or adapt to policies in contexts considered as peripheries, reveals how the image of Roma student relates to the complex interplay between the making of Roma and the making of the periphery and how policy discourses can be captured in these processes.

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[1] In this chapter I use the term 'Roma' whenever I write in general. When looking at the local cases, I either use Roma or Gypsy, depends how much is it adequate in the given context. In Pécs, a significant group usually refuse to use the term 'Roma' which comes from the Romanes, as they do not speak that language and do not identify with the other local group that does. They use the term 'cigány' when referring to themselves. In this case it is both an exonym which involves strong stereotypes while widely diffused in the Roma community, as well as an ethnonym used by certain groups to differentiate themselves from other groups. The term 'nomad' I use exclusively as an example of stereotypical labeling. Similarly, in some cases I will use the term 'Gypsy' in order to refer to its connotation. In some cases I will refer to the exact ethnonyms, especially where it is an important element of self-identification: like in the case of 'Spoitori' in Naples or the 'Boyash' and 'Kolompár' in Pécs.

The narratives of different actors are analysed along the main categories and terms that emerge in policy documents and provides evidences for the local interpretation of questions like: 'early school leaving', 'early marriage', 'segregation', 'disadvantages', 'poverty', mentioning only a few keywords that often appear in Roma targeted policies. The young population's point of view puts all these questions in a prospective that helps to understand more the (non) dynamic characteristics of the issue, e.g. sheds a different light on (the blurred lined betwenn) present/future, mobility/immobility, suspension/progress. 'Roma policies' I mean policies that address Roma – implicitly or explicitly[2] – as a target group, while as 'Roma' I understand those who appear as 'Roma' for the referred policies and for the local actors – for an analytical purpose. This study focuses rather on what we can learn from the research process itself, rather than the core analysis of the fieldwork data.

3. The context

At the first sight a comparison between Naples and Pécs seems to be surprising, as the dimensions and social processes in the two localities seem to be hardly comparable. I rather think though that this is one of the strongest points of this research – even if it was rather a result of 'life' than well-planned decision – comparing very different contexts which have many similar points in the production of the "Roma issue". On the other hand, there is a strong common point in the analysed contexts: the focus on the periphery which on one hand again is embedded into very different contexts, therefore strongly differ, while share similar processes and representation. Within this, the ghetto[3], the camp has a particular relation to time and space, a 'permanent temporariness' (Picker and Pasquetti, 2015).

When I say 'cross-cultural' ethnography I understand it as exploring analogical incidents in different institutions or countries (see Lappalainen, Lahelma, Mietola, 2014). What connects the two places most strongly is my experience and the way I was moving in and out of the two contexts in the last few years. In this relation to the fields, all my research activities were bound by the dialogue between my different experiences. I learned Naples from Pécs, I learned the Roma camp departing from the South-Transdanubian Hungarian 'Roma village' and 'Roma ghetto'. Later on I have relearned the periphery of Pécs and the Roma ghetto from another point of view. The same happened to the school system itself, moreover in changing roles over time entering the very same contexts.

When understanding the contexts of my fieldwork, besides knowing 'the facts', seems to be even more relevant to understand the history of knowledge production of these places, namely how and by whom are they constituted and defined – as camp, as periphery, as 'deprived', etc. The image of these locations in public and scientific discourses is part of those spatial politics that have been

[2] Under Roma targeted policies I understand both policies that explicitely use the term Roma (or other designations common in the analysed contexts, e.g. Nomad, Gypsy, etc.), but also those that avoiding the ethnic targeting, use social categories and/or spatial definitions, but in a local context thanks to the implicit knowledge on space and social conditions these categories have a similar ethnic load. About this question regarding the Hungarian context, in particular about housing policy documents see more: Balatonyi – Baracsi – Cserti – Orsós, 2014.

[3] The concept of ghetto in the Hungarian context is problematic in some points, though I use this expression throughout the chapter.

involved into the construction of my research sites, already at the point of formulating my research questions. Here I would like to underline that I do not look at the Roma camp or ghetto in itself (again to be questioned what is a Roma camp or a ghetto) but the dynamic relation between camp and periphery, Roma ghetto and periphery.

Doing (educational) ethnography is always multiscale: in the local experience we capture wider social dynamics. Also, throughout my research I found very useful the term 'glocal' as Meyrowitz uses it, both in understanding the wider associations of social processes captured in one locality and my position as a researcher (Meyrowitz, 2005)

When in 2011 I have started to work in Naples as a trainee at an association, I suddenly found myself in Scampia, a periphery that has its overall negative fame in the country and in the world, place and topic of several, books and films (among them the most well-known is Roberto Saviano's Gomorra[4]), recently even a television series with the title Gomorra. I had no knowledge of Scampia or Naples. Though during my stay I lived in 'popular neighbourhoods' of the centre, I was spending most of my time from the very first days in Scampia, and in the Roma camp, then in other camps around the city. It was a process through which I learned the city from its margins, taking the experiences of the periphery as a basic reference point. This position implies a very different perspective as the sites of my research are strongly stigmatised within the city as well, they are typical 'no-go' zones in the imagination of city habitants. This is though only a chain of a complex process in which the multiple layers of stigmas are passed on within Italy towards Neapolitans, then inside the city between the different neighbourhoods. The construction of very local identities – the Neapolitan and the "quarter-identities" – is a dynamic, continuous process of belonging. Naples is often described as an ambiguous city of feudalistic structures combined with a suddenly arrived modernisation, where the conserved popular culture exists parallel to modern lifestyles. The city's particular development is often blamed for its current situation and its development is interpreted as a failed or abnormal pathway. The other narration of Naples highlights its postmodern face, the intellectual initiatives, the art movements and the blossoming third sector. Dines proposes the critical ethnography of Naples and points out a few starting points for that: "First, such an ethnography needs to engage more seriously with analogous urban processes of other cities, be they Stockholm or Delhi, rather than measuring Naples exclusively against the rest of Italy or Mediterranean Europe. Second, it is necessary to oust the city's historic centre from anthropology's pantheon of privileged field sites and to revisit it as one part of an ordinary city interconnected with the world at large. Third, greater scrutiny must be paid to the interactions and conflicts between different social groups and how these are constitutive of urban life, contra the tendency to dwell on those inhabitants (usually of the popular neighbourhoods) seen to share the same values and practices. Finally, research needs to take on board the sorts of historical contexts." (Dines, 2012: p. 23.) In my view Naples, which seems to combine characteristic of cities from both the Global South and North, can be a ground for rethinking our image of cities in Europe: in my understanding cities like Naples or neighbourhoods like Scampia makes us facing

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[4] Saviano, Roberto (2006): Gomorra. Mondadori

those inherent elements of urban life that we often try to exclude from our image about the city or at least control them.

The problems of Scampia are various and much of them is connected to a failed urban planning and its realization (thanks to different interests), which overlooked several important social and cultural factors.[5] Though the image of Roma camp – just beside a recycling depot, literally cutting through a road leading out of the city – makes us believe that they are the newcomers, both Neapolitans and Roma migrated to this territory relatively recently. The real expansion of the neighbourhood happened in the '80s solving the housing problems that emerged after the earthquake. This internal migration was followed by a 'spontaneous' migration of people from Yugoslavia, which transformed into a wider influx during the war in the '90s. Currently there are an official camp and an informal one on the territory of Scampia-Secondigliano. The first official data about the territory's population is the one collected in 2008 when the state of emergency was declared. The newest data[6] that was presented publicly at the Faculty of Architecture by Giovanni Laino on the 9th November 2015 show a decline in the population compared to the previous data.[7] The camp, in spite of external perceptions, is not a homogeneous community, not only in terms of ethnic belonging[8], but also of socio-economic status.[9] The stratification within segregated Roma communities is often overlooked by public authorities in their interventions.

Barra is another Neapolitan periphery - though less famous – with some similar characteristics: among those the high level of unemployment and the strong presence of criminality imply several difficulties also regarding education. In this context can find the camp of S. Maria del Pozzo, close to the railway line, visible from the train but hidden from the usual routes of the local population. The camp exists for more than a decade and the habitants are from Romania (mainly from Călăraşi) and they identify themselves as 'spoitori' that implies a strong differentiation from other types of Roma, they often also refuse the name "Roma"

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[5] About Scampia in English see Laino, 2004. It is also worth to look into some accounts (e.g. interviews) of Felice Pignataro, artist and activist about the topic. Documentary: 'Felice!' http://www.felicepignataro.org/felice/

[6] mapping survey made in the Roma settlement of via Cupa Perillo in Scampia, a Romact and Welfare Depertmant Joint Action

[7] According to this data there are 681 persons living on this territory, half of them born in Italy. There are several methodological and ethical concerns around these surveys, therefore also the data must be treated with some caution. However, the interest of the city in having a more complex picture about the background and needs of this community can be considered as a progress in the management of the Roma camp.

[8] It has to be noticed that in general the activists, experts, organizations engaged in Roma issues seem to be little interested in the Roma culture in terms of used ethnonyms, language and customs. The only categorization widely used is the distinction between Xoraxane and Dasikane Roma, but more likely referred to as "rom ortodossi" and '"rom musulmani". The camp inhabitants themselves use the same categories when explaining their background to non-Roma. For detailed questions, in a few cases they refer to the region where they come from (e.g. banatsani), in other cases they refer to their "pure" Roma origin and distinguish themselves from those who define themselves as part of a subgroup. Others are both aware of their group identity and declare it and categorize others in the camp. S., one of my respondents who unlike the others, comes from Bulgaria and identifies herself as kaladzhi, listed the following groups that are present in the camp: bukulesh, bajash, banatsani, mrsarja, kanjara.

[9] The camps, i.e. the smaller communities inside the camp have even physical borders that separate them from each other, however there has been some mix-up between different groups, also between a group of rom musulmani and rom ortodossi. Others maintain and reproduce their borders much more intensively, well exemplified by a small community that is in the best economic situation within the camp. The labelling of others is quite strong between the camp inhabitants, some less integrated families are simply called as "sporchi", i.e. dirties by the others.

when talking about their concrete ethnic identification. According to the different estimates 200-350 persons live on this territory (Zoppoli, Saudino, 2012). In 2013, when I have first time visited the camp, it was hardly reachable not only because of the bad state of the road but also the amount of garbage all around the camp. In the meantime it has been removed, unlike in the old camp of Scampia.

Regarding the schooling the two neighbourhoods share similar problems, both regarding Neapolitans and Roma. Associations and schools notice a progress regarding school attendance of Roma children, much more strongly and visibly in Barra, less in Scampia (especially taking into account their long presence on the territory), while school drop-out, the so-called early marriage and the participation of minors in the informal economy are still among the mostly mentioned problems. Scampia in general is a place of several civil initiatives, and also in the camp work several religious groups and associations. Most of them realize educational activities as well. In Barra there are less NGOs, but also the dimensions are smaller. Regarding the projects, in both territories there is some kind of collaboration between the different actors, though it is not really organized and does not seem very effective. Since the presence of Roma on these territories, there were several public projects, first under the name of mediation, lately referred as inclusion project thanks to the local extension[10] of a ministerial "experimental project" started in 2013/2014.[11]

Pécs is a city in the South-Transdanubian Region of Hungary. Similarly to the city of Naples that incorporates tolerance into its identity, Pécs as part of the city brand, promotes its cultural diversity as a historical and inherent element of the city identity. The city held the European Capital of Culture title in 2010 and the title of the project was „Borderless City". Numerous minorities are living in the city, among others the Roma minority. In this picture, the post-industrial problems could be overwritten by the imagination of a diverse, colourful cultural life and creative industry, however, the city is in a strong population and economic decline in the recent years. These processes undermine the (never too realistic) dream of the 'decentrum': that despite of Hungary's strongly Budapest-centralized population dynamics, cultural politics and redistribution system, Pécs could be a regional (cultural) centre.

In 2011 I have started the fieldwork at a former mineworker colony called István-akna. Though that time I was working on Roma topic for more than 4 years and had quite a deep knowledge about the situation in the region, especially in the countryside, I did not have much concrete experience on the margins of the city apart from superficial accounts from visits and events. My knowledge about the

city itself, the way I learned was quite downtown-centric, but I was grown up on the margin of the very city centre, having a look at a lower status territory right from my window that later on got into the news when in order to hide to poor (i.e. Roma) population from the visitors of the newly built concert hall, the city hall put a wood wall there. When I decided about the territory, I had a clear intention to go on the 'periphery', which I have selected based on its accessibility through my contacts, which that time was one of the most 'abandoned' area in terms of public or civil society interventions[12]. The territory of István-akna since the transition and the close down of the mine has been affected by a strong population change as the result of the outflow of former workers, inflow of people from villages and the relocation of families from the city centre. For decades the city of Pécs placed the evicted inhabitants from the city centre to the very periphery of the city, which with the formerly started transformation processes of these colonies caused the segregation of certain areas. Within the area of István-akna we can also divide some subterritories and at the most peripheral part we can find almost exclusively Roma families. The major part of them went through a strong assimilation process during the state socialism. There are both Boyash and Kolompár[13] families and we find some examples for Boyash-Non Gypsy and also for Boyash-Kolompár mixed marriages.[14] While on one hand, the territory and its population is in a deprived situation where being Gypsy is tied to poorness and exclusion and the accessible narratives about a valorised 'Roma culture' are quite limited, if we change the perspective, we can narrate this territory in more positive terms compared to other Hungarian territories or my other fields. We can find a very similar situation on the other field site, Pécs-Somogy that has a similar mineworker colony history. This territory I included into the research in 2014 through its school and except of some activity with a group of young people, I have not done more work in the community itself.

Meszes, a 'mixed territory' is the neighbourhood where the school centre works to which institutionally belong the elementary schools frequented by the children of the two mentioned territories; moreover some of them commute to this elementary school. Meszes is in the same Eastern, stigmatised part of the city, which on mental maps made by city habitants appears with a reduced importance – a huge territory drawn as a tiny one with not much information. During their interpretation it comes up as an overcrowded, dangerous place. (Mester, 2005) Meszes is still not a segregated area, even though segregation processes are quite visible. Another school, where I realized collaborative research, belongs to the same school centre, though its district, Gyárváros, is different – but still with similar problems. I have also carried out field visits at an elementary school and educational initiatives in György-telep and Hősök tere, which are other segregated[15] areas in Eastern-Pécs. Still István-akna seems to be in the worst situation, also because this was the last territory where community development

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[12] Exactly for this reason it has been selected as the intervention area of the Romact program.
[13] The local name used for those groups who speak Romanes (see lovari).
[14] There are strong boundaries between the old and new habitants and the people who live upper or down on this territory. Between the newcomer habitants and the people living here for decades emerge several conflicts. The social status of these families is low and the identity policy based on cultural representation or the civic activity is also weak, almost not existent.
[15] Segregated in terms of socioeconomic conditions, while the ethnicisation of poverty works towards a false ethnically homogeneous imagination of these areas.

interventions started, while the other mentioned territories, especially György-telep and Hősök tere were places of such interventions since 2008[16]. We can find some afterschool projects on these territories. The interventions in Roma communities in general have a strong professional basis and can count on the experiences of similar initiatives in the region.[17]

4. The research process, methods and research position

4.1. The research process

The questions raised in this paper are fruit of my PhD research that was started in 2011. An ethnographic fieldwork has been carried out in the selected neighbourhoods, with accounts in educational and housing contexts. The research is a critical, engaged ethnography with a strong element of collaborative research. The meaning of collaboration has been defined and filled up in several different ways since 2011, including collaborative research methods in the classroom, school and afterschool activities or the preparation of scientific papers on the topic with professionals of NGOs[18]. The original idea of realizing a school ethnography in one or two Hungarian schools has been extended to a multi-sited, transnational comparative project based though still on very concrete local cases, even if working in two different cities and within them different neighbourhoods, limits the time and possible engagement with the field. In almost five years, I have spent in Pécs approx. 10 weeks dedicated full-time to the research, from which 3 weeks in classrooms, having previous experience on the field and being involved for 2 years into another research project on Roma housing policies and participating in the fieldwork of a child trafficking project on the same research site. The time dedicated specifically to collaborative research activities in the classroom was quite restricted, only one week. I was doing fieldwork in Naples for approximately 11 months for my PhD and other 7 months working on another research project about economic strategies in the city of Naples and two cities in the province of Caserta. I dedicated approx. 22 weeks for the school context, including observation and collaborative research activities in the classrooms.

The core reference was the educational ethnography which works with multiple methods (including quantitative methods) and as an ultimate goal, the so-called 'collaborative ethnography' that I have tried to put in practice with students, schools and NGOs, but have found extremely complex both its practical aspect and its theoretical implications. However, at the same time exactly the efforts to collaborate with certain actors helped me to discover its limits. The conflicts of interests, the power relations within the field and my limits regarding balancing between different actors gave me a non-expected insight. As in my understanding collaboration must involve a higher level of consciousness and dedication, I do not

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[16] Jelenlét Program, Hungarian Maltese Charity Service and desegregation programs under different funding schemes (social and regional development funds) with the participation of a local Roma NGO

[17] Pécs and the Transdanubian Region is well-known of the strong presence of NGOs since decades in the Roma question: several associations, religious groups work with the Roma community. The Gandhi Secondary School, the (in the meantime closed) Collegium Martineum, the Department of Romology all can be found in Pécs. These initiatives were starting points for many current Roma intellectuals.

[18] Pierro, Barbara-Ferulano, Emma- Baracsi, Kitti: Residence: Nowhere. In: Roma Rights Journal, 2014/1. Going Nowhere? Western Balkan Roma and EU Visa Liberalisation. and The List of Dead Souls: The Dilemmas of Ethnographic Research and Intervention in a Public Project for Roma Students in Scampia, Naples (Italy). Oxford Education and Ethnography Conference 2013. (conference paper)

use this label to the entire research, as I am aware of its shortcomings in my research practice. [19]

Also, collaboration stands much in the collaborative analysis, which is a phase in progress in my research. In each site, each school there is a different situation regarding the state of the research. It comes from the different amount of time and level of engagement and also from the specificities of the local context. In Barra in a relatively short time, I managed to reach a partner relationship with the director and a few teachers, a good collaboration with children inside the classroom and with a group of Roma adolescents (girls) outside the school, thanks to the extreme openness and support of the director itself. The situation is similar in the selected schools of Pécs, with less engagement in time. In the schools of Scampia, the research results from the school context come from activities (observation, collaborative research activities with students) that were incorporated in my work in the classrooms in the frame educational project implemented by an association. Even if anthropologists often use similar techniques to enter certain difficult contexts, it is a very questionable position and as such must be critically reflected in the analysis. In fact, the field notes from this period are much more to be analysed as an autoethnographic experiment.

As collaborative methods in the classroom and the school, I refer to methods that counted on 1. the active participation and collaboration of the students with me as a researcher and among them inside the classroom: construction of interview questions, negotiation in groups (with cooperative learning techniques), interviews conducted with each other, reflections on the process in groups, preparation of mental maps and reflection on them in couples or groups, or in the case of focus group with adolescents: drawings and discussion about future, gender roles and discrimination in the school, debate facilitated by videos. 2. The teachers and the directors' participation in the construction, realization and interpretation of these activities, feedback to them on the activities, incorporating their interpretation of the results into my analysis. As a partially realized phase: the first elaboration of data and proposals for the analysis are brought back to the schools and a collaborative analysis process will be structured.[20]

I used other methods: interviews with families and students, teachers, special educators, social service, NGOs. These interviews are used along the field notes taken during visits to families or other contexts. I participated at a few meetings of policy-makers, some of NGOs and collected a wide range of related documents, especially from the local level.

4.2. The researcher's position

Pécs is my home city, where I was born and I have lived for 25 years. The inequalities, the selectivity and the segregation of the school system in Hungary were among my very first school experiences – at that time seen as a given fact of

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[19] Not only in terms of power relations and conflicting interests. While collaboration means also sharing detailed information about the research purposes, constructing questions together, one of my strongest concerns is how much the scope on Roma students caused distortions: led the actors either to hide or even the contrary: to overrepresent the 'Roma issues'.

[20] I plan to extend it also to the neighbourhood level in each field site, inviting the other interviewed actors: families, social services, NGOs, eventually representatives of the city hall to a workshop.

the world. I started my elementary school in the class 'A', while in the class 'B' there were the Roma and 'low-performing' students (in some schools it was/is called the 'C' class, that provoked an association to the word 'cigány'). The selectivity of the school system occurred even before starting the school: enrolment to the school depended on the competence of the parents to advocate for their interests. After a few days entered a teacher with a pupil in our class, telling: 'he was in the B, but he can already read'. He was too intelligent for the underperforming class, so he was brought into ours that in the very same school offered a more quality education using alternative methods.

When in 2006 I have started to work in a project for Roma students I started to critically look at this reality. The same time I had the luck to participate in research projects carried out in the topic of education or community research in small (Roma) villages of the region. Later on, I have worked in another town in an afterschool project and then in the city of Pécs at a Roma women association. At the NGOs, at the university and my private life I was surrounded by Roma, and what is important, not only as 'targets' of my work, but as friends and colleagues. I have written my thesis about a Roma educational project and when I have started my PhD, I was dedicated to look at this topic and combine somehow my educator, activist and researcher background, all these circumstances led me to look continuously for the ways my research can make an impact. Therefore when I am looking for the traces of policies, my main interest is in the way local actors cope and how can the research itself facilitate reflections and transformation processes. As the main focus of the research is the deconstruction of terms used to approach the "question of Roma students", there must be a continuous self-reflection on the terms and categories used by the research itself (e.g. Roma, periphery) and on the researcher's position.

What feminist theory and methodology brought into my research is exactly this: a conscious theoretically and methodologically founded reflection. Throughout my work I focus on subjectivities, I reflect on multiple positionality and the politics involved in the construction of my field. Thapar-Björkert and Henry as non-white, but 'Western' women, in their study provide examples from their fieldwork in order to rethink the polarization of researcher and researched into powerful/powerless or oppressor/victim categories as it is often simplified even in femist research. They have found themselves in much more complex and changing positionality during their research project. (Thapar-Björkert and Henry, 2004) Cairns based on an educational ethnography in rural settings proposes to situate research in the intersection of feminist post-structuralism and cultural geography.: "As a generative practice, ethnography does not simply 'take place', but participates in the active making of place a relational process that is ongoing, contested, and enmeshed in networks of power. Feminist post-structural scholars have forged important interventions into ethnographic debates by questioning ideals of authentic representation and challenging researchers to confront for their own implication within the politics of knowledge production." (Cairns, 2013:p. 335.) This is not a simple tentative for balancing power relations, but rather an approach that transforms the way we think and the language we use.

The researcher's (changing) performance often challenges exactly those questions on the field that are analysed in the research: an Eastern-European migrant

woman in Southern-Italy, a gazhi in a Roma camp, a girl/woman alone in the periphery, camp, a mother, a mother of a Roma child 'provokes' reactions from the different actors. Similarly, in Hungary a researcher that goes on the periphery, or who lives abroad and returns to her home town for research purposes, in-between a position of native and stranger, between seen as too embedded or distant, already implies a sort of complexity. The list can be continued, including several questions like the North-South, West-East differences, ethnicity, gender, age aspects and so on. The achievements and limits of collaboration in this regard, just like my perceived and real position in the power relations in the local context, the results of the research seen as 'products' of an interaction and my shifting positionality when working local and talking in international scenes, are all important aspects in critically engaging with the research process and its results.

5. Critical and engaged? Challenges and limits

5.1. Culture in educational research: critical positions

Walford talks about educational ethnography as a study of culture: "ethnography balances attention on the sometimes minute everyday detail of individual lives with wider social structures". (Walford, 2008: p. 8.) The schools are a particular micro-culture that is inhabited by students (and other actors) gradually in which tacit knowledge can be revealed in the ethnographic research process thanks to its way of getting know the culture. (Walford, 2008) Critical educational research as Levinson and Holland writes: "is fundamentally local and ethnographic, yet moves beyond the school to examine links between local cultural practices and the community, the region, the state, and the economy." (Levinson and Holland, 1996: p. 2.) At the same time, local analysis must retain a perspective on large-scale issues, "without losing sight of the particular contingencies and cultural dynamics which characterize local sites". (p.22.) Their book – The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice, published 20 years ago – which moves away from reproduction and cultural differences theories, analyses culture as a process, with emphasis on subjectivities and their agency. "Reconstructing culture in educational research": this is the title of a McDermott and Varenne study (McDermott-Varenne, 2006). The authors argue for the importance of a cultural approach and how culture can be reconstructed through educational research. Based on the experiences of their work about success and failure, they take a critical position that intends to reveal what some taken-for-granted categories imply: "A cultural analysis is not about giving solutions to acknowledged and likely false problems, but about sketching and confronting the conditions that tied problems and apparent solutions together." (p. 13.) At the same time they reflect on the limits of cultural approach that can be taken "only to the extent one remains sceptical of what is publicly acknowledged" (p. 25.) and call attention on its grounding in institution and time. Moreover, such approach implies a special research position that is somehow the main point of this article too: "A strict cultural approach is necessarily reflexive. We have no choice but to study that which we also make. There is no privileged position from which to escape culture. [..] all we claim we know proceeds from particular positions or instruments."(p. 23.) While about critical position we must add, what Levinson and Holland points out: we, a researchers are the products of the

criticized school system either as current/former students or teachers. (Levinson and Holland, 1996)

The McDermott-Varenne study's theoretical considerations depart from the author's former work 'Successful failure' (Varenne and McDermott, 1998) about the success and failure in American schools. "If the only tools available for helping children in trouble are the diagnostic and remedial preoccupations of American education, it might be best to forget individual children and focus instead on how we have created contexts that make some children – about half of them – so problematic. If schools are for all children to flourish, then the individual child can be our unit of concern, but not our unit of analysis or reorganization. Why should kids be the focus of change when it is the rest of us – the culture that is acquiring them – that arrange their trouble." (McDermott-Varenne, 2006: p. 4.) This statement seems strongly relevant to the situation in the schools of my research. Later in this article I will discuss the paradoxical effect of special educational needs categories on the school performance of Roma students and I will argue that the different social and cultural categories applied to Roma children lead to similar processes that are described by the authors.

5.2. Participation and collaboration along engagement and action

When I started my research in 2011, my original idea was realizing an action research in educational settings. Later on, I have changed the label of my research to collaborative ethnography, sometimes I referred to it as collaborative action ethnography (as it is used for example by Erickson in his study 'Studying Side by Side: Collaborative Action Ethnography in Educational Research', see Erickson, 2006). Soon I left the word 'action' though, when realizing the real need for resources, team work and institutional commitment in order to implement a community-based action research. (Schensul, Borrero and Garcia, 1985) Of course, even smaller and individually funded projects can build on participatory action research methods, but I felt that my narrow intervention was not in line with my interest in the complexity of the issue, and regarding the action, were too complicated to connect results to intervention. Still what remained is the approach of collaboration incorporated in a critical and engaged research. Collaborative means action, even if not as a participatory action research, but it does point on participating in the research activities and as an outcome on the local 'politicisation' of questions as I will discuss it later. What I would like to underline is that the tension between being both critical and engaged, while trying to collaborate with different actors, is exactly what gave the complexity of the research experience. Why I am citing these changing denominations is not the ambition of giving a review about these approaches, but to shed light on the complexity of placing and describing research methodologies and how much is it important being honest – in first place to ourselves and then to our audience – when referring to our approach and methods.

One can find many different starting points to the definition of the term 'engaged research' and the explanation of its relation to collaborative/community-based/participatory/emancipatory/action research (the list could be continued)

and their relation to each other.[21] I opted to use this term that not explicitly refers to collaboration or participation because of two reasons: 1. the interconnectedness of these mentioned approaches under the same effort to reshape power relations and the epistemological basis of "traditional" research approaches 2. as I discussed it above "collaboration", "participation", "empowerment" was defined and redefined in many different ways throughout the negotiation process of my fieldwork. The understanding of critical and engaged ethnography in this article is based mostly on the anthropological tradition of engaged research, on the rich and critical literature of educational ethnography, especially collaborative educational ethnographies and feminist approaches (some already cited above). Participatory research and collaboration are widely discussed throughout different disciplines involving many different understandings and are in the centre of interest in anthropological debates.[22] Also, regarding our specific topic, there is a strong 'Roma participation' discourse: on one hand, as a simple understanding of the issue: an expectation towards research projects on Roma to ensure somehow the participation of Roma as a basic requirement, on the other hand as a claim of Roma academics to transform the status quo of "Roma research" through a fundamental change in power relations and an epistemological turn that involves e.g. critical whiteness studies and feminist theory.[23]

Educational ethnography itself is understood as a study that involves cycle of hypotheses and theory building understood as a process that involves multiple methods and gives high status to the participants' accounts. (Walford, 2008) In these terms, educational ethnography – just like ethnography – is engaged in itself. This field has produced also precious contributions to the educational policy research. It looks at policy research as cyclical process and "it offers too, a means of bridging the macro-micro gap since a study focused on the impact of a range of policies in the 'zone of implementation' will tend to expose constraints and influences of wider societal factors on what teachers do. […] Generally, there has been a neglect of the experiences, perspectives and emotions of actors who are charged with the implementation of policy and the social, cultural, political, economic and emotional contexts in which it takes place." (Troman-Jeffrey-Beach, 2006: vii-viii.) The authors talk also about the problems of producing research findings and "the shift towards more direct collaboration with users, and highly contested nature of the relationship between ethnographic research, policy and practice." (Troman-Jeffrey-Beach, 2006: ix) The ethnographic works on Roma education in Italy and Hungary, which are important points of reference of my PhD research, include some kind of engaged position (see for example Saletti Salza, 2003, Setti, 2015, Bakó, 2009, Kovai, 2008, 2011), and there are examples for

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[21] There are several different interpretations of the relation between collaborative and participatory approaches. I have found interesting Ursula Plesner's proposal for understanding collaborative research as based on actor-network theory, while the participatory approaches as dialogic ones. It might have interesting implications in this research as well. (Plesner, 2013)

[22] Some examples from the field of anthropology for the importance of 'collaboration': This year's topic of the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Cultural Anthropology is Collaboration (http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/744-cfp-collaboration-the-biennial-meeting-of-the-society-for-cultural-anthropology), while at the annual conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists there are several panels that involve somehow collaboration, even one on the limits of collaboration. (http://nomadit.co.uk/easa/easa2016/panels.php5?View=Panels)

[23] Roma Rights 2015/2 Special Issue: Nothing About Us Without Us? Roma Participation in Policy Making and Knowledge Production

applied ethnographies (see for example Gobbo, 2009), while on the other hand, we can find less examples for collaborative research with students in this specific topic, unlike the always more significant contributions of 'children as co-researchers' in educational ethnography (see for example Milstein, 2010 Hohti, 2016)

An ethnographer – whether having or not an explicit engaged approach – easily finds him/herself in a situation, where different actors challenge his/her responsibility, role, utility and capacity for intervention. Though on one hand, the necessity of intervention could be discussed along the different ethical, methodological, epistemological standpoints, in practice, the demand is usually very concrete and pressing. Moreover, it often leads to crossing pre-imagined boundaries of researcher's position and roles. Engaged research though can be interpreted as a way of making political certain issues on local level by highlighting them and provoking critical reflection on them. This emancipatory approach in ideal situations overwrites the need for communicating directly with policy-makers, as it is something carried out by the local actors. [24]

In case, a research first of all is positioned according to its local 'utility' and its potential for facilitating dialogue and the emergence of certain issues, it implies a very different ethical and epistemological standpoint which always has to be revised according to the existing power relations. Not taking a clear stand with one certain group, but trying to understand several levels and sides in the same context means also a very different ethical position, even if clearly the research is biased, among others in terms of aiming to reveal discrimination. But as the same time, the research should understand the multiple positionality of researcher and researched, it should not be reduced to an attempt of giving voice to the 'marginalized ones' as it reproduces the same powerful-powerless distinction somehow. Therefore I suggest a combined approach, based on the involvement of different actors. Roma education cannot be seen as the issue of Roma students and families, it is an issue of teachers, non-Roma students, families[25], NGOs, social services, etc. The collaboration at the same time needs to involve a very strong reflection on the power structures and discrimination and puts the researcher under a continuous pressure to revise the choices for collaboration.

5.3. Producing normality

5.3.1. The normal student?

As Kovai writes in her report of two schools based on an research realized in the frame of the EDUMIGROM research project[26]: "It is obvious that the "Gypsyness" as the experience of difference is not "the" difference itself. […] most probably the Gypsy problematics incorporate in already existing dynamics in which we can have an easier insight through the Gypsy question. In this case that this school has the most difficulty in dealing with – any kind of – experience of difference. […] The Gypsy or Roma in both cases

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[24] Of course, there are many examples for collaborative research with local policy-makers, there is even a recent example on one of my field sites.

[25] Especially in light of segregation processes thanks to free school selection system.

[26] Ethnic diffferences in education and diverging prospects for urban youth in an enlarged Europe: A comparative investigastion in ethnically diverse communities with second-generation migrants and Roma. www.edumigrom.eu

is interpreted in its relation to the so called "norm" or "normal", so as it questions, endangers the norms or cannot confirm them." (Kovai, 2011) The labels, categories (that derive from the relevant legislation) clearly represent the efforts to describe, define and divide diverse from the "normal" students. I was looking for these taken for granted categories and tried to understand how do they limit our general critical view on structural questions and on the "cultural" in these, e.g. what is success, good behaviour and how what is the meaning of good citizen in a certain context, even if the production of good citizen and its relation to school is not so simple and unidirectional (see: Levinson and Holland, 1996).

In the schools of my research, the production of normality – being on the periphery – is realized having only a very few examples of this imagined 'normal students' in the classes. The normal student in fact is an ideal student, who has not much to do with the local context. As the imagined, desired level, compared to which certain students have backlog, is much higher than the class average, means that in the class a high percentage of students become labelled as 'problematic'. One of the school directors told me: *the teachers do not want to accept that these are the students, they are attached to an imagined child that only a few students per class can confirm and they continue to teach only these students*. In my view, we should look more closely at how periphery and educational inclusion relate to each other both in theories of inclusion and in our analytical accounts.

Returning to the question of success, the participation in competitions or rehearsals is the ultimate benchmark, even if these activities are carried out by a tiny minority of the students. This is an important point that shows how the culture of competition and evaluation has a negative effect on the low performing students which of course does not derive from the teachers, but higher levels of the system. This comes out very concretely when teachers admit being worried about the comparative tests and the year results of the class and therefore looking for ways to differentiate the results of those 'left behind'.

Teachers talk about Roma as a separate problem, though if we ask them about the other children; they come up with similar remarks. The peripheries of Naples which are considered as problematic in themselves and the children who grow up in these places are strongly stigmatised gives an interesting insight into the process how within this reality is reproduced 'the even more problematic other', i.e. the way the stigmas are passed on from Neapolitans to Roma.[27] What a critical and engaged research position and a transnational comparison can add to this is questioning what nobody ever questions. Once I had an interesting dialogue with a teacher who was very active and supportive throughout the research process. I heard several times other teachers blaming the Neapolitan students for not speaking Italian, "they don't even speak their mother tongue", but honestly I was quite surprised hearing similar remarks from this teacher who I saw very progressive. Thinking that Italian should be the mother tongue of children who speak Neapolitan at home (indifferently from its 'quality') has its roots in historical and social dynamics of the Italian context and the special situation of Naples. Still,

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[27] It was an interesting experience conducting an interview with an NGO that works in the „Vele", the famous buildings of Scampia, inhabited by squatters. They listed exactly the same problems regarding education like the ones mentioned by those working with Roma children.

thanks to this short dialogue, questioning this situation, I sensed a real interest on behalf of this teacher.

5.3.2. Space and communication

The relation to space, the created spaces and the accepted or favoured way of interaction, i.e. the exact meaning of collaboration and competition, strongly influences the situation of Roma students in the classroom. As a very basic and obvious point of comparison, the performative forms of resistance (and the noise level) in the classroom are completely different in the two localities, but strongly differ also in the two peripheries of Naples. The idea that one has to take his/her own space is much stronger in the Neapolitan schools, encouraged by the teachers as well. The local (often neighbourhood specific) interpretation of success and the accepted strategies[28] strongly influence the classroom climate and the communication, including the locally accepted ways of expressing hostility. It is worth to look at the underlying processes that create or deny certain spaces from the different actors along gender and race. The comparison between the two contexts gave me very interesting insights into this question. While in the schools of Pécs some teachers seem to be dedicated to protecting the non-Roma children from the Roma children's violent communication, the very same type of communication in a Neapolitan periphery does not appear as extremely violent and is much more the way Neapolitan children communicate. The differing forms of communication create different non-inclusive spaces.

In the schools of Pécs, I observed not simply more formality but as a result of formality, a strong repression of conflict, which leads to the continuous presence of violence: at least in form of trying to avoid it. Similar processes occurred though also in a first grade in Scampia. Doing collaborative research with students destabilizes these previously established forms of everyday survival (both on behalf of teachers and students), therefore often makes visible tensions. One of the main preoccupations around my presence was whether I can handle the students or not, and keep these kind of limits. Teachers in fact intervened mostly in this regard during the research activities. About the level of tension, I bring here only one example: I was asking something from a girl during an activity in a 8th grade in Pécs and I did not understand her answer, she got angry and shouted on me. I reacted in a peaceful way, trying to explain the situation. Seeing this, a student told to another *"look, she is cool, that girl shouted at her and she did not even shout back"*.

It is worth to look at the good practices from this particular angle: how come can in the same geographical, social, cultural context, often in the same school be created those 'islands' of collaboration and how these islands are embedded into their context and through what kind of negotiations can maintain their existence. Moreover, the question of collaboration and communication can be applied also to the relations between the different actors on the territory and in what kind of space can they practice their agency.

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[28] In Naples "the border between formal and informal, legal and illegal is particularly fluid, not only in the perception of people, but also on the part of the authorities. However it does not really mean a total tolerance, rather a system based on implicit and sometimes incomprehensible rules.

5.4. Low-performing and futureless: the making of the Roma student

In the production of difference the image of Roma seems to be a key point in each of my field sites, therefore I look at how certain 'cultural elements' are put together in the imagined 'Roma' and what are its local specificities.[29]

When entering the classrooms the question of capacity was present in each of my field sites in the declarations about Roma children. The style and exact ways of expression however differ strongly in the different schools: when in the classroom: *"You know, she is a bit weaker"*, *"This one cannot even read or write."* Or when teachers talk to me about the children: *"You know, we have problems with these children."* These statements usually seem to be based on the performance of the students, but Roma and non Roma stay distinct in these phrases[30]. Even in the cases of the most 'supportive' teachers, methods and most positive classroom climate. Teachers underline that *"many of the non-Roma are the same problematic as the Roma".* Or: *"they are very good students, the study a lot".* Usually, when a Roma student performs better, is seen as an exception that does not change the general image of the "underperforming Roma students". Passivity and laziness is strongly attributed to the Roma children and their families. Even when teachers analyse the class composition or the individual child's background, there is a distinction between the socioeconomic conditions and cultural elements, in practice the mixture of these information about the student's background can become easily associated to his/her ethnicity.

Declarations may change also with time and the actual situation, once it happened to me that I was talking to the secretary of a school in the morning, when she emphasized that the problems are not the Roma but the Neapolitans (in that moment she was busy with the problems of a Neapolitan student, later the same day, she told me that they try everything with the Roma students, but sometimes seems completely useless. In my view this has a strong connection to what I described as the production of normality in the image of an over idealized student and the culture of evaluation.

The category of 'special educational needs' has an important role in the strategies applied in facing the 'problems of Roma students'. It often appears as a revealing instrument for reducing the pressure of performance, while teachers themselves confess that several problems derive clearly from the socioeconomic conditions of the families. Teachers face an ongoing pressure which among others comes from the evaluation culture in the schools in general, or at least are challenged by the lack of appropriate methods, human resources and tools to balance the differences within the class. Parents either are interested in getting this label in order to reduce the problems their children face or become passive observers of such processes as they do not understand what it implies exactly and whether it provides more opportunities or not, while on the other hand, many of them take it as an offence. I am not questioning here the special educational needs categories, I do question their usage in practice. I suggest looking at how the access to these

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[29] About the implications of naming as Roma in a case of sinti see Setti, 2015

[30] I would like to underline that in many cases teachers talk about Roma because they know 'I am interested in them'. This misunderstanding of my main scope of course did not prevent me filtering those statements and looking for other expressions of the same issues.

recognitions and the services that come with them attract or not teachers and parents in order to eliminate the pressure which comes from the problematisation of difference in the school.[31] Paradoxically, I observed an increased interest for the SEN when teachers understood that the former mediator role of the municipality project's educator does not cover anymore separate activities for Roma students.

It is much connected to the desire of solving the Roma students' presence in the class by having an additional person who works exclusively with them. This is exactly the same that happened in many cases through the mediator role, who in the former projects (and in some cases still) entered the classrooms in order to provide activities for Roma children. The presence of figures like mediator, social worker, etc. always implies the risk of replacing in certain duties either the teacher or the social services, as the actors try to reduce the problems and their own responsibilities.[32] Therefore the negotiations around these roles give us precious information about what is seen as problematic in a certain context. There are of course, very good examples of collaboration and the role of social worker depends much on the profession's prestige in the given context, the professional background, official position (assumed by the school or not) and the relevant regulation. What made me to understand most the specialities of each context regarding the external figures was my own presence in the school. I found myself suddenly involved into the well-established dynamics of each school, negotiating not only about my activities but the grounds of my researcher role. I was compared to other figures by teachers, students (sometimes families), confronted with different expectations, granted with trust or treated with suspicion. In most of the cases I had the impression of not being perceived as a researcher, especially by the teachers – even though my project was totally transparent and I explained it in the classroom.

5.5. Integration from below

Without going into the deep analysis of how integration as a concept arrives and becomes applied in the local context, I rather offer a few examples of how an engaged research can reveal the local application of the concept of integration and how is it connected then to the 'making of Roma' in these particular contexts.

As I mentioned before, when talking about the integration problems of Roma students they are usually compared to an ideal, imagined child prototype that neither corresponds to the non-Roma student's reality or the general context. Integration is a term overall used in each of my field sites when talking about the education of Roma students. We can capture the language of trainings in this the topic or of policy documents in many different ways in this dialogues with teachers and afterschool educators. Integration is one of the most cynically pronounced

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[31] I would like to add that the situation is strongly different in the two contexts in this regard: Hungary has its history with the – often biased – labelling of Roma students and the special classes, later on transformed to an inclusive system (see for example Erőss-Kende, 2010), while in those Neapolitan schools where I worked, in the scene of 'inclusive classes' occurs the possibility of qualifing Roma students for this category (which is often seen as difficult because of documents and communication with the family).

[32] The whole design of these projects, and mainly the mediator role created and maintained a special balance in which the mediators stepped into certain roles of teachers and social workers. The reassignment of responsibility for Roma minors to associations based on the assumption that they know them better (i.e. their culture, the way they communicate) has been an obstacle for years to open a debate about inclusion in education.

words when talking about Roma students, and no surprise for those who work in similar contexts, for the deficits of integration usually Roma families are blamed. It is often has a conceptual connection to the so-called mediation – especially in the Italian context – mediation became an instrument of reinforcing the image of culturally different Roma[33]. Interesting to see how the conditions of camp life enter into the image about Roma students in these contexts and become integrated part of the applied teaching strategies.[34]

Nevertheless, the conversations with teachers made me ask myself: is integration a useful concept for teachers on the periphery? and if not, why? According to my observations, a great part of tensions derive from the fact of talking about the issues of education and integration disconnected from wider structural problems. While the problems of education are at the intersection of legal, socio-economic and housing problems, the separation of these issues on a discursive level increases the tension between the actors, instead of mobilizing them together. The fragmentation of 'problem-holders' (well exemplified by comparing the children of the 'Vele' and the children of the camp) is a result of complex processes, in which though one factor is the design and implementation of public projects. On the other hand, actors, including students are very much aware of the social embeddedness of education: when students were creating interview questions for an interview with an imagined student in order to understand the pupils relation to school and another one with an imagined student who does not frequent school, their questions touched on many issues of this complicated context.

5.6. Racism

In Pécs, according to the interviews, regarding the Roma non-Roma relation there are might less open conflicts than between the different ethnic groups, namely the Boyash and Kolompár. Also some interviewed Roma mothers stated that 'Hungarians' tend to become like 'Gypsies'. These trends are the same of the neighbourhoods: the assimilation processes within the community are reinforced by the external ethnicisation of poverty: those living in areas with a high presence of 'Gypsies', are seen and treated as 'Gypsies'. According to the parents' opinion, racism in classrooms comes from the teachers and rarely from the students. Some of my respondents talked about their first experiences of facing that they are 'Gypsies' in the school and the meaning that was attributed to that. These perceptions strongly differ based on the person of the teacher, or the actual school climate. In several cases discrimination does not work through explicit acts but the passivity and apathy of the different actors creates processes with long-term consequences. As I noticed, there is a strong tension in some classrooms that at least partially is result of a colourblind, conflict-avoiding strategy.

In Naples, I observed more explicit racism in certain schools, with little attention to the used expressions. This kind of racism is connected to total lack of attention for a politically correct language which is reinforced by the practice of Roma projects: the list of children who eat in the school is divided in three parts, those who pay, those who do not pay/pay reduced fee and the Roma. Collaboration means also

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[33] For a more general, critical view on the interventions and the role of 'operatore sociale' in the 'Nomad' camps (see: Daniele-Persico, 2013)

[34] About the problems of labelling policy and legal background see for example Sigona, 2003.

sharing our views in these situations: I remember a case, when a teacher – disappointed because of a student who was absent the last days of the school year – told me that Roma do not care about education, they do not want to change. When I tried to introduce other points of view, for example the situation in the camp or wider responsibilities, she stayed attached to her view that this is something that characterises the Roma. Talking more, giving examples of some Roma friends, she reformulated her opinion telling that there is a problem with the attitude towards education in this particular camp.

In one of the schools I have found a very positive climate with a 'Roma supportive' director, where racism seems to be suspended inside the school. This suspension though does not work completely well, depends much on the teachers themselves – whether they have a different approach or they try to hide their true opinion – still the Roma children seem to be in a safe environment in this school. I referred to this as suspended racism that can be confirmed by stories from this school. One is the case of an epidemic among the pupils that stirred up a strong reaction among the parents and reinforced the racist narratives. The worries about health issues led the parents to complain about the fact that Roma parents are collecting metal from the waste together with their children after school. It means also that the children, who just before exiting were classmates, in the moment of stepping out from the school, meeting their parents and going on their way, become again 'those Roma from the camp'.

Still, what the most revealed the question of racism in the school, were the collaborative research activities carried out with the students. The questions related to racism came while drawing and explaining the mental maps of the city and even more while inventing interview questions. Also, the space created by these activities allowed them to come up with this topic and showed how much the repression of this question works during normal school activities. It sheds light also on the tension in the classes and the roots of violent conflicts.

6. Conclusion

Engaged ethnography and studying side by side with the different interlocutors, means creating spaces of collaboration for collecting research data and analysing it. It brings up information, perspectives and interpretations that usually remain hidden. In order to do so, it often breaks the everyday routine and introduces new channels and instruments of interaction that reveal the underlying processes that allow or block the efforts of collaborating with the different actors. These interventions are though often very small and rather invisible. Still, by putting in motion certain questions, it has the potential to reveal power relations along age, gender, race, social class, or different professional roles within the field and their changing according to situations, places, institutional frames within the same context. During my fieldwork I have found myself several times in discussions with teachers, in which we questioned something that seemed very evident for that context. In other cases, the collaborative methods in the classroom created out-of-order moments: for example I discovered during an activity that two students that I put in a couple in a 5th grade, have never talked before. The collaborative approach can bridge the gaps that are constructed through the identification processes of different actors, including the differences in the languages they use.

Though the limits and risks of these deconstruction attempts and the difficulties of reshaping power dynamics must be taken into account, engaged ethnography can be a facilitating element in reshaping the interpretation and utilization of terms related to culture and integration on local level. In this regard the reflections on relation of ethnography to transnational activism seem strongly relevant: "We argue for a shift in how we understand the aims and methods of both ethnography and political intervention and suggest that the role of ethnography should be understood not in terms of explanation or representation, but as translation and weaving, processes in which the ethnographer is one voice or participant in a crowded field of knowledge producers. Ethnographic translation enables the ethnographer's participation in the creation of new and different worlds and is a vital form of political intervention." (Casas-Cortés - Osterweil -Powell, 2013: p. 199.)

In my understanding the reflection carried out with the different actors contributes to the politicization[35] of certain issues by the actors themselves, in a very simple way: questioning them. The main challenge of this research is to turn into a systematic work the small realised experiments of 'collaborative analysis' and not 'closing the door behind' after leaving the field. Besides the content of policies, or their implementation, there is another key question to address: the role of local actors in the design and implementation. This research is an invitation and proof that change must be designed together with local actors who are those who can give the most precious contributions about the implementation of top-down policies.

What this article did not speak about – the other side of the coin – is the effect of these processes on the identity and belonging of Roma children and youth. I often use the term 'colonized identities' when referring to this relation between the making of Roma and the identity of Roma children and you. This expression refers to the strong restriction of space given to accessible narratives and the everyday practices related to identity in the context where I work, while at the same time the actors own agency in adapting and contesting them.

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