Centring Roma perspectives and critically interrogating Eastern European whiteness: Entry points toward decolonising Nordic education and knowledge production

Centrar as perspetivas Roma e interrogar criticamente a branquitude da Europa de Leste: Pontos de entrada para a descolonização da educação e da produção de conhecimento nórdicas

Mettre l'accent sur les perspectives roms et interroger de manière critique la blancheur de l'Europe de l'Est: points d'entrée pour la décolonisation de l'éducation et de la production de connaissances dans les pays nordiques

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Abstract
This article foregrounds Roma-related research, from the perspective of a non-Roma Eastern European (EE) researcher, to discuss possibilities to construct EE-BPoC solidarities towards decolonising Nordic education and knowledge production. I apply the positionality of a non-Roma researcher coming from "the other Europe" while arguing for a centring of Roma perspectives and for critically interrogating EE whiteness as part of the modern white supremacist project as an entry point into race and decolonisation. The article thus carves a specific entry point into the ongoing process of decolonising Nordic education and knowledge production, through critical reflexivity, by bringing into dialogue fields of study and perspectives, which are not usually brought together, in new and unexpected ways.
Keywords: Roma, Eastern Europe, Nordic, whiteness, decolonising knowledge

Resumo
Este artigo antecipa a investigação relacionada com os ciganos, na perspetiva de um investigador não cigano da Europa Oriental (EE), para discutir as possibilidades de construir solidariedades EE-BPoC no sentido da descolonização da educação nórdica e da produção de conhecimento. Aplico a posicionalidade de um investigador não cigano vindo da "outra Europa", ao mesmo tempo que defendo uma centralização das perspetivas ciganas e interroga criticamente a branquitude da EE como parte do projeto supremacista branco moderno, como ponto de entrada na raça e na descolonização. O artigo traça, assim, um ponto de entrada específico no processo em curso de descolonização da educação nórdica e da produção de conhecimento, através da reflexividade crítica, ao colocar em diálogo campos de estudo e perspetivas, que normalmente não são reunidos, de formas novas e inesperadas.
Palavras-chave: Roma, Europa Oriental, Nórdico, branquitude, descolonizar o conhecimento

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Résumé

Cet article met l'accent sur la recherche liée aux Roms, du point de vue d'un chercheur non rom d'Europe de l'Est (EE), afin de discuter des possibilités de construire des solidarités EE-BPoC vers la décolonisation de l'éducation nordique et de la production de connaissances. J'applique la positionnalité d'un chercheur non-rom venant de « l'autre Europe », tout en plaidant pour un centrage des perspectives roms et pour une interrogation critique de la blancheur EE dans le cadre du projet moderne de suprématie blanche, comme point d'entrée dans la race et la décolonisation. L'article trace ainsi un point d'entrée spécifique dans le processus en cours de décolonisation de l'éducation et de la production de connaissances nordiques, par le biais de la réflexivité critique, en faisant dialoguer des domaines d'étude et des perspectives, qui ne sont généralement pas réunis, de manière nouvelle et inattendue.

Mots-clés: Rom, Europe de l'Est, Nordique, blancheur, décoloniser le savoir

The role of education in knowledge production politics and structures

The initial critique of knowledge production in education emerged from the decolonisation struggles of the "Global South" against "Western" hegemony (Altbach & Kelly, 1979). More critiques have followed since then, showing how the formal validation of institutional knowledge, the hierarchisation of knowledges, the exclusion of alternative knowledges, and the racial stratification of people determine unequal access to education and to knowledge production (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021). Researchers are increasingly calling for decolonising education and knowledge production, which has been defined as an endeavour that is simultaneously political – posing epistemological questions to address Eurocentric epistemic hegemony –, material, and structural, including aspects of justice, access, and representation (Eriksen & Svendsen, 2020). While education has been proven to reproduce "epistemic violence" (Castro-Gómez & Martin, 2002), it also presents potential avenues towards alternatives to socio-economic, racialised, and racist inequalities (Velásquez Atehortúa, 2020). These can be found in educational projects, practices, and pedagogies located outside formal institutions, which employ previously ignored or disdained knowledges, such as indigenous, diasporic, and minoritarian knowledges (Yumagulova et al., 2020). Yet when minoritarian knowers and knowledges enter academic spaces, they are often expected to represent a homogenous group, and their inclusion within academia rests on not disturbing the status quo (Ahmed, 2017; Vergès, 2021). The solution is thus not necessarily inclusion if power structures remain in place due to a forced inclusion that may actually turn into exploitation (Pohlhaus, 2020).

Education in the Nordic context

Education in the Nordic context has historically been instrumentalised in the settler colonisation of Sápmi (the homeland of the Sámi indigenous peoples, covering the north of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the north-west of Russia), the attempted assimilation of Kale and other groups of Romani people living in the Nordics, and the Nordic colonial endeavours in Africa and the Americas (Keskinen, 2019). Romani alternative knowledges have been shown to have the potential to decolonise Nordic education. Knowledge production on Nordic Romani people has historically been conducted by so-called 'experts on Gypsies' who

have constructed the Roma as a social problem and legitimated their oppression through measures like forced labour and education that erased Romani knowledges (Montesino, 2001). Training Roma mediators has been argued to improve Roma students' school performance and thus increase equality, yet the Roma mediators are exposed to unequal power relations embedded in education discourses and practices; Roma mediators carry the burden of being made responsible for tackling racialising and racist discourses through knowledge on the Roma that counteracts biases, while the unwillingness of the school community to address inequalities and racism remains unaddressed (Helakorpi et al., 2019).

Recent research in the Nordic context has further explored Romani people's attainment of formal education without giving up their knowledges (Hagatun, 2020). Hagatun emphasises the need to focus on malfunctioning educational systems rather than Roma's alleged deficiency, on centring Romani counter-knowledges that challenge exoticising representations and the assumed non-existence of Roma people in education. The author further argues that Romani agencies of historical resistance to forced assimilation through education systems constitute vital contributions to decolonising Nordic education. Contributing to these ongoing debates, this article foregrounds Roma-related research from the perspective of a non-Roma Eastern European (EE) researcher to discuss possibilities to construct EE-BPoC[1] solidarities towards decolonising Nordic education and knowledge production.

Methodology

I draw from the literature reviews and theoretical contributions I developed for my doctoral dissertation (Țîștea, 2024).[2] From 2015 to 2023, I conducted extensive literature reviews of academic and artistic texts written in a Nordic context during the past three decades on topics related to: Nordic educational systems, policies, and practices; migration policies, practices, and lived experiences; the relations between education, migration, and access to knowledge production. Based on these reviews, as well as on long-term multi-sited auto/ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Finnish educational settings involving diverse migrants occupying multiple positions on both receiving and delivering sides of migration-related services (Țîștea, 2020, 2021; Țîștea & Băncuță, 2023), I developed theoretical and methodological contributions on decolonising Nordic migration research in educational settings and beyond. These contributions simultaneously address colonial and racialised power relations *and* unexpected and transversal encounters, and they are informed by decolonial perspectives in education, critical race and whiteness[3] studies, and certain strands of critical migration theories.

For this article, building on the research described above, I carve a specific entry point into the ongoing process of decolonising Nordic education and knowledge production. This requires critical reflexivity and bringing into dialogue fields of study and perspectives, which are not usually brought together in new and

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[1] BPoC: Black Person and Person of Colour (plural: Black People and People of Colour).
[2] The article is based on parts of my PhD thesis.
[3] I capitalise Black, and not white, when referring to race. Black reflects a shared sense of identity and community; capitalising the word recognizes Black resistance, empowerment, and struggles for social justice. White carries a different set of meanings and histories; capitalising the word risks reproducing white supremacist discourses.

unexpected ways. I do this from the perspective of a non-Roma researcher coming from "the other Europe," questioning various theories and power dynamics that have developed "under Western eyes." I also challenge my own complicities with those power structures while arguing for a centring of Roma perspectives. Romani studies are usually seen as a marginal field of research, rarely brought into dialogue with other fields. In contrast, I suggest that recent developments in Romani studies offer rich theoretical and methodological developments for challenging racialising and racist academic structures and discourses. These insights can be applied in various fields of research, particularly educational research dealing with the politics and power dynamics of knowledge production.

Self-reflexivity

In diasporic contexts, I have often been misread as Roma. I sometimes perceived this misreading as offensive. I later found out that

> the ascription as Roma of white Romanians is discriminatory—however, not against the white Romanians, but against the Roma. [T]o perceive it as a harm to be named as 'Roma', to understand the appellation as a slur and the misreading as Roma as wrongful, reproduces antiromaism. (Tudor, 2017b, p. 34)

At other times, I took up my misreading as Roma as a strategy to equate the discrimination I experienced with racism (Țîștea, 2021). Yet performing an imagined racialised subjectivity from a privileged positioning involves access to knowledges embedded in white and colonial privilege that approximate a 'knowable' and decontextualised subjectivity and assume that one can pass for others by adopting their ways of being (Ahmed, 1999), thus fixing those ways of being as indicators of what it may mean to be Roma.

In the migrant 'integration' training I attended when I first arrived in Finland, the students were migratised and sometimes also racialised in various ways, and this motivated the need for them to be trained towards 'integration' within society. The teachers were positioned as neutral facilitators of a naturalised requirement for 'integration'. The students' 'integration' was dependent on the teachers' assessments since the latter facilitated or restricted students' access to wider services like job training and further education opportunities or citizenship-related language testing. Yet the teachers' jobs, many of whom were specifically trained in teaching Finnish as a foreign language to adult learners, were also dependent on the migrant students. A wider co-dependency could further be observed between the economic viability of schools offering the training – who participated in yearly competitions and received substantial financial benefits for providing the 'integration' training – and the construction of an assumed demand among migrant students for this service with the implication of unemployment offices that first assessed the need for migrants to join the training. In my attempt to expose and resist oppressive Nordic 'integration' regimes, I sometimes used my misreading as Roma as grounds of solidarity with my classmates from West Africa and South Asia by claiming similar experiences of racism (Țîștea, 2021). I thus conflated my nationalising discriminatory reading from a white EE social positioning with a racialising one from an appropriated Roma positioning (Tudor, 2017b). My classmates in the training taught me how my appropriation of racism

downplays or even renders invisible both their experiences of racialisation and racism, as well as the experiences of their children who may not have a migration history. I thus became aware of how, by distancing myself from an oppressive Nordic 'integration' regime through appropriative acts rather than transgressing whiteness and its hegemonic norms, I was reproducing them. I further learned that, as a white Romanian being misread as Roma, it is important to put my energies into transversal solidarities without self-victimisation and while reflexively accounting for my privileged positioning in relation to Roma people and people of colour (Tudor, 2017a; Țîștea, 2021).

I put into practice these epiphanies and my subsequent shifts of perception by critically engaging with the "reflexive turn" in Romani studies (Silverman, 2018, p. 77). This required applying reflexivity both to my lived experiences as well as to my positioning as a 'judge' of those experiences. Before being able to be reflexive without miring in victimhood or shame, I first had to look into what reflexivity is and how it has been applied previously in Nordic Roma-related research, as well as how reflexivity could be done differently based on recent developments in critical Romani studies (Bogdan et al., 2018; Țîștea, 2020). While I tended to be very critical towards what I perceived as a lack of reflexivity in other non-Roma researchers' writings, I also saw myself in some of those practices. I thus engaged with my own ignorance and complicity with values that I may not endorse, with the knowledge that both exposed and removed my fears, which marks the creative and the painful sides of reflexivity (Anzaldúa, 2009).

I ultimately learned that misreadings create opportunities to reflect on unequal encounters and entanglements towards creating social and epistemic solidarities and decolonising education and knowledge production. I became invested in opening research to plural knowers and knowledges, specifically to Romani knowledges, while "refusing" to speak on behalf of Roma participants (Solimene, 2024). Here, I have been inspired by a very recently emerging strand in Romani studies in which an academic and a non-academic write ethnography together while analysing the collaborative process itself (Gay y Blasco & Hernández, 2020; Țîștea & Băncuță, 2023). For disadvantaged collaborators to be considered epistemic partners, it is necessary to disregard normative notions of 'expertise', value alternative knowledges by people with the least power in society, and make practical adjustments to working methods to recognise the analytical contributions of interlocutors who might not be formally educated (Piemontese & Leoco, 2024). Still, the legitimation of alternative know-how as valid knowledge relies on the privileged researcher's channels, resources, and mediations within established institutional patterns, which makes clear the deep inequalities onto which such projects are built (Fotta & Gay y Blasco, 2024a).

In what follows, I place these personal reflections with a wider context by bringing into dialogue EE research perspectives with Romani research and with research on and by BPoC.

Eastern European scholarship in the Nordics

EE scholarship in the Nordics aims for more EE representation in academia, education, migration studies, critical race and whiteness studies, and postcolonial studies. For instance, claims towards colonial innocence

in Iceland have been argued to make it difficult to acknowledge racism against EE migrants who are exploited as 'inexpensive' labour and positioned in the lowest step within national and labour hierarchies (Loftsdóttir, 2017). That study further argues that Icelanders are keener to work with African rather than EE migrants due to perceiving the former as more 'exciting' and as adding to a presumed multicultural landscape. This is also seen as racism yet is argued to have less harmful consequences due to being situated within a discourse of celebrating differences perceived as 'exotic'. What is worrying about this approach is that rather than using the analysis towards solidarity based on overlapping yet different experiences of non-belonging, it seems to instead reinforce divisions based on competing for who is more victimised while ignoring wider EE complicity in supra-national racist and neo/colonial structures based on white supremacy (Tudor, 2022).

Similar arguments have been made about the experiences of EE migrants in Norway, explained through what has been termed 'cultural racism' which, drawing a reading of Balibar (2007), has presumably replaced racism based on biological markers like skin colour and shifted the focus from race to migration (Przybyszewska, 2021). However, 'race' is not just 'biology' but is also a cultural construct, and 'biology' is also not immune to culture (Tudor, 2022). Therefore, as Tudor (2017b, 2022) argues, focusing solely on migration, class, and nationality as categories of difference is insufficient for grasping the functioning of racism.

More critically reflexive perspectives have been offered by Lapiņa and Vertelytė (2020), Krivonos (2020, 2023), and Kingumets and Sippola (2022). Contributing to research on "differentiated whiteness" from EE perspectives and to nuancing research on whiteness and racialisation in the Nordic context, Lapiņa and Vertelytė show how, while whiteness often brings them closer to going unnoticed in Danish academia or in fieldwork settings, it does not always prevent scrutinising gazes or questions about not being quite white enough, and this affects their perceived legitimacy in knowledge production. Vertelytė shows how her whiteness was often questioned based on her accent and phenotype, which were claimed to sound and look 'Eastern European'. Furthermore, her choice of research topic was often scrutinised by Danish colleagues who questioned her ability to research anything that does not have to do with Eastern Europe, particularly her ability to research the Nordic context itself, or sometimes even questioned her unlikely positionality as an EE researcher in Denmark. Vertelytė further reflects on the encounters with her research participants from Western Asia who, although initially read her as white Danish, would later bond with her based on shared yet different experiences of migration and marginalisation. Lapiņa, however, reflects on how she has most often been able to pass as white Danish in academic and fieldwork settings. On several occasions, she has chosen not to reveal her Eastern Europeanness to Danish participants due to safety concerns since EE femininity is often hyper-sexualised.

Krivonos (2020, 2023) and Kingumets and Sippola (2022) intersect migration processes related to Russians and Estonians in Finland with postcolonial histories and realities and with power relations shaped by the coloniality of power, racial capitalism, and white supremacy. Krivonos (2023) argues that Russian migrants, while expelled from hegemonic whiteness, tend to remain loyal to the system of white supremacy and anti-Blackness, thus reproducing racial hierarchies and a racial capitalist system that also degrades them.

While Krivonos (2020, 2023) highlights how Russians lose white privileges after migration to Finland, Kingumets and Sippola (2022) observe how Estonians become more aware of their whiteness after migration to Finland and collectively cultivate their whiteness as useful racial capital in negotiating better places in Finnish society. The authors also notice 'solidarities', or rather complicities, between Estonians and Russians when asserting their whiteness through racism against other racialised migrants. However, as Krivonos (2020) pleads, solidarities should overthrow racial hierarchies rather than attempting to fit within them in a better place.

Still, Krivonos (2023) considers Eastern Europeanness to be one form of racialisation and claims that all Russian migrants, regardless of how they are racialised, experience racism in Finland, associating racism with aspects like language, accent, clothing (Krivonos, 2020), and having a Russian name (Krivonos, 2023). By not differentiating between differently racialised EE people, the argument makes it impossible to think of an EE migrant as anything other than white. Intelligible Europeanisation is indeed a privileged racialisation as white, and East Europeanisation can be a less privileged racialisation as white that interconnects with postcolonial and postsocialist conditions, yet this does not mean that ascribing EE migration is necessarily racist (Tudor, 2017b). Claiming so would render the racism experienced by Roma, Black, Arab, or Asian Eastern Europeans who may migrate to the Nordic countries the same as the discrimination experienced by a white EE migrant, when in fact, the former will not be ascribed with Eastern Europeanness but with extra-European migration (Tudor, 2018). EE languages, names, and accents may position someone "differentially" in relation to Nordic whiteness and may entail discrimination in the labour market or in academia (Lapiņa & Vertelytė, 2020). Yet they do not automatically construct someone as non-white, so they do not imply racism, whereas asking someone where they are 'really' from and positioning them outside both intelligible Western/Northern Europeanness *and* "differentiated" Eastern Europeanness is indeed a racist ascription of migration (Tudor, 2017b, p. 31).

Eastern European scholarship in the Nordics at times conceptualises what is claimed to be racism against EE migrants by equating racism with what Alyosxa Tudor (2017b) calls "migratism". "Migratism" is the power relation that ascribes migration; it is dependent on geopolitical and classist power relations, and it can also be a strategy of racism, although not every ascription of migration is racist since there can be more or less privileged migratisations. Racism refers not only to migration but also to underlying power relations that construct hegemonic understandings of Europeanness and European societies. While racism and migratism can be mutually constitutive and entangled, equating them can invisibilise Black Europeans, Europeans of colour, and Roma people within experiences and theories of racism. The concept of migratism helps theorise the discriminating effects of ascribing Eastern European migration and its interconnections with postcolonial and postsocialist conditions, yet this does not mean that ascribing Eastern European migration is necessarily racist.

Tudor (Tudor & Rexhepi, 2021) reflected on how their suggestion that not all migration-based discrimination can be called racism has been met with defensiveness by certain EE scholars whose agenda is including research on what they perceive as racism against EE migrants into anti-racist scholarship. Rather

than pushing for mutually beneficial EE-BPoC solidarities, Tudor claims, the scholars in question seem to express feelings of being left out from anti-racist scholarship due to critical race theory not diversifying its definitions of racism, whiteness and white supremacy to include racism against white EE migrants (Tudor, 2022; Tudor & Rexhepi, 2021).

Of course, not all EE scholars express such feelings. But even critically reflexive scholarship can sometimes name the discrimination faced by white EE migrants as racism. Examining racism against EE people should, however, start from the position of people racialised as non-white, such as BPoC and Roma people, and place their histories and lived experiences at the forefront of the analysis (Tudor & Rexhepi, 2021). This shows the importance of foregrounding Roma-related research in discussions of EE-BPoC solidarities toward decolonising Nordic education and knowledge production. Such discussions should address the role of EE whiteness in the modern white supremacist project and focus on the messy and contradictory relatedness of Romani, BPoC, and EE approaches.

The messy and contradictory relatedness of Romani, BPoC, and EE research approaches

During the past couple of decades, both Roma and non-Roma researchers have been discussing and applying ethical, theoretical, and methodological tools and insights for decolonising research and engaging critically with racialisation and racism (Brooks, 2015; Mirga-Kruszelnicka, 2015; Tidrick, 2010; Tremlett, 2014). A few directions came out of what has been termed the ongoing "reflexive turn" in Romani studies (Silverman, 2018, p. 77), such as the emerging critical Romani studies (Bogdan et al., 2018) and the growing call for reflexive, participatory, and collaborative research practices (Dunajeva & Vajda, 2021; Gay y Blasco & Hernández, 2020; Piemontese, 2021; Silverman, 2018). A growing number of scholars in Roma-related research are answering these epistemological and methodological calls, a process which generates multiple ongoing questions and dilemmas (Fotta & Gay y Blasco, 2024a).

Neither Roma nor non-Roma scholars can claim greater legitimacy over Roma-related knowledge, and sustained efforts should be made to overcome such dichotomies and to recognise both Roma and non-Roma as legitimate voices (Mirga-Kruszelnicka, 2015). This can only be achieved through a commitment to reflexivity on all sides, but especially on the part of non-Roma scholars who occupy more positions of power currently and have held more authority historically. Roma scholars encourage uses of reflexivity that explore historical and current power dynamics between Roma and non-Roma in societal and academic contexts; account for one's own positionality in social and epistemic hierarchies, biases and assumptions; scrutinise Roma-related research approaches, investments in 'truth' production, ways to involve people from the researched community without tokenising them, and disciplinary limitations manipulating inquiries (Brooks, 2015; Matache, 2016, 2017). These approaches to reflexivity may disrupt the reproduction of whiteness as the norm against which to explore Romani experiences and the paternalistic intent to "help" or "rescue" Roma by shifting the focus from Roma marginalisation, exoticisation, or victimisation to multiple agencies of Roma as free thinking and acting subjects (Matache, 2016, 2017).

Such uses of reflexivity correspond to a critical/emancipatory paradigm, and they have been mainly employed by non-Roma researchers contributing to the emerging field of critical Romani studies. They argue that, without incorporating critical theories within reflexive practices, non-Roma scholars may continue to reproduce whiteness and structural and epistemic racism even when their aim is to dismantle racism (Howard & Vajda, 2016; Vajda, 2015). They thus use reflexivity to expose and challenge power, practice advocacy, design and implement more engaged research projects, and facilitate and provide resources for various projects without using paternalistic and colonising stances (Silverman, 2018). Scholars should further assess the place of academia in struggles over social justice, what advocacy and action might accomplish or by whom, and the need to engage in advocacy or not (Fotta & Gay y Blasco, 2024b). The latter can be achieved by "refusing" to speak on behalf of Roma participants, a refusal through which Solimene (2024) explores silence as a way for non-Roma researchers to defer to Roma's knowledge and honour Roma's self-representation.

Roma researchers further explore their own uses of reflexivity in challenging dominant representations, centring Roma self-representations, troubling 'insider'/'outsider' dichotomies, and exploring hierarchies and inequalities between Roma researchers and the members of Roma communities they study (Sarafian, 2023, 2024). Roma researchers thus highlight the multiple agencies and power differentials within Roma communities and between Roma researchers and participants. On a similar note, the category non-Roma is not a monolith either, and it might not always entail a position of privilege, domination, or epistemic authority. Based on his lived experiences, Escobedo (2022) argues that non-Roma scholars of colour may choose to conduct Roma-related research due to having gone through similar experiences of racialisation and racism. The author questions dichotomies between non-Roma identifications and Roma-related issues and argues that BPoC perspectives on Romani research can lead to new Roma/non-Roma mutual identifications, boundaries, solidarities, and collaborations. It is important not to downplay the power a researcher may hold in relation to participants but to nuance non/belongings to Roma communities beyond binary oppositions.

Furthermore, drawing from Lapiņa and Vertelytė (2020), a researcher situated in liminal or differentiated whiteness, such as Eastern European scholars in the Nordics, might also not occupy a position of absolute privilege. Still, one has to be reflexive of historical and ongoing power differentials between Roma and non-Roma in Eastern Europe and in diasporic spaces, as well as question why they want to conduct Roma-related research and how those histories influence their knowledge claims. Without equating liminal whiteness with non-whiteness and without downplaying power imbalances, I argue that highlighting these various research positionalities can destabilise whiteness as the norm against which to explore Romani experiences, as Matache (2016) urges non-Roma researchers to do in their reflexive endeavours.

In the Nordic context, Nordic Romani studies is already an established field, whereas research on Eastern European Roma migrants has been emerging more recently. Research focusing on Nordic Roma people is argued to have largely moved from the "on/for" the Roma phases towards the "with/by" Roma phases (Saarinen et al., 2020, p. 56) through transversal dialogues and reciprocity between Roma and non-Roma

actors (Pulma, 2012) and Roma conducting research with their own communities and creating their own policies and reports (Friman-Korpela, 2014). While this might be true for studies written in local Nordic languages, Nordic Roma-related publications in English are mainly authored by non-Roma researchers (Țîștea, 2020). It has further been claimed that EE Roma migrants in the Nordics are still in the "on/for" research phases due to not being societally "integrated" and therefore not having the means of doing their own research (Saarinen et al., 2020, p. 57). Such claims may reproduce binary divisions between "integrated" Nordic Roma citizens and "problematic" EE Roma migrants, as well as conflate "integration" within mainstream society with the ability of being a knowing subject thus invisibilising alternative Romani knowledges.

Migration scholars became interested in EE Roma migrants starting with the 2004-2007 so called 'Eastern expansion' of the European Union and the subsequent increased migration of Roma people from Eastern Europe to the Nordic region (Ciulinaru, 2017; Diakonissalaitos et al., 2009; Djuve et al., 2015; Enache, 2010; Engebrigtsen, 2011; Gripenberg, 2019; Himanen, 2019; Markkanen et al., 2012; Nordberg, 2004; Roman, 2014; Spehar et al., 2017; Tervonen & Enache, 2017; Warius, 2011). Research interest initially arose from the paradox occurring at the intersection of free mobility, EU citizenship, homelessness, poverty, and street work and begging in societies built on work- and welfare cultures. The challenge for many researchers therefore was how to portray this paradox and how to challenge racist public discourses without exoticising or criminalising the people impacted by those. Such uses of reflexivity centred on minimising damaging discourses and attitudes toward making accurate and valid research representations and influencing advocacy and policymaking, yet those approaches risked producing a homogenous image of Roma migrants.

Roma-related migration studies in the Nordic context have also challenged essentialising nation-state- and ethnicity-focused approaches and East/South-West/North migration patterns, by showing the heterogeneity and divergent agencies of Roma people or focusing on alternative and entangled mobilities (Enache, 2018; Markkanen, 2018; Roman, 2014, 2018), thus echoing the "reflexive turn" in migration studies (Dahinden, 2016). One such study was based on interviews with Finnish Roma academics, artists, and social workers on their views regarding the more recently arrived EE Roma mainly from Romania and Bulgaria (Roman, 2014). The respondents tended to detach themselves from EE Roma due to not wanting to be associated with begging and criminality, thus reproducing mainstream public discourses. They did not want to lose their status within Finnish society which grants them several official rights, nor did they want the resources for the Finnish Roma community to be diminished due to the arrival of EE Roma. While they invoked common histories of attempted forced assimilation of Roma people as part of European nation state building, they used that as an additional argument for detachment, since the severe marginalisation of EE Roma in Finland currently reminded them of their historical position in the country and ignited fear of going back to something they thought belonged to a distant past.

The research by Roman (2014) contributes to highlighting the heterogeneity and divergent agencies of Roma people, yet it also reproduces certain divisions without putting them into a wider reflexive context.

For instance, in their efforts to articulate their Europeanness and aspirations to white privileges, non-Roma Romanian migrants who perceive themselves as white also distance themselves from Roma migrants in Northern Europe, yet they often do so through overt and violent anti-Roma racism (Tudor, 2017a). In the case of Finnish Roma however, their detachment from EE Roma stems from fear of losing certain rights associated with their already marginalised positioning within Finnish society, rights that were achieved after many decades of Roma civil rights movements (Stenroos, 2019). Entangling these different experiences could show how Finnish Roma fears of being associated with EE Roma migrants are caused by the structural racism they experience in a society built on white supremacy, while white Romanian migrants' attitudes are driven by wishes to overcome their liminal positionings in relation to normative whiteness, to be recognized as fully white, and thus take part in white supremacy.

In her research with Finnish Roma individuals engaging in missionary work with Roma communities in Romania, Roman (2018) applied the entangled mobilities approach. She explored Finnish Roma missionaries' North–South transnational mobility, as well as Romanian Roma representatives' South-North mobility when invited to participate in planning meetings and express their communities' views. The multiple unequal entanglements between non/believers, non/Roma, missionaries, missionized, pastors, members of local communities, researcher, and researched, occurring trans/locally in small locations and across borders in multiple directions, highlight the necessity of broadening understandings of Roma mobility.

The entangled mobilities approach has also been applied by Ndukwe (2017) in studying trans-local and trans-continental mobilities of African migrants to and within Finland and from Finland to other locations, which similarly highlights the necessity of broadening understandings of African mobility in a Nordic context and beyond. Ndukwe starts by entangling experiences of discrimination of both Black African and white EE migrants in the Nordics who share socio-economic similarities yet differ in terms of racialisation and racism due to skin colour. Experiences of racism were the main trigger for the African participants' mobilities within and outside of the Nordic space. Ndukwe also entangles past and present mobilities and experiences of racism by drawing parallels with Rosa Emilia Clay's 19th century experience of moving to Finland from Namibia. Racism did not diminish once some of the participants acquired Finnish citizenship. Lundström (2017) has similarly shown how Nordic citizens of colour do not automatically enjoy national belonging, and upward social mobility is more easily achievable when one can embody or pass into Nordic whiteness. Driven by multiple structural forces, the African participants in the research by Ndukwe engage in multiple, multi-layered, and sometimes partial mobilities and belongings, during which they acquire entangled cosmopolitan skills and abilities to negotiate their racialisation, subjectivities, and belongings across multiple locations. In the case of EE migrants however, as Lundström argues, Nordic whiteness may broaden and include them within its boundaries, especially their descendants.

Departing from the claim in Lundström's (2017) study that children of white EE migrants will be unproblematically 'integrated' into Nordic whiteness, an exploration of the racialisation experiences of white Polish migrants' descendants who were born or grew up in Sweden is offered by Runfors (2021). The study shows the descendants possess both materialised, physical whiteness, as well as performative abilities

of Swedish whiteness. Their Polish parents, however, while possessing materialised whiteness, most often cannot enact performative Swedish whiteness. Moreover, the descendants of Polish migrants still have to navigate a radar that could make them involuntarily visible when markers of Polishness surface. They thus have to consider whether to conceal or reveal their Polishness by reading various contexts and possible unwanted consequences. The study by Runfors shows how Nordic whiteness is still not broad enough to unproblematically include EE migrants and their descendants within its boundaries. Still, passing or not passing into Nordic whiteness is a choice for descendants of white EE migrants, which confers them relative privileges and mobility, while their parents might also pass into Nordic whiteness if they learn how to perform it. Nordic citizens and their parents who cannot pass as white are however othered, regardless of their ability to perform Nordicness, due to visual markers like skin colour, which unlike clothing and performative aspects, cannot be un/learned. Yet these issues are difficult to voice due to Nordic colour-blindness.

Nordic colour-blind discourses imply that racism happens when one mentions or sees race, whereas anti-racism implies not seeing or talking about it (Mählck, 2016). White researchers may therefore choose not to engage with academics of colour in order to claim that they do not see race. Relatedly, BPoC scholars voicing their experiences of racism, may be seen as the 'problem', since one only sees racism if they see race, and seeing race makes one racist within a Nordic colour-blind discourse (Ezechukwu, 2020; Osman, 2021). With the Nordic countries avoiding their colonial pasts and perpetuating colour-blind discourses, BPoC academics experiencing racism do not have access to words that can voice their experiences (Diallo, 2019). This also stems from the fact that only a few 'others' are accepted into Nordic academic spaces, a way of claiming 'diversity' while keeping power and abilities to define valid knowledge within hegemonic knowers, which ultimately invisibilises knowledge claims by marginalised knowers.

Closing thoughts: pathways towards emerging solidarities

BPoC scholars have explored in detail the mechanisms through which Nordic academia is immersed in coloniality and white supremacy, highlighting the silencing force of whiteness (Custódio & Gathuo, 2020; Diallo, 2019; Ezechukwu, 2020; Osman, 2021). It has also been claimed that whiteness may not always afford unconditional access to positions of 'scientific neutrality' and 'rational thinking' in Nordic academia (Andreassen & Myong, 2017), particularly when speaking from a position of EE "differentiated whiteness" (Lapiņa and Vertelytė, 2020). While scholars occupying differentiated or liminal whiteness may not always be seen as knowing subjects, they may still be able to navigate Nordic academic landscapes by passing as Nordic white. Furthermore, theorising Eastern Europeanness as liminal whiteness makes it impossible to think of an Eastern European person as anything other than white, thus erasing the experiences of EE, BPoC and Roma people. Still, there are also grounds for solidarity and coalitions between these multiple unequal perspectives towards decolonising education.

The tensions of unequal coalitions can lead to imagining and practicing new ways of producing knowledge, beyond hegemonic gazes and approvals for legitimacy. Such transgressive actions towards

dismantling power can only occur in cooperation between plural marginalised actors within and beyond the Nordic space, and within and beyond academia. Eriksen and Svendsen (2020) see decolonising education as not only reforming but sometimes also abandoning academia altogether. This is where lessons can be learnt from Romani historical resistance against Nordic formal education (Hagatun, 2020) and from current Romani efforts of introducing their own knowledges in Nordic higher education, alongside their continued prioritisation of community life (Stenroos & Helakorpi, 2021).

Solidarities do not always result in transgressive transformations. Sometimes there may be communicative difficulties that need to be negotiated, in which cases what Lugones (2006) calls complex communication can be helpful. Complex communication happens at intersections between communicative openings and impasses, requiring tolerance for the opacity of other ways of being and knowing without attempting to break them down within one's familiar sense-making, and without necessarily relying on shared vocabularies or interests. Through complex communication, people who are differently positioned by relations of power can create new coalitional possibilities by learning how to see each other beyond what they may be within a given structure of power. This may not only shift the terms of the conversation but create new conversations altogether, which imagine alternative and more just research practices.

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