CZECH AND SLOVAK ROMA IN LEEDS: ESCAPING EXCEPTIONALITY, REMAINING ROMA

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities.

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**Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A8</td>
<td>A8 countries: eight out of ten countries which joined the European Union in 2004. They are: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Economic Area: EEA is a single market area that includes countries of the EU and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Employment and Support Allowance: welfare benefit for people unable to work because of short-term illness or medical condition.</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRT</td>
<td>Gypsy, Roma and Travellers</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRTAS</td>
<td>Gypsy, Roma and Travellers Achievement Service: part of Leeds City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRT</td>
<td>Habitual Residence Test: an assessment of whether an EU citizen who has recently moved to the UK from abroad is entitled to receive welfare benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MET</td>
<td>Minimum Earnings Threshold: an assessment used to determine whether an EU citizen is entitled to receive welfare benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>UJM</td>
<td>Universal Jobmatch: government-run website where people can look for jobs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRS</td>
<td>Worker Registration Scheme: registration scheme run by the government from 2004-2011 for people from A8 countries coming to work in the UK.</td>
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Abstract

The University of Manchester

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PhD Social Anthropology

Czech and Slovak Roma in Leeds: Escaping Exceptionality, Remaining Roma

May 2018

Roma in former Czechoslovakia have historically experienced economic and political marginalisation and been treated and portrayed as inferior to ethnic Czechs and Slovaks. Roma thereby became perceived as different from non-Roma citizens, as not belonging to the Czech or Slovak nation, as an ‘exception’. The post-socialist transition produced economic precarity, new inequalities, and a climate of rising nationalist sentiments in Central and Eastern Europe. The perception of Roma as not having the same rights as ethnic Czechs or Slovaks to access state care became even more salient than during the socialist period. Following the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, Roma are now able to move freely across EU borders and to find employment and settle in the United Kingdom. Migration to the UK, including Leeds, offered Roma new economic opportunities as well as the promise of escaping ethnic stigmatisation. It seemed to offer the possibility to lead what I refer to as a ‘normal life’ as equal citizens. This thesis is based on ethnographic research among Czech and Slovak Roma in Leeds. It reveals the processes that contribute to Roma becoming defined as an exception after migrating to Leeds, and looks at the ways in which Roma resist this. It recounts the interactions that Roma have with different aspects of state care, namely welfare provision, services and projects aimed at improving the well-being of Roma, and with non-Roma Czech and Slovak interpreters. Some Roma in Leeds have converted to a Roma Pentecostal Church, the Life and Light. In this thesis I argue that by providing material support to Roma, both converts and non-converts, and through a narrative that Roma are a lost tribe of Israel, the Church constructs Roma as a moral collectivity and subverts their position of inferiority and ‘exceptionality’. The Church provides a way for Roma to be respectable, to live with dignity and to have what they understand to be a ‘normal’ life, whilst retaining their Roma identity.
Declaration

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my younger self, who did not know what she was getting into, and to all others who are embarking or have embarked on a similar journey.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to many people who helped me complete this work. A special thanks to my supervisors, Jeanette Edwards and Tony Simpson, for their help and encouragement over the years. Without Jeanette and her support from the start, I would not have been able to complete this work. Many thanks to Derek Sankar who helped me to get this research started and to Jan Grill who provided me with feedback and support over the years. Heartfelt thanks to Sinéad O’Sullivan for all her help, which came in many forms, and to Jasmine Folz for reading and feedback on sections of this work. I am grateful to the people I met during fieldwork and who allowed me to learn about their lives. Thanks to Erik Piper for his technical help when I thought that technology failed me. I would also like to thank my friends, Michaela Kamenská, Klára Kučerová and Zuzana Panušková, and my sister Marie Doležalová, who all helped to keep me from sinking during the final year. Finally, I would like to thank my sons - Kryštof, who grew up alongside this work, for reading sections of this thesis and for looking after his little brother on many occasions, and Ragnar, who was born next to a pile of anthropology books, for never deleting any of my work and never scribbling on any of my books.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores the lives of Czech and Slovak Roma who moved to Leeds in England after the expansion of the European Union in 2004 in order to find better economic opportunities and to escape the prejudice and discrimination that Roma experience in the Czech Republic. Roma there are visible as Roma or cikáni because they tend to have a darker skin complexion than ethnic (non-Roma) Czechs, and are thus identified as Roma or cikáni simply by the way they look. In the Czech Republic, Roma have been subject to discrimination through practices such as Roma children being placed in schools for children who are considered academically less able simply because of their ethnicity (Amnesty International 2010). Other practices through which Roma face discrimination include being denied entry to bars or restaurants, or being refused employment because of their ethnicity or given harder and more demeaning work than non-Roma (see, for example, Stewart 1997 for a discussion of a similar situation in Hungary). These practices, together with official discourse and medical and social research done during the socialist era, have resulted in the Czech state and non-Roma Czechs perceiving Roma as socially pathological, deviant and abnormal (Sokolova 2008).

In this thesis, I examine how Roma navigate their lives in Leeds in order to escape racism and I consider how the production of Roma as socially problematic or pathological happens in practice. I describe what strategies they use to rebel against or resist the negative stereotypes associated with Roma identity. What do Roma think about their lives in Leeds as opposed to living in the Czech Republic? How do Roma manage their interactions with non-Roma Czechs and Slovaks, and

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1 Throughout the thesis, I use the term Roma when talking about the people that I worked with as a group. I also use the term Roma as a description of a specific ethnic category. I use the term Gypsy as a translation for the Czech word cikán or Slovak word cigán, or when referring to works of other scholars who use the term Gypsy. The word Roma comes from the Romani language (Romanes) and means ‘people’ (rom means man in Romanes). Though I discuss Czech and Slovak Roma throughout this thesis, the main focus is on Roma from the Czech Republic, as I explain in more detail below.
with state services? In this thesis, I argue that migration to the UK is a way of escaping the discrimination and stigmatisation that Roma experience in the Czech Republic while allowing Roma to retain their Roma identity and values. In the UK, Roma have however also become associated with negative stereotypes and my Roma informants experienced some aspects of their lives as outside of the ‘normal’ and acceptable range of possibilities. Conversions to the Life and Light Church, a Roma Pentecostal church, address this tension between striving to overcome negative stereotyping, to escape ‘exceptionality’ and to remain Roma.

In this Introduction I first outline who Roma are and why they are perceived and constructed as different. Second, I describe what led me to study Roma in Leeds. Third, I foreground my theoretical approach and discuss how normality has been approached in anthropological literature, specifically in the post-socialist context. In the final part of the Introduction I outline my methodology and discuss how doing anthropology ‘at home’ influenced the production of knowledge in this thesis, before providing a brief description of the structure of the thesis.

Who are the Roma?

Roma live in many countries across Europe and are associated with a range of (mostly negative) stereotypes. On the one hand, Roma have been portrayed in European literature and media in essentialist terms as an ‘exotic other’, romanticised as nomads, dancers and musicians (discussed in Lemon 2000; Stewart 1997; Trumpener 1992). On the other hand, Roma have become associated with social problems, such as unemployment and poverty, through their portrayal in media and in public policy as ‘benefit scroungers’, beggars or criminals (discussed in Rövid 2013). The reality is that the majority of European Roma are not nomadic, but live settled in houses, and that Roma are found across all economic levels. There are, however, far more Roma in Europe who live in poverty than there
are Roma who are wealthy. In addition to their frequent economic marginalisation, Roma identity itself has become a source of stigma by being reduced to a range of stereotypes. This situation is the result of policies of various states and their successive governments which shaped and produced the economic, social and political marginalisation of Roma, as I describe in this thesis in relation to the Czech Roma.

Despite similarities of experiences that Roma have in different European states and vis-à-vis their majority populations, Roma across Europe do not form a homogenous group. The word Roma is used as an umbrella term to refer to people who have been referred to as cikáni (Gypsies in Czech), and includes Sinti, Manouche, Kalderash, Vlach (Vlachiki) Roma, Romungro Roma, Slovak Roma, and some other groups who live on the fringes of society, or more precisely on the fringes of European nation states. Many of these groups speak the Romani language (Romanes), which has many regional dialects. Some states, including Britain and France, group other people, who may or may not speak Romanes, such as English or Welsh Gypsies (who sometimes call themselves Travellers), or Scottish Travellers, together with Roma in their public policy, because these states understand ‘Gypsiness’ as located in a particular lifestyle, and not simply as an ethnic identity (discussed in Lemon 2000). For example, Travellers and Gypsies are often grouped with Roma by the British state through bureaucratic processes like data collection or by establishing services aimed specifically at Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, which exist in many local authorities in the UK, including Leeds.

There are several theories about the origin of European Roma. The first written accounts that mention Roma in Europe are from the 14th century (discussed in Willems 1997). Some early recorded instances that mention Roma or Gypsies in Europe describe them as ‘Egyptians’ and it was commonly believed that Roma came to Europe from Egypt (discussed in Okely 1983). Linguistic scholars have
provided a link between the *Romanes* language and Sanskrit and argued that Roma came to Europe from India (discussed in Willems 1997; see also Leggio 2013; Matras 2004). However, as language and culture are not static or fixed, but rather continuously shaped through interactions between social groups, foreign origins cannot explain the persistence of cultural difference. Writing about Traveller-Gypsies in Britain and Ireland, Okely (1983:18) states that there is both ‘considerable inter-marriage between groups’ and incorporation of non-Gypsies into the groups. The perceived foreign origins therefore cannot explain the persisting difference because of the frequent movement of people into and out of groups (Barth 1969). Some scholars have argued that ascribing Indian origins to Roma has contributed to perpetuating the myth of the ‘exotic’, foreign, and nomadic Roma, which has then been used to explain perceived difference in terms of foreign origins, instead of examining the social processes that lead to Roma being defined as a separate and distinct group (Lemon 2000; Okely 1983; Stewart 1997).

The history of Roma has been written by non-Roma and it is an inherent part of the structures of domination that Roma face in their everyday life. I do not intend to examine the origins of Roma in this thesis. The Roma migrants\(^2\) that I studied are citizens of either the Czech Republic or Slovakia and their lives are firmly embedded in, and shaped by, the European social and political landscape. The current mobility of Roma must, therefore, be viewed alongside the mobility of other groups which migrate within, into or out of Europe. At the same time, the alleged Indian origins of Roma impact Roma people’s lives because the notion that ‘Roma come from India’

\(^2\) I use the term ‘Roma’ or ‘Roma migrants’ to refer to Czech and Slovak Roma migrants, unless specified otherwise. This includes Hungarian-speaking Roma from Slovakia, who were seen as Slovaks or Slovak Roma by state services due to their Slovak citizenship. At the time of writing, there were also Romanian Roma in Leeds, and their numbers have increased since January 2014 when transitional restrictions on Romanian and Bulgarian nationals’ ability to work in the UK ended (personal communication from Gypsy, Roma, Travellers outreach workers). This happened after my fieldwork ended. During my fieldwork I was aware that there were Romanian Roma working as Big Issue vendors in Leeds, or self-employed in other ways. I did not, however, have any interactions with Romanian Roma because my informants did not have interactions with them, apart from occasional encounters with Romanian Roma musicians busking in Leeds city centre. There were also Polish and Hungarian Roma in Leeds, but again, I did not have any (or had minimal) interactions with them.
contributes to the perception that Roma are different from non-Roma Europeans and that they are less civilised (Engebrigsten 2007; Lemon 2000; Stewart 1997; Willems 1997).

Before and during my fieldwork, I attended several events organised by various local agencies and public sector organisations in Yorkshire that work with or for Roma. These events were usually aimed at people working in the public and third sectors. Sometimes at those events there would be an introduction during which an overview of who Roma are was given. If any history of the origins of Roma was provided, it tended to focus on the alleged Indian origins and nomadic culture of Roma, despite the fact that the majority of Roma in Europe are settled, rather than nomadic. If any recent context was provided, it tended to focus on the situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), rather than looking at the complex and transnational economic and political structures within which Roma lives are embedded. Simhandl (2006) traces how the institutions of the European Union contributed to the emergence in the 1990s of a discourse within which Roma are understood to be an a priori group, defined by their ethnicity (and initially also by their perceived nomadism) and associated with Central and Eastern Europe. She states that this discourse served to identify ‘Roma issues’ with the former Soviet bloc and was used as a political tool in discussions about the expansion of the EU, and obstacles to it (Simhandl 2006).

Some Roma activists and intellectuals engage with the notion of Roma having shared Indian origins, as a way of promoting unity among Roma and with the intention of increasing political and ethnic emancipation among Roma (Vermeersch 2006, Stewart 2013). During fieldwork, I learnt that Roma Pentecostal and Evangelical churches also engage with the idea of Roma coming to Europe from India. According to their teachings, however, India was only a stop on the journey that Roma travelled from Israel. The churches thereby also use the notion of Roma
having a shared foreign origin as a way of constructing a transnational Roma community. Arguments about the origins of Roma are used for various reasons and political aims and must be examined as such. Therefore, even though I will not examine the origins of Roma per se, in later chapters I will look at how discussions about the origins of Roma are used in the production of specific and sometimes competing discourses used by different actors.

The Czech and Slovak Roma that live in Leeds are not a homogeneous group. They come from diverse backgrounds, have a variety of experiences, values and life trajectories and would not necessarily think of themselves as sharing a single Roma or Gypsy identity or ethnicity. There are Roma in Leeds who are educated, who have office jobs, Roma who pass as non-Roma,\(^3\) Vlach Roma who speak a different dialect of *Romanes* than my Roma interlocutors and who I was often warned about. There are Roma who identify as LGBT, but also Roma who consider homosexuality to be a sin. There are some values or practices which were described to me as a Roma way of doing things (*Romanipes* in *Romanes*). Instead of being fixed, values are formed and reaffirmed by daily practice, and are thus constantly changing and contested. In addition to kinship links that exist between them, and which I discuss in Chapter Two, Czech and Slovak Roma have a shared experience of living in the same state for over forty years. As a result of living in one state, having kinship links and because of the similarity between Czech and Slovak languages, Czech and Slovak Roma in Leeds experience ‘groupness’ (Brubaker 2002) in their interactions with the state and with non-Roma – they are often perceived and treated as a group regardless of the varied experiences and internal differences among them. In interactions with the British state, Roma are seen either as ‘Roma’ and defined by their ethnicity, or as East Europeans and perceived through their migrant status, as I examine in more detail below.

\(^3\) Stewart (2017) discusses Hungarian Roma in the UK who pass as Hungarians. Some of my interlocutors also passed as non-Roma in some situations.
As I have thus far outlined, Roma have in recent history been targeted by policies of both the Czech and Slovak states at two interconnected levels. On one level through specific policies and practices, such as limiting their access to education, or moving them into an area away from non-Roma populations, the state has limited their access to resources and thus contributed to the fact that many Roma live in poverty. On another level, Roma identity itself has become stigmatised and Roma are often seen as socially dysfunctional and inferior to the non-Roma populations among whom they live (see Sokolova 2008; Stewart 2002). Roma in the Czech Republic have become defined as an ‘exception’ to the norm; with the norm understood to be the non-Roma majority. Throughout this thesis, I will refer to the position of being perceived and treated as an exception from the norm in which Roma find themselves vis-à-vis non-Roma as ‘exceptionality’. Migration to Leeds, a city with a diverse population, which contrasts with the ethnically homogenous populations of the Czech Republic, can be viewed as a strategy to escape this position of ‘exceptionality’. In this thesis, I will examine how the position of ‘exceptionality’ that Roma have been pushed to in the Czech Republic impacts the lives of Roma after their migration to Leeds.

**Parallel Czech lives**

There were several factors that led me to study Roma migrants in Leeds. I am myself a Czech migrant, though I am not Roma. I moved to the UK in late 1998 after I dropped out of university in my first year when I became pregnant with my English boyfriend. The relationship did not last, but I decided to stay in the UK and when my son started primary school I began studying for a degree again. After studying anthropology as a single mother living in London, I struggled to combine a full-time job with being a single parent and decided to retrain as an interpreter and became
self-employed. As many Roma migrants do not have the ability or confidence to interact in English with authorities or health professionals and require an interpreter, my interpreting job led me to interact more closely with Roma than I had ever done when I lived in the Czech Republic, as I describe below.

I grew up in a working-class household in communist Czechoslovakia in a small town on the border of what was at the time Western Germany. I describe my upbringing as working-class because both my parents were brought up in poor, working households. When I was a child my mother was a seamstress in a local clothes factory and my father was an army employee. Overtly, communist Czechoslovakia was a classless society because the official rhetoric focused on all citizens being ‘workers’ and thus equal as members of the working class. According to the official socialist ideology, the class differences present in a ‘bourgeois’ or capitalist society were overcome by the socialist revolution, and the nationalisation of all property (Leff 1997; Sokolova 2008). Yet, class differences did not disappear overnight following the imposition of the communist regime, despite the apparent lack of economic differences between households. Class differences are located in people’s embodied dispositions and habits and in the cultural and social capital that people possess and pass on through their kinship and social networks (Bourdieu 1984). Following the collapse of the Soviet regime, class differences became quickly visible through increasing economic inequalities, accompanied by differences in social status. After the end of the Soviet regime, when I was completing compulsory school education and later attending grammar school, I started noticing such differences between many of my classmates and myself, for example my classmates had music lessons, their parents took them to the theatre or sent them to language classes. Some of my classmates’ and friends’ families

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4 The official name was the Federal Republic of Germany.
5 Compulsory education ended at 15 at the time. After this I attended a four-year grammar school until I was 19 and passed the final examination, called Maturita, which is equivalent to British A-levels.
received property or compensation for property that had been confiscated (nationalised) by the socialist Czechoslovak state in the 1950s. Unlike some of my friends’ and classmates’ families, my family’s economic situation did not improve after 1989. On the contrary, it became more precarious and both my parents worried about losing their jobs.

When I was in primary school, there was only one Roma girl in my class and she dropped out of school when we were twelve years old. I do not remember any other Roma children in our school, though it is possible that there were some. Similarly, I do not recall any Roma families living on the newly-built housing estate on the outskirts of Cheb, the small town where we lived. Again, it is possible that there were some Roma families on the estate but there were no Roma among my friends or my brother’s friends. After the Velvet Revolution⁶ in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet bloc, as I entered my teenage years in the early 1990s, my parents divorced. My mother, my brother and I moved into a different area of our town, an older housing estate closer to the town centre. There were some Roma families living in houses a few streets away and in the town centre where my new school was located, but again, none in my class or among my friends.

One of the visible changes that came with the opening of the border to ‘Western Germany’ was the appearance of German cars with German men in our town. The main streets leading to Germany became lined with sex workers, who were said to be Roma women. In her book which examines the discourses on Roma in communist Czechoslovakia, Sokolova (2008:54) argues that in communist official discourse ‘Gypsy deviance’ was explained as being a result of Romani ‘dysfunctional families, backward reproductive and demographic patterns, unnatural sexual behaviour, and incompetent parenting.’ Sokolova (2008) further points out

⁶ The term ‘Velvet Revolution’ is used to describe the events of November and December 1989, which led to the resignation of the socialist government and the collapse of the socialist regime in Czechoslovakia.
that these explanations were not gender neutral, instead they focused on the female body and behaviour and Roma women were described in the official discourse as ‘sexually loose’ and the Czechoslovak state established practices which aimed to control the sexuality and fertility of Roma women.”

The sex tourism of German men who appeared much wealthier than the majority of the local population (as indicated by the cars they drove) and who crossed the border in search of cheap sex was one area where established and emerging inequalities came to be visible – not only the inequalities in wealth between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ Europeans, but also those emerging within Czech society. When I was sixteen years old I learnt, through a chance encounter with two women who were sex workers and not much older than me, that many sex workers were women exploited by men who acted as their ‘pimps’ and forced them into sex work.

The presence of sex tourism and the fact that Roma became associated with the sex industry, through the image of the sexual and sexualised cikánka (a Gypsy woman in Czech), were specific to my hometown because of its location next to the German border. My point here is to illustrate that Roma became associated with illegal and ‘frowned upon’ or ‘immoral’ activities in the eyes of many non-Roma Czechs because of suddenly visible inequalities and the increased economic precarity that emerged during the post-socialist transition. I should point out that segregation is not always as spatial as I describe here. In many Czech towns, indeed in some parts of my hometown Cheb, there are areas where Roma and non-Roma live next to each other, for example, in the same tower block. However, there is still widespread segregation in education (Amnesty International 2010; 2014) and the workplace, and Roma and non-Roma Czechs do not usually socialise with each other.

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7 In 1972, a Sterilisation Decree was issued by both Ministries of Health in federal Czechoslovakia. Even though there is no mention of Romani ethnicity in the decree, it was used to target Roma women. Roma women were often forced into sterilisation either through threats or through financial incentives (Sokolova 2008:11).
Despite living in the same town as many Roma, I had hardly any personal interaction with Roma people while I lived in the Czech Republic, apart from the occasional brief encounter. I certainly do not remember having any meaningful conversation with anyone who would describe themselves as Roma. This is a fairly typical experience for the majority of people in the Czech Republic – Roma and non-Roma Czechs live next to each other but there are government policies and social practices in place, which maintain the pre-existing segregation. Therefore, when I started working in England as a public service interpreter in my mid-twenties it was the first time that I had meaningful conversations with the Roma people for whom I was interpreting. By then I already had a degree in anthropology and was aware of many of the political, social and economic constraints that Roma faced, but through speaking with Roma people, I starting to learn about the variety, as well as the similarities, of experience of Roma and the challenges they faced both in the Czech Republic and as migrants in England.

‘Going up’ or becoming ‘normal’?

My background, selectively described above, and my experience of interpreting for Roma in England and in various institutional settings including healthcare services, Job Centres, social services and prisons, shaped the initial questions that I had in mind when I first considered studying Roma migrants in England. My initial questions also reflected what Roma themselves shared with me during our interactions, and my own experience of living in the England. Of course, my questions were skewed by the fact that I often saw Roma in settings and situations where social problems such as poverty, inadequate housing, and low school attendance were at the forefront. I was curious to find out why Roma often found themselves in such a position and how they navigated their interactions with the
British state and local authorities. I was also interested in learning about the differences and similarities in the experience of Roma and non-Roma who moved to England from the Czech Republic. When I spoke to Roma during the years that preceded my research, many compared and contrasted life in England with life in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, and said that it was easier to find work and make a living in England. Not only that, many Roma described their lives in the Czech Republic and Slovakia as hard because ‘Czechs / Slovaks are racists’. While this sentiment often did not refer to specific Czech and Slovak people, it described the institutionalised and normalised racism and prejudice that Roma experience in the Czech Republic. At the same time, many Roma seemed to find the British healthcare and welfare system confusing and slow, in comparison with the Czech or Slovak version of the same. I found this contrast between describing life in England as better and easier than in the Czech Republic, on the one hand, and expressing dissatisfaction with healthcare and other services on the other hand, interesting and wanted to explore it further. Below, I turn to a discussion of what aspirations and expectations Roma had when moving to Britain.

Grill (2012a) studied migration networks of Roma who migrated from the village of Tarkovce in Slovakia to the UK and found that they talked about migration to the UK as džan opre, which translates as ‘going up’ in Romanes. He compares this with other types of movement across state borders, such as migration for work in the Czech Republic, or migration that involved applying for asylum, and states that Roma did not describe these other types of migration as ‘going up’ (Grill 2012a). There was high unemployment and limited possibilities for making a living in the village of Tarkovce and many Roma there were not able to imagine changing their economic situation or social status. Some Roma who moved to the UK were able to bring home earnings that they would not have conceived of before, thus not only being able to improve their economic situation but also to gain higher social status.
Migration to the UK enabled those Roma who managed to migrate successfully to transform their lives in a way that migrating for work in the Czech Republic did not, for example some Roma who migrated to the UK used their earnings to renovate or build houses in Tarkovce. Grill (2012a:1273) states that ‘“going up” entails movement forward, towards achievement and fulfilment’ and this movement was contrasted to ‘being stuck’ in a situation when one ‘is at the perceived bottom and there are no possibilities for improving his or her lot’. He concludes that for Tarkovce Roma, ‘going up’ refers both to physical mobility and to existential mobility (Grill 2012a). Living in Britain and being able to afford status goods such as branded sportswear, mobile phones or certain cars enabled Roma to achieve upward social mobility in Slovakia, even if they did not achieve upward social mobility in Britain.

In a similar way, the Roma migrants I worked with believed that moving to Leeds (and to England in general) would lead to their upward social mobility, both because of having a higher income in Leeds, and gaining higher social status. This was indicated by the fact that my Roma interlocutors, like the Roma in Grill’s (2012a) work, also talked about moving to Leeds as ‘going up’ (dříjet nahoru in Czech). Many of my interlocutors said that they moved to Leeds because they wanted to have a ‘better life’ either for themselves or for their children. When I asked them what it meant to have a ‘better life’ or a ‘good life’, they usually told me that they just wanted to live normally (normálně in Czech). Living normálně was described to me as having a job, a house, a family and being seen as a ‘normal’ person.

The notion of normality expresses a number of different meanings. First, the idea of normality, of being normal or having a life that is normal, refers to the possibility of achieving aims and goals in life that are understood to be commonplace and which everybody should be able to achieve: having a job, a place to live, a family, and a sense of security (Jansen 2015). Second, normality has to do with morality. Living
normally is linked to going about one’s life in a way that is seen as socially acceptable. Life that is normal should be lived ‘properly’ and according to specific moral values. This does not mean that in order to have a normal life, a person cannot have any moral flaws or make mistakes. On the contrary, some personal flaws and moral failures, like smoking or struggling to control one’s anger, are seen as part of normal life. What is important is that these flaws or moral failures fall within a certain range that counts as acceptable. Normality thereby requires acting in a socially acceptable way and conducting one’s life in a way that is seen as reasonable by others (Zigon 2011).

Third, being normal and having a normal life requires material conditions which are imagined as normal – normal life is a life that is not lived in extreme material conditions. It is lived neither in poverty nor in extravagance. Fourth, a normal life has continuity, it is moving from a known past into a future where one’s aspirations and goals can be achieved. It gives the person a sense of going somewhere, instead of a sense of being stuck, for example, without a job, without decent accommodation, or without the possibility of improving the material conditions of one’s life. Normal life is therefore a life that is somewhat ordinary, it is not exceptional either in its goals, temporal orientation, and moral or material dimensions (see Jansen 2015). The ability to live ‘normally’ and have a normal life is thereby largely determined by one’s social relationships which need to be conducted in a socially acceptable and expected manner, to express appropriate moral values and foster a sense of belonging within a collectivity. For Roma, this includes relationships with other Roma, with gadže (non-Roma), and with the state.

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8 Gadže (plural) is a Roma word for non-Roma. The singular forms are gadžo (non-Roma man) and gadži (non-Roma woman). When I asked my informants if gadže just refers to white people, or if for example a black person would also be called a gadžo/gadži, I was told that gadže are Czech or Slovak non-Roma, whereas an English person would be called Angličan (an English man) or Angličanka (an English woman), a Pakistani person would be called Pakistánec (a Pakistani man) or Pakistánka (a Pakistani woman) and so on, implying that people were generally described by their ethnicity, nationality or race. However, I observed that English people in positions of authority were also talked about as gadže. This suggests that whether someone is described as a gadžo/gadži does not depend only on their ethnicity but also on their position vis-à-vis Roma.
Gadže and the state are in some contexts seen as one and the same – the state looks after the interests of gadže more than it looks after the interests of Roma, and gadže are almost always in a position of power and authority over Roma, because the state is a gadže institution. The state and state-like actors create conditions which can either facilitate or hinder a person’s ability to live a normal life (Jansen 2015).

What, then, did my interlocutors mean when they said that they wanted to live normálně? Migrating to Britain in order to have a ‘better life’, articulated in terms of a ‘normal life’, is a way of dealing with and overcoming the conditions of abnormality and the position of exceptionality which Roma experience in the former Czechoslovakia. Sokolova (2008) states that despite the supposed absence of class and socio-economic differences, social hierarchies persisted in communist societies. She states that without socio-economic signifiers ‘social differences between people were sometimes cast in terms of “decency” or normality. To be “decent” or normal was a key element of social citizenship’ (Sokolova 2008:50). In order to be seen as normal, individuals or social groups were expected to behave in normal or ‘proper’ ways. In her book, Sokolova (2008) traces the ways in which popular and official discourses in communist Czechoslovakia were used to create an understanding of culture as a category of identity, and to produce rigid boundaries between Czechs and Slovaks on the one hand, and Roma on the other hand. Abnormality or ‘exceptionality’ in relation to Roma became associated with being seen and treated as immoral, as backward, poor, lazy or deviant. In order to live normálně, the Roma in my study wanted to overcome this perception and to be treated as moral and decent persons with rights equal to others.

In her study of post-socialist Hungary in the 1990s, Féhérváry (2003) discusses how the concept of normality was used by Hungarians in relation to changing expectations of living standards. She found that many Hungarians referred to
objects, services and standards of living, which were extraordinary in their local context, as normal. Consumer goods, like high-tech appliances or ‘American kitchens’, which were beyond the means of her informants, were imagined to be part of the average lifestyles in Western Europe and the USA (Féhérváry 2003). Describing such lifestyles as normal was a strategy with which the Hungarians aimed to distance themselves from the ‘abnormal’ socialist past and position themselves as belonging to Western Europe (Féhérváry 2003). The point that Féhérváry (2003) makes about normalising certain living standards as a strategy to shift one’s identity is relevant for my study because Roma attempt to escape the position of ‘exceptionality’ in part by having a better standard of living, which they understand to be the average or normal material conditions. This better standard of living, expected to be achieved after moving to Britain, is seen as a proof that Roma migrants are more civilised than the Roma who live in poverty in settlements or in run-down houses in Roma-only areas of some Czech and Slovak towns.

In his book *Yearnings in the Meantime*, Jansen (2015) talks about ‘normal lives’ in post-socialist and post-war Sarajevo. He points out that studies of ‘normality’ tend to focus on places or settings which are experiencing some form of ‘abnormality’ - either in the form of violence (Das 2007) or in the context of large-scale political and economic changes like those that were experienced in the post-socialist region (Fehérváry 2002; Jansen 2015; Yurchak 2006; Zigon 2011). The notion of a normal life expresses not what a life is, but a seemingly shared and self-explanatory sentiment of what life ought to be (Jansen 2015). Both situations of ‘abnormality’ described above are relevant to the situation of Czech and Slovak Roma. Even though Roma do not live in a context of violent conflict, there have been instances of violence from far-right groups towards Roma across CEE, which in a number of cases ended in deaths (Strašíková 2009). Additionally, Roma have been subject to structural violence both during socialism and in the post-socialist era. As well as...
living with the threat of violence, Roma have been disproportionately affected by the economic changes that accompanied the transition to capitalism (Guy 2001). For example, a report by the Czech government (2010) shows that in 2009 in some locations in the Czech Republic, over 90% of Roma men were unemployed. Roma therefore have to deal with economic precarity and the unpredictability of life created by the post-socialist transition as well as with the threat of violence. Additionally, Roma in the former Czechoslovakia experience racialisation and are often treated as inferior to non-Roma Czechs or Slovaks, as discussed above. Roma therefore not only live in conditions of abnormality, but they are themselves constructed by actions of a variety of actors, and produced through discourse, as being an exception to the norm, as different to non-Roma and as inferior on the basis of their ethnicity (Sokolova 2008).

In his book *Everything Was Forever until It Was No More*, Yurchak (2006) discusses the concept of normality in relation to how the Soviet state and its ideology were sustained and reproduced during late socialism, despite the contradictions between official rhetoric and everyday life. He interviewed people who were Komsomol members during the late socialist period. Komsomol was a Soviet political organisation for young people aimed at spreading and normalising Soviet ideology among youth. According to the former Komsomol members in Yurchak’s (2006) book, a person who was living a ‘normal life’, and was therefore a ‘normal person’, did not concern herself or himself too much with the dominant discourse; they were neither overtly opposed to the ideology of the Soviet state, nor were they actively promoting it. According to Yurchak normal life as it was understood by the Komsomol members during late socialism was ‘a life that was neither too activist nor too oppositional’, instead it was a life that was ‘interesting, relatively free, full, creative, and not reduced to an oppressed existence, ideological automatism or idealist activism’ (Yurchak 2006:118). An understanding of ‘normal life’ in Russia
during late socialism was thereby linked to being a ‘normal person’, and was
determined by a person’s stance towards the state and the official discourse (see
also Zigon 2011).

In this thesis, I argue that for Roma, having a normal life is also linked to being a
normal person and to having a standard of living which they understand to be
normal. For Roma, being a normal person is determined both by their stance
towards the state and the gadže, and by the stance that the state and gadže have
towards Roma. There are different co-existing and competing understandings of
normality. Roma understandings of normality can overlap with, as well as diverge
from, those of others; they are linked to Roma values and morality. As I observed
among my Roma interlocutors, in addition to cultivating ‘a certain sensibility for living
within a particular range of possibilities’ (Zigon 2011:227), normal life also meant
being treated as ‘normal’ by others. Roma understood this as being treated with
respect and dignity as others are, instead of being treated as an ‘exception’
because of one’s ethnicity, immigration status or class position. Yet, Roma migrants’
ability to live with dignity and respect was being undermined as a result of various
policies and practices and the resulting economic conditions, what I refer to as ‘state
care’, and which includes services, policies and conditions with which the state
contributes to the well-being (or its absence) of its citizens.

In his work on the production of sovereign power of modern states, Agamben (1998)
discusses the Roman legal category of Homo sacer; the sacred man ‘who may be
killed and yet not sacrificed’ (Agamben 1998:144-45). The ‘sacred man’ does not
have the rights that citizens do and is thus reduced to ‘bare life’. Drawing parallels to
modern states, Agamben (1998) looks at the figure of the refugee and points out
that the refugee does not have citizenship in any nation state and as such is bare
life; individuals only gain rights as citizens if they are incorporated into the
sociopolitical and legal order of the nation state. The absence of rights creates
exclusion. Who is considered a citizen and who becomes ‘bare life’ is however not fixed and can shift. As individuals move across bureaucratic and legal categories, they can gain citizenship and rights, but they can also lose them. Agamben's (1998) work shows that power over ‘bare life’ has moved to the bureaucratic apparatus of states, the legal system, and to humanitarian or non-governmental organisations – to actors who have the power and ability to challenge, define and contextualise categories, and decide who is included and who excluded (see also Zigon 2011). Agamben's work is relevant for my discussion of Roma who continuously come up against processes and structures that push them towards becoming ‘bare life’ or an exception. They are continuously being defined and produced as people without rights, or their rights are questioned. In order to overcome this ‘exceptionality’, Roma have to be incorporated into the sociopolitical order of the nation state as equal citizens. However, because Roma ethnicity itself is stigmatised, their ethnicity becomes a category of exclusion and of exception.

In this thesis I will show that in order to live normálně, it is important for Roma to retain their Roma identity - to live according to a specific Roma morality and be different from gadže and therefore to not concern oneself too much with gadže rules. At the same time, to have a normal life requires not being treated as inferior to gadže due to being Roma. Living normally therefore requires having ‘normal’ or ‘proper’ relationships, with Roma, with gadže and with the state. It entails a tension between being treated as normal and equal by the state and gadže but remaining Roma in the Roma social world. However, this expected normality is often not achieved after moving to Leeds. As a result of the changing political and economic situation in the UK, and the changing relationship of the UK towards the European Union, and the A8 countries in particular, life in the UK is also lived in conditions of

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9 The A8 countries are eight of the ten countries which joined the European Union in May 2004: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The other two countries which joined
‘exceptionality’. Dealing with the British state is unpredictable, and Roma are again being pushed towards ‘exceptionality’ because of both their ethnicity and being A8 migrants. In order to become good citizens, Roma have to either adopt gadže values or they have to perform a specific identity as cikáni, as it is imagined by gadže. During my fieldwork, some of my interlocutors converted to the Life and Light church, a Roma Pentecostal church. In this thesis, I will argue that the church provides a space where Roma can distance themselves from the stigmatisation and immorality associated with being Roma, and thereby from their perceived ‘exceptionality’; it creates a space where they can be moral (and thus normal) and at the same time remain Roma without becoming (like) gadže.

Fieldwork and methodology

In this section, I describe how I ‘entered the field’, discuss how I was positioned towards the various individual and institutional actors who are present in this work, and provide an overview of my methodology. When I started fieldwork in September 2013, I had already lived in Leeds where I had worked as an interpreter for three years. My background and migration trajectory shaped my positionality, and how I was situated in the various relationships that formed and shaped my fieldwork and created my perception of the ‘field’. As a Czech migrant who had been living in Leeds for several years prior to starting fieldwork, I shared the experience of living in a foreign country with the people I studied. But I have a different ethnicity and class position than the Roma with whom I was working. Even though I consider myself to be working-class, there was a social distance between us because of differences in the levels of our education and income. I did not do manual work and both interpreting and ‘visiting people and talking to them’ (as my informants at the same time but are not part of the A8 group are Cyprus and Malta. The A8 countries were subject to certain restrictions during a transition period of 7 years. I discuss this in more detail in Chapters One and Five.
described my fieldwork) did not constitute ‘work’ in my informants’ eyes. Like Roma
migrants, I had experienced having to navigate the benefit system when I lived as a
single parent. At the time of my fieldwork, however, my partner had a management
job in retail, and even though we were by no means wealthy, together with my
funding our income was too high to qualify for welfare benefits and we were able to
afford a mortgage. During fieldwork, I was at times acutely aware of the difference in
income between myself and my informants, as well as of the difference between us
in the extent to which the British state intruded into my life through its bureaucratic
apparatus versus the lives of my informants, determined to a large extent by the fact
that they had to rely on welfare benefits.

In a city, depending on which neighbourhood you live in, and the terms on which
you live there, the feeling of belonging to a local community or of having local
connections can be lacking. It is easy to be anonymous in some contexts. Yet, by
living in a particular area and through social interactions with other ‘locals’, people
have or can create and gain connection to a neighbourhood (Evans 2006). In
Leeds, although Roma are dispersed throughout the city, most Roma tend to live in
few specific areas. I decided to focus on one of these: the neighbourhood of
Harehills.\textsuperscript{10} As I lived in Leeds with my partner and son when I started fieldwork, I
did not move to Harehills. Fieldwork and the knowledge produced through fieldwork
are always partial because there is no unknown ‘larger whole’ or a totality that could
be grasped (Marcus 2007:356). The idea that cultures are homogenous spaces and
that geographical proximity implies social proximity has long been critiqued by
anthropologists (see for example Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Passaro 1997).

My decision to focus on Harehills (and to a lesser degree neighbouring Gipton), but
not to move there, shaped my experience of fieldwork and what I learnt.

\textsuperscript{10} Harehills is the real name of the neighbourhood. I decided to not change names for the areas in Leeds where I
did my fieldwork, because I believe that it would be easy to identify them through my descriptions here.
Anthropologists create their ‘field-site’ through the process of doing fieldwork and through decisions about what to include and exclude in both their fieldwork and writing. Writing about his fieldwork in a village in Corsica, Candea (2007) states that ‘the village’ where he was doing his research was made up of a multiplicity of heterogenous places and that it was these multiple connections within which the village was positioned which created its value as a fieldsite, as what he calls an ‘arbitrary location’. Focusing on a specific location allows us to explore the processes that create it and the social relations that constitute it. In order to be able to define what I was researching, I made a decision to focus on Harehills and the areas immediately next to it, and on the Roma who lived there. I also visited other areas of Leeds during fieldwork. For example, one of the Roma women I visited during fieldwork moved out of Harehills to Armley, which also has a diverse migrant population, including Roma. I continued visiting her there and also visited Armley through my contact with services aimed at Roma there. Deciding to focus on Harehills and surrounding areas meant that I did not have time to establish close contacts with Roma in other parts of Leeds. This was also linked to the fact that the social networks of my main informants did not include Roma from other parts of Leeds (but included people from other cities in England).

Despite the imposed ‘boundedness’ of ‘arbitrary locations’, fieldwork tends to extend beyond specific bounded locality and temporality (Okely 2007; Passaro 1997). Fieldwork does not happen just when one is in a specific location designated as a field-site, it requires ‘thinking through it elsewhere’, it happens ‘in the head, whole body, and beyond one designated locality’ (Okely 2007:360). My fieldwork spilled out of Harehills, as my informants moved through Leeds and as their social connections reached beyond Harehills. I was also faced with the views that some of my family members and non-Roma Czech friends held about Roma either as a problematic group or as an exotic and romanticised ‘Other’. Even when I was not
physically present in the ‘field’, these encounters shaped my experience of fieldwork and my thoughts about it - this was enhanced by my previous work as an interpreter. Locality is produced through concrete practices and interactions between local actors (Appadurai 1996) and so are field-sites and those that we study. Defining localities in a global and deterritorialised world is not straightforward but we need to somehow define where we work and whom we study (Passaro 1997:161). I found the fact that I have to describe the people I worked with as an ethnic group problematic because defining them in terms of their ethnicity contributes to the perception of Roma as a bounded group. As the processes through which Roma continue to be constituted as a group deserve a detailed discussion, I return to this topic in more detail in later chapters.

In Leeds, and in Harehills, there is no single location that would stand out as a place where Roma socialise. Roma are visible in public spaces, such as the streets in Harehills, or the Compton Centre – a council-owned building in Harehills which houses the library as well as some council services. I did not use these public spaces as places to meet Roma, instead I used the resources that I already had in order to make contacts. Before starting fieldwork, I worked as an interpreter for the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) outreach workers11 at a weekly drop-in session called the Welcome Group and at home visits. The Welcome Group was aimed at Roma and provided help with benefit applications and school applications, as well as support with or advice about other financial issues (such as household bills), and ‘crisis help’ when needed (the outreach team arranged food parcels for Roma families in difficulty). Many Roma came to the Welcome Group after arriving in Leeds to get help with their benefit applications and with finding a school for their children. It was therefore the perfect place for me to meet Roma migrants. At the

11 The GRT outreach team was part of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Achievement Service (GRTAS), provided by Leeds City Council. The service has since been renamed the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Inclusion and Outreach Team. As well as working with Roma, the GRT outreach team worked with Travellers on a site in south Leeds on a different day. I never saw a Traveller at the Welcome Group.
same time, working weekly at the Welcome Group for a couple of years meant that when I started fieldwork people saw me as an interpreter, rather than a researcher, and it took several months for me to make the transition from one to the other, at least in the eyes of some of the Roma with whom I worked.

As an interpreter, I often worked alongside social workers and health professionals including health visitors, outreach workers, police and other state-like actors. The differences between the various professionals (for instance between outreach workers, health visitors, or social workers) was not always clear to Roma who tended to refer to them all as ‘sociálka’ or ‘social services’ in Czech. By working alongside ‘sociálka’, I was associated with the state and its authorities in the eyes of Roma migrants. As I mention above, Roma have been subject to interventions by the state (in both the former Czechoslovakia and the UK) in attempts to police and shape their behaviour, for example through forcible settlement of previously nomadic families, through economic policies which restricted Roma economic strategies, or through the threat of removing children from families by social services (see Stewart 1997; 2002). As I am a non-Roma Czech woman, a gadži associated with the state because of my previous job, my Roma informants were initially wary that I might try to tell them how to behave. I realised later during my fieldwork that people had tried to hide certain behaviours and information from me.

My perceived association with the state was not fixed, it shifted throughout fieldwork and depended on how much time I spent with people and to what extent they got to know me. In some ways, my transformation from an interpreter into a researcher was only partial because throughout fieldwork I was asked by people for help with filling in various forms, making phone calls and attending appointments to translate for them. The people I worked with spoke Czech and Slovak (and most of them spoke Romanes), which allowed me to speak to them in Czech. During fieldwork I tried to learn Romanes and I was eventually able to understand people’s
conversation and the Life and Light church service, but I never learnt it well enough to be able to converse in Romanes, especially in a group situation. Czech remained the main language that I used to communicate throughout fieldwork, but I was able to have short conversations in Romanes. Several of my informants used a combination of Czech, or Slovak, and Romanes at home, while others spoke mostly Romanes.

I used the Welcome Group as one of my springboards from which to ‘enter the field’ and find people who were willing to participate in my research. Even though, as interpreters, we were told not to give out our contact details to clients and it is considered unprofessional and against guidelines to see clients outside of work, in the weeks that preceded the start of my fieldwork, I spoke to and visited several Roma people and explained my research to them. Additionally, in the year before I started fieldwork I worked on two research projects on Roma health with Advocacy Support, a local non-governmental organisation. I received funding for my research from the Economic and Social Research Council, which was based on collaboration between the University of Manchester and Advocacy Support. Advocacy Support acted as a non-academic partner organisation on the award and as part of the terms of funding I had to spend a period of time working for them. During fieldwork, I spent a day per week there and my work involved providing support and supervision to the two Roma employees that the organisation had at the time, and helping them to set up a community group for Roma. I used my work with Advocacy Support as another entry into the ‘field’ and into establishing contacts with Roma. Advocacy Support had Roma volunteers and Roma employees, which gave me contact with the Roma elite - Roma who had managed to move up the social ladder, away from manual work and into office jobs. Many of these office jobs were supporting roles in services and organisations, where either the organisation, service or the role itself was aimed at Roma. The role was thereby linked to their Roma ethnicity, for example, instead
of working as a support worker for families from all backgrounds, the Roma person would be given the role of a support worker for Roma families.

As the start of my fieldwork was approaching, I took the opportunity to speak to Roma for whom I was interpreting, for instance when we were in hospital waiting to be seen by a medical professional, or at the Welcome Group. I explained my research to them and asked if they would agree to participate. I also explained that I would change names and personal details to ensure anonymity. Throughout my thesis I use pseudonyms and have changed some personal details in order to disguise the identity of my informants. However, during fieldwork and the process of writing, I came to realise that despite changing names and certain details, some of my informants may be identifiable because they are public figures. This relates to people who worked for services and organisations in Leeds that work with, or are aimed at, Roma.

There has been negative publicity in the British media focused on Roma migrants. For example in 2013, the former Home Secretary David Blunkett warned on a local radio station that the increasing tension between locals and Roma migrants in Sheffield’s Page Hall could lead to riots, unless the local authority improved integration (BBC 2013). I found that some people who worked for public services or the third (non-governmental or voluntary) sector were worried that they could be identified as saying something that was not in agreement with the official policy.

During fieldwork, I conducted a small number of interviews with interpreters and with people who worked providing services for Roma. I was able to record most of these interviews, but two people did not want to be recorded and explained that they were worried that the recording could be used for quoting misleading information out of context. I had to write notes when I was interviewing them. I also attended the weekly Roma Club run by Advocacy Support during the three months of its existence and two other projects aimed at Roma, which were run either by non-
governmental organisations or received funding from Leeds City Council. During my fieldwork I engaged in participant observation and informal conversations. I usually wrote down brief notes during the day and I wrote detailed notes at the end of the day. In addition to participant observation and interviews in the ‘real world’ I used social media, especially Facebook, because it played a large role in the lives of my informants. I used social media for talking to my informants when I was not with them, and also to look at their posts and pictures with which they documented their activities in which I did not take part, like shopping and family days out.

When I started fieldwork, I spent time getting to know people, and allowing people to get to know me. I decided not to ask many questions in the early part of my fieldwork and left my informants to lead conversations. One of the reasons for this was that I felt that people were wary of letting me into their private lives because of my former interpreting work for sociálka. Fieldwork involves intruding into people’s lives and I thought that they would find my presence even more intrusive if I was constantly questioning them. I had explained to people at the start that I was interested in health, their experience with state services and in what was, according to them, necessary in order to ‘live well’. Some of my informants therefore sometimes tried to focus our conversations around these topics. At other times, people tried to hide some behaviours, (like smoking - a habit that tends to be seen as unhealthy and problematic by healthcare or social care workers) from me. Apart from visiting people at home, I went to various medical or other official appointments with them, and sometimes I went shopping with my informants. After five months of fieldwork, I started attending weekly church services with a Roma family who had recently converted to the Life and Light church, a Roma Pentecostal church. The church and religious conversions among Roma are the focus of Chapter Seven. Even though the congregation in Leeds was quite small, it became one of the main points of focus of my fieldwork, because my informants became very involved and
active in the church, attending every service and often holding prayer or Bible study meetings in their home. They became regular attendees at the service and at church meetings, and I got to know more people from the church as my fieldwork progressed. At the end of my fieldwork, I attended a four-hour dialysis session with Martina, one of the women whom I met in church. The narrative which I recorded during this session forms the main event in my final chapter.

Fieldwork ‘at home’ and the production of anthropological knowledge

The issues that arise from doing anthropology ‘at home’ or doing ‘native anthropology’ have been discussed by various scholars over the past three decades (Bourdieu 2003; Narayan 1993; Okely 1987; Strathern 1987). These discussions have led to increase in awareness of how the researcher’s background and identity influence the research as well as of the researcher’s responsibility towards her or his research subjects. I cannot claim to be doing either anthropology ‘at home’ or ‘native anthropology’ – I am neither native to Leeds nor am I Roma. However, I had already made Leeds my home for several years before I started fieldwork, and this shaped my experience of fieldwork to a significant degree. Harehills is a heterogeneous location and as I have already noted ‘Czech migrants’ (the category which includes both Roma and myself) have diverse migration trajectories. Consequently, there are multiple co-existing and at times conflicting understandings and experiences of social life both in Harehills and among ‘Czech migrants’. This adds to the complexities of conducting fieldwork among Czech Roma as a non-Roma Czech migrant.

Peirano (1998:109-10) describes anthropology as ‘a kind of knowledge, or a form or consciousness, that arises from the encounter of cultures in the mind of the
researcher, it enables us to understand ourselves in relation to others, becoming a project of heightened self-awareness’. According to her, anthropology at home is ‘the kind of inquiry developed in the study of one’s own society, where “others” are both ourselves and those relatively different from us, whom we see as part of the same collectivity’ (Peirano 1998:122-123). The ethnographer is him- or herself a research tool who collects data through the process of long-term embodied presence in a particular social setting. Through this immersion, the anthropologist also undergoes a process of self-knowledge and it is this process which is necessary in order to explain and convey the categories and meanings of the particular social group to others (Ryang 1997). All knowledge is culture-bound and it reflects ‘material circumstances that have emerged historically and socially, within certain limits of a given cultural parameters’ (Ryang 1997:28). This is what Haraway describes as ‘situated knowledges’ (1988:590, italics in the original text). Instead of being objective and disengaged, ‘from everywhere and so from nowhere’, knowledge is always situated, partial and located in particular bodies (Haraway 1988:590). It is always positional. My position in the field and the knowledge produced during my fieldwork and through my writing were influenced by different aspects of my identity, such as being Czech, female, a mother and a researcher, and which shaped my interactions with my interlocutors.

When doing anthropology at home, or in a setting with which the researcher is already familiar and is seen as an insider, he or she is sometimes expected to have a particular insight, what Merton (1972) describes as the ‘insider doctrine’. This idea rests on the presumption that the anthropologist who is an ‘insider’ and the people whom he or she studies share the same values (Van Ginkel 2010). But as anthropologists have noted, identity is not based on a singular and unchanging or fixed characteristic, rather it is situational and contextual. Individuals do not have a single status, but a ‘status set’ which is ‘a complement of variously interrelated
statuses which interact to affect both [the individual's] behaviour and perspective’ (Merton 1972:22). Certain aspects, such as gender, can be the defining aspect of a person’s identity and experience in one context, whereas in another context, it can be ethnicity, class or religious belief. Rather than having a fixed identity, each person thus has a set of ‘shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations’ (Narayan 1993: 671), or what Rosaldo (1994) calls ‘multiplex identity’. Rosaldo (1994) states that social life encompasses multiple aspects, which include the cognitive, emotional, and ethical capacities of the researcher as well as his or her social identities. When I started fieldwork I tried to emphasise, or draw on, things that I had in common with my Roma informants, including childcare, housework and family life, or I joined in jokes about some of the things that many migrants find odd about life in England or the English, such as the English (or British) design of separate taps for hot and cold water.

When conducting fieldwork in her home village in Bangladesh, Jahan (2014) noted that she was not able to participate in some activities or ask some questions because of her gender and because of her wealthy family’s influential position in the village. For example, she was not able to ask both poor and rich men and women about their property and related disputes or mismanagement of development funds because it could have endangered her father’s relationship with the local council members. Jahan (2014) found that people in the village assigned her different roles – for example, some people wanted her to help them solve their disputes, while some Hindu women found her presence polluting because she was Muslim. Therefore, even when doing what has been described as anthropology at home or native anthropology, the anthropologist may be seen as an insider in some contexts, but an outsider in other contexts and it may be difficult to ‘blend in’ because of one’s pre-existing social relations and status.
My situation was somewhat different to what Jahan (2014) describes, yet similar in certain ways. I also worked in a setting with which I was already familiar and while this opened some possibilities (for example it helped me find contacts among Roma) it closed or limited others. For example, Margita, a Slovak Roma woman, referred to me as sociálka in front of her children for much of my fieldwork because I used to visit her house with the GRT outreach workers (whom she calls sociálka) before fieldwork. During fieldwork I tried to distance myself from the state and be seen as a researcher (even though research and knowledge production are to a large degree entangled with the state as I discuss below). Many Roma knew me as an interpreter but during fieldwork I had to shift my positioning not just in relation to Roma. When going to appointments or just going to places around Harehills with my Roma interlocutors, I had to interact with non-Roma whom I knew from my job – only this time I was often with one of their ‘clients’. I not only knew the staff in various services and non-Roma Czech interpreters, some of them were my friends. At the same time, I spent a lot of time with several of my Roma informants during fieldwork and I gained intimate knowledge about some aspects of their lives, which I did not have about my non-Roma Czech friends. Some Czech Roma worked as cleaners at my partner’s workplace and knew me. They were not involved in my fieldwork but they were relatives of a couple that I saw regularly at church. And even though I did not live in Harehills and went home every evening, as my Roma, non-Roma friends, and family and myself moved through Leeds, there was always the possibility of unplanned encounters, such as meeting my Roma interlocutors when out shopping with my family. I found the frequent encounters between these different aspects of my life challenging and I was often forced to question and re-evaluate my loyalties.

Whilst being able to speak Czech with my informants facilitated the start of my fieldwork and helped me to find and establish contacts, my speech marked me as
different from my Roma acquaintances. A few weeks after I started fieldwork, Yvonna, a young Roma woman, said that she could tell that I was not Roma just from the way I speak. When I asked her how, she replied: ‘You don’t sound like us, the way you pronounce things, like…you pronounce them properly.’ Yvonna refused to speak *Romanes* in front of me or to admit that she could speak it for several months. Only after I started going to church with her family and we discussed how much of the service, delivered mainly in *Romanes*, I understood, did Yvonna seem happy to show off her knowledge of *Romanes* to me. Other researchers have also noted that using one’s mother tongue does not mean that communication will be easy or that the researcher can take the words of his or her informants at face value (Van Ginkel 2010; Okely 1983). In her ethnography of the Traveller-Gypsies, Okely (1983:43 italics in the original) describes how her middle-class accent initially marked her out as a ‘rauni’, a middle-class woman, which ‘was jarring’ even though her informants sometimes flattered her about how she spoke. She decided to imitate as much as possible her informants’ enunciation, added in swear words to her speech and used the Gypsies’ alternative vocabulary such as saying ‘trailer’ instead of ‘caravan’ (Okely 1983:43). She also changed her clothes and started wearing longer skirts and looser sweaters, clothes that the Gypsies saw as more modest. The Gypsies viewed her adjustment to their rules and ways as a sign of respect and she received compliments such as ‘Judith, your speech *has* improved!’ (Okely 1983:43, italics in the original).

Similar to what Okely (1983) describes, I tried to adjust my speech slightly after I started fieldwork in order to fit in. While there is not as marked a difference in accents in Czech as there is in Britain, in terms of both regional and class differences, my vocabulary and the expressions that I used made it clear that there was a class difference between my informants and myself. Because I wanted to fit in, I started using expressions that my informants did and, like Okely (1983), added
swearwords or used some words in Romanes, as my informants tended to do. My informants were at first guarded and did not use swearwords in front of me, and on several occasions Iveta, a Czech Roma woman, told one of the other members of her family off for swearing. When I started using swearwords, they became less guarded around me and I heard them use swearwords more often than they had before. That however changed again after the family converted to Pentecostal Christianity and according to the teachings of their church, made an effort to avoid swearing. Some of my other informants were initially guarded and refused to speak Romanes in front of me or only spoke it when they thought they were out of my earshot or that I was not paying attention.

My gender was an important aspect of my fieldwork. I had read and had heard from various people, including Roma as well as other researchers, that Roma have strict rules about gender division. Among Roma or Gypsy groups, a woman’s sexuality is under more scrutiny than a man’s (Gay y Blasco 1999; Okely 1983; Stewart 1997). I was told that a woman should not be alone with a man who is not her husband or a relative. Being alone with a man who is unrelated to the woman could lead to a suspicion of inappropriate sexual relations, and if a woman were alone with a group of men, it could lead to rumours of sexual promiscuity. I was careful throughout fieldwork not to be alone with men because I did not want to create any suspicions that could cause jealousy or rumours, which could in turn hinder my relationship with my informants. Thus, women became my main informants. On a small number of occasions, I was alone with one or two of the men from the family with whom I was closest. This always happened with the knowledge and agreement of the women and almost always involved helping the men deal with some official authority (such as opening a new bank account).

In the later part of my fieldwork, I often chatted to my female Roma interlocutors via online messenger in the evenings when I was at home. These online messaging
apps became a significant tool during my fieldwork, perhaps fittingly, because online messaging tools and social media played an important role in the lives of my informants who used them constantly to keep in touch with family members and friends who had stayed behind in the Czech Republic. During the day, my female informants and I were usually accompanied by their children, husbands or other family members. When men were around, the topic of conversation was often directed by men. Being able to talk to my female interlocutors online provided us with a private space where we were able to discuss things such as our relationships, children, worries or anything else without interference from men or children. Similarly, as I started to know people better, women often stepped outside their house to say good-bye to me when I was leaving and we would end up talking on the doorstep for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes, until we were interrupted by the woman’s children or husband. These ‘door-step conversations’ were another way of creating a space for women to temporarily escape from the demands of their families.

When I started fieldwork, several of my Roma interlocutors expressed surprise that my partner let me visit people that he did not know on my own. I had a car, which I used for getting around Leeds, visiting people and for giving people lifts to their appointments or to shops. Having a car and being able to drive as well as being able to visit people as I liked, without my partner, meant that I did not fit into the typical gender roles, as most of my Roma interlocutors understood them. As I briefly mentioned above, Roma in Leeds have at times different understandings or expectations of the social world. This also applies to understandings of gender and gender roles. However, the majority of my interlocutors agreed that there should be some division of the social world and people’s roles according to their gender, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four. Many of my interlocutors considered driving to be a male activity and I was told on several occasions that women should not
drive because in general they are not good drivers. However, some women told me that they would have liked to be able to drive because they would not have to either rely on their husbands to drive them, or need to take a taxi. On several occasions, I was told (always by a man) that I ‘drive like a man’. While these comments were compliments on my driving skills, they could also be understood as comments on my perceived lack of femininity and ambiguous position in the ‘field’. The issue of gender kept resurfacing throughout my fieldwork and I return to it throughout my thesis.

**Structure of the thesis**

The thesis comprises seven chapters and a Conclusion. The first chapter is this Introduction. Chapter Two describes the history of Czechoslovakia (and later the Czech Republic) from its establishment in 1918 and discusses how major historical events, like World War II, Czechoslovakia becoming part of the Soviet bloc, and the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the break-up of Czechoslovakia impacted on the lives of Roma. It provides the historical context of Roma migration from the Czech Republic to Leeds. The chapter also introduces the key people who feature throughout the thesis through accounts of their migration trajectories.

Chapters Three and Four examine understandings of ‘normality’ in relation to what it means to live normálně, how normal lifestyles are imagined by Roma, and how Roma try to attain the lifestyle that they understand as normal. Chapter Three sets out the relationships that Roma have to different parts of the city of Leeds. It starts by an overview of the history of Leeds and of the neighbourhood of Harehills, then looks at the interactions that Roma have with others in Leeds as they move through the city when shopping. Chapter Four describes everyday life in a Roma household. This chapter discusses how relationships within a Roma household are constituted
through different forms of care which its members provide to or expect from others. The chapter also discusses how through the appropriate (and therefore ‘proper’) provision of care to their family, which is understood as normal, Roma distinguish themselves not only from non-Roma but also create distinctions between themselves and other Roma.

Chapters Five and Six examine the interface between Roma and the British state and describe how Roma come to be treated as an ‘exception’ in their interactions with the state. Chapter Five examines the role of language in the production of knowledge about Roma, and in how Roma gain knowledge about the state and services. Many Roma do not have a good command of English and interactions between Roma and the state apparatus often happen in the presence of Czech and Slovak interpreters who are usually non-Roma Czechs and Slovaks. Languages, as well as speakers of different languages, are situated within wider social and political structures, and interactions between public services, interpreters and Roma migrants are embedded within unequal power relations. This chapter argues that non-Roma Czech and Slovak interpreters contribute to Roma being perceived by the British state as different from them, and as ‘not quite’ Czech / Slovak (see also Grill 2012b).

Chapter Six builds on the previous chapter and examines how selective provision or withdrawal of state care is used to police the conduct of Roma migrants. This chapter discusses two forms of political care – one concerned with social welfare benefits and the other with Roma as an ethnic minority. The first part of the chapter looks at the British benefit system and the complexities encountered by Roma migrants as they try to navigate it. The second part of the chapter discusses the work of the public and voluntary (third) sector organisations intended to improve the well-being of Roma migrants. Such services and projects are often presented as addressing the social problems of Roma as perceived in public policy. By focusing
policies and services on Roma as an ethnic group and by attempting to improve their well-being through ethnic emancipation, based on the notion that Roma are a distinct ethnic group with a shared culture, the structural causes behind various social and economic problems are overlooked. This chapter argues that because the provision of state care is conditional either upon being perceived as a ‘worker’, or upon a certain view of Roma ethnicity, it leads to the production of new forms of exclusion and inequality.

Chapter Seven discusses conversions to the Life and Light church. Several of my informants joined the Life and Light church and I attended religious services and meetings with them. The Life and Light church provides material help to its members in times of hardship, through financial collections, distribution of clothes as well as religious healing and emotional support, what I refer to as ‘care work’. Through the provision of this ‘care work’, the church aims to create a sense of belonging to a specific Roma and Christian moral collectivity. The distribution of ‘care’ or welfare in the form of money, food, or clothes by Roma converts to other Roma also serves to shift their position from ‘welfare recipient’ (which they are in relation to the state) to ‘welfare provider’. This alters and subverts their position of inferiority vis-à-vis the state and the gadže (non-Roma) which is forged through the need for many Roma in Leeds to rely on welfare. This thesis then situates Roma migrations to Leeds in the context of the production of Czech nationalism and Roma ‘exceptionality’. By looking at different aspects of the lives of Roma in Leeds, I trace the production of Roma after their migration to Leeds as ‘exception’. I look at ways in which Roma experience this ‘exceptionality’ and how they attempt to overcome it through creating a sense of belonging within a Roma Christian collectivity.
Chapter 2: Historical Background and Migration Context

Introduction

Most of the Roma with whom I worked migrated to Leeds from the Czech Republic. However, as I discuss Czech and Slovak Roma migrants throughout my dissertation, it is important to explain my reasons for considering Roma from both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and to look at the history of migration of Roma within and out of the former Czechoslovakia. The migration of Roma from the former Czechoslovakia to the UK is part of a wider migration trend between the former Soviet bloc and Western Europe that emerged in the last three decades. In this chapter I discuss the historical processes which shaped this recent outward migration of Roma. I describe the history of Czechoslovakia from its establishment after the First World War until its break up in 1993. I then focus on the Czech Republic and how the changes that accompanied its transition to a capitalist economy have played out there. However, despite local and national variations in how the post-socialist transition played out, there were similar trends in societal changes in Central European countries during this period, and Roma experience marginalisation and discrimination across the region. Therefore, although I do not discuss the political and economic situation in Slovakia after the break-up of Czechoslovakia, it is important to point out that Slovak Roma are also subjected to processes which construct and produce them as 'exception'.

The chapter has three parts. The first part describes the history of Czechoslovakia. It looks at the events that preceded and led to the establishment of Czechoslovakia, and then provides an overview of historical events which resulted in major economic, political and social changes in the country. These are: World War II, the absorption of the country into the Soviet bloc after the war and life under the Soviet regime, and then the post-socialist era and the breakup of Czechoslovakia. The
second part of the chapter looks at how the resulting political, economic and social changes affected Roma and contributed to the current migration patterns. The last part of the chapter introduces some of the main characters which will feature throughout this thesis. It does this through the narratives which they told me about their lives in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and about their decision to move to Leeds, which I call migration stories. As well as introducing my informants, the migration stories serve to anchor the historical processes that shaped Roma migration to the UK in the lives of concrete individuals, and they open up issues which are discussed in this thesis.

**History of Czechoslovakia**

Czechoslovakia came to existence when the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918) collapsed at the end of First World War. The country was formed of four main geographic regions; Bohemia in the west, Moravia in the centre (Bohemia and Moravia now form the Czech Republic), Slovakia to the east, and the Subcarpathian Rus (also called Ruthenia) made up the easternmost part of the country (see Figure 1 below). Its establishment was preceded by the Czech and Slovak national revival movements in the 19th century, which were led by Czech and Slovak intellectuals. The Czech and Slovak national elite played an important role in raising awareness of the Czechs and Slovaks as nations both abroad and within Austro-Hungary, and they used an opportune historical moment to put forward their demands in order to create the new state of Czechoslovakia. The establishment of Czechoslovakia was ‘the product of domestic demands for autonomy backed by respected Czechs … abroad, combined with an allied wish to find an alternative arrangement for the countries of central and Eastern Europe’ which were formerly ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Shepherd 2000:10).
Looking at how the country was formed provides important context for the historical experience of Roma in Czechoslovakia and its constituent parts. The largest (and state-forming) ethnic groups in Czechoslovakia were Czechs and Slovaks. They are both Slavic peoples and descendants of tribes that settled in the Central European region in the 5th century (Leff 1997). The Czech and Slovak languages are closely linked and mutually comprehensible. Despite the commonalities in language and identity, and their geographical proximity, Czechs and Slovaks had different historic experiences, which resulted in the unequal distribution of political and economic power in the newly established joint state.

During the existence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Czech and Slovak lands were incorporated into different parts of the dual monarchy. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was formed of two former states, Austria and Hungary. Each of the two constituent states retained its own ruler and enjoyed a large degree of autonomy even after the formation of a joint state. The empire thus had two regulatory centres. The different ways that the Czech and Slovak lands were incorporated into the empire had important consequences for the two regions during the existence of Czechoslovakia. Slovakia became part of Hungary around the year 1000, and it
became incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire as part of Hungary (Leff 1997). Slovaks were subject to pressures of a governmental Hungarisation policy ‘that closed Slovak schools and limited career prospects for Slovaks who failed to assimilate’, whereas Czechs were incorporated into the ‘more economically developed and nationally tolerant Austrian part’ of the monarchy (Leff 1997:7). As a result of this, when Czechoslovakia was formed in 1918 Czechs had higher levels of literacy and national income, and were more closely ‘tied to the larger continental economy’ than Slovaks (Leff 1997:7). Czechs therefore had more political and economic power than Slovaks, as well as having a higher profile abroad (Shepherd 2000). Czechoslovakia was an ethnically diverse state and large minority groups, including Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenians, Jews, and Roma, lived on its territory (Leff 1997). The establishment of a common state of Czechs and Slovaks was in large part an attempt to provide a counterweight to the large German and Hungarian minority groups who lived in the country and who were historically politically more powerful than the Czechs and Slovaks (Leff 1997). The establishment of Czechoslovakia was therefore a nation-building project and nationality was (and remains) an important part of how many people in CEE conceptualise their collective identity. The official discourse and policy in interwar Czechoslovakia promoted ethnic tolerance (except towards Roma as I discuss in a later section), and ethnic minorities were able to form political parties and had representation in parliament. A consideration of how Czechoslovakia was established helps to explain the foundations that were laid for the nationalist sentiments which have been on the rise in the region in recent decades, as I discuss further below.

During the interwar period, Czechoslovakia was a functioning parliamentary democracy, despite political divisions along national lines (Leff 1997). It had a ‘sophisticated industrial economy’ and an established middle-class and was a
relatively wealthy country (Leff 1997:36). However, due to its diversity, national tensions between Czechs, Slovaks, and the large Hungarian and German minorities persisted. Hitler’s rise to power in neighbouring Germany fuelled nationalist sentiments among some Germans living in Czechoslovakia. The borders between Bohemia (the westernmost part of Czechoslovakia) and Germany had been fluid throughout history, with some areas at times being part of Bohemia and at other times being part of Germany. Consequently, there was historically a large German minority\footnote{In 1918 when Czechoslovakia was established, its German population was around 3 million, almost the same as the Slovak population (Leff 1997).} living along the border; in an area called the Sudetenland. In September 1938, representatives of four European states (Britain, France, Italy and Germany) met in Munich to discuss Hitler’s territorial demands. As a result of this meeting, Czechoslovakia was dissolved and a large section of its territory became absorbed into Nazi Germany as part of the Munich Agreement (Mlynárík 1989). The Sudetenland were annexed to Germany and Czech people who lived there were evicted and forced to move into what remained of Bohemia and Moravia (see Figure 2 below). The remainder of the Czech lands became the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and was under the rule of the Nazi regime. Slovakia became an independent country and was forced to ally itself with Hitler’s regime to avoid having part of the country annexed to Germany (Leff 1997). Subcarpathian Rus declared independence as the Republic of Carpatho-Ukraine in March 1939 and was annexed by Hungary soon after.
After the end of the war, the state of Czechoslovakia was reinstated and the borders between Czechoslovakia and Germany returned to their pre-war locations. Germans living in the Sudetenland, the areas along Czechoslovakia’s border with Germany which were annexed to Germany at the start of the war, were removed to Germany, first forcibly and later by a presidential decree (Shepherd 2000). The war had profound consequences for the ethnic make-up of the whole country, but especially of the Czech lands, which became ‘close to mono-cultural’ as a result of the genocide of Jews and Roma during the war and the post-war forced expulsion of Germans (Shepherd 2000:16). Another consequence of the war was that the Sudetenland became de-populated and there was a shortage of workers in agriculture and industry. The Czechoslovak state needed to repopulate the region and adopted policies to encourage people to move there by offering jobs and accommodation.

13 The eastern border of the country changed and the Subcarpathian Rus became part of the Soviet Union. It is now part of Ukraine.
After the war, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa) became the largest parliamentary party, although it did not have a majority. Following a governmental crisis and a political coup in February 1948, the Communist Party gained a monopoly of power and Czechoslovakia became a satellite state of the Soviet regime (Kaplan 1989). After 1948, the Czechoslovak economy was subject to central planning, as in other East European states, and ‘heavy industry was given priority ...over light manufacturing and semi-finished goods’ around which the country's economy had been built before the Communist takeover (Shepherd 2000:24). Travel to the ‘West’ was restricted and the country became insular. Private property was confiscated and nationalised by the communist regime, religion was suppressed, and ‘[t]rade was redirected to the east and agriculture was collectivised’ (Shepherd 2000:24). Despite this, Czechoslovakia managed to retain a relatively high standard of living and there was almost full employment.  

This was part of the state ideology according to which the socialist state was so efficient that it was able to provide work for everyone. Unemployment was thus portrayed as both the product and the manifestation of the failure and inferiority of capitalism. The inefficiencies of the communist economic policy nonetheless became visible over time and as the public mood changed across the Soviet bloc, the dissent and opposition to the regime in Czechoslovakia became bolder and louder.

A student demonstration in Prague on 17th November 1989 was held to commemorate students executed by Nazi Germany in 1939 for protesting against the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. The demonstration was dispersed by police with the use of violence (Leff 1997). This event initiated what became known as Sametová revoluce (the Velvet Revolution), which resulted in the resignation of

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14 An unemployed person was labelled ‘příživník’– social parasite - and unemployment was punished by imprisonment.
the communist Czechoslovak government on the 28th November 1989, and konec komunismu (the end of communism) as it is locally known. Similarly, other countries which formed part of the socialist bloc, such as East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, experienced regime changes in late 1989 or early 1990. The resulting collapse of the Soviet bloc led to vast economic and political changes in CEE and to changes in the global distribution of power resulting from the end of the ‘Cold War’. Three years later, following an Act issued by the Federal Parliament, on the 1st January 1993 the country of Czechoslovakia, as a federation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, was dissolved and the Czech Republic and Slovakia became independent countries.

![Figure 3: Current map of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Source: https://www.google.co.uk/maps](https://www.google.co.uk/maps)

After the Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovakia (and its successor countries) underwent extensive economic restructuring accompanied by the privatisation or closure of previously state-owned factories and farms, and the entry of foreign capital and multinational corporations. For instance, as I describe above, the Sudetenland areas were sites of manufacture and heavy industry during the Soviet era. After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, many of the factories closed down or were
privatised and underwent redundancies. Consequently, these areas have experienced a rise in unemployment (almost unknown under communism), precarious employment and poverty, and have been described as ‘sites of exclusion’ (Toušek et al 2018). The difference in income between the rich and the poor became wider (Leff 1997). The economic uncertainty, particularly for ‘publics accustomed to low-level but consistent economic security of the communist period,’ translated into insecurity and anxiety (Leff 1997:174). One way in which these anxieties have manifested themselves is the resurfacing of the question of national identity.

Nationalist sentiments and national struggles have emerged not only in post-socialist Czechoslovakia and its successor countries, but across the former socialist region. Writing about understandings of nationhood and nationality in the Soviet Union and its successor states, Brubaker (1996) argues that the Soviet regime and its practices institutionalised nationhood and nationality, which led to the strengthening of nationalist feelings that are now present across the post-socialist region. Although the Soviet Union as a whole ‘was neither conceived in theory nor organized in practice as a nation-state’ (Brubaker 1996:52), its component parts and citizens were defined in terms of national identity. The individual sub-states which constituted the Soviet Union were defined as nation-states and nationality was a ‘key element of a person’s legal status’ (Brubaker 1996:53). As such, nationality was important in shaping a person’s life chances, with for example Russians having preferential treatment over Jews in many aspects of their lives. Brubaker (1996:55) states that through its practices, the Soviet state institutionalised two ‘conventionally opposed definitions of nationhood’. On the one hand, nation was defined as being linked to and shaped by a particular political territory and was linked to a person’s citizenship, and on the other hand it was understood as being based in certain cultural commonalities, such as speaking a common language. Brubaker (1996:57)
argues that in the historical experience of Central and Eastern Europe, the political national units do not correspond to the cultural units and there is ‘a persisting tension between the two’ understandings of nation and nationhood in the region. He concludes that the Soviet regime ‘has transmitted to the successor states a set of deeply structured, and powerfully conflicting, expectations of belonging’ (Brubaker 1996:72).

Brubaker’s (1996) argument is important when we look at the situation in Czechoslovakia and its successor states, where a person’s nationality tends to be perceived as important both for understandings of belonging to the state, defined as being constituted by the nation, and for determining who has access to state provided services, wealth and goods – which I refer to as ‘state care’ throughout this thesis. As I have outlined in this section, the Czechoslovak state was shaped from its beginning by nationalist sentiments and linked to the idea of it being a state of Czech and Slovak nations, despite its initial ethnic diversity. The idea of the state being linked to the Czech and Slovak nations has been strengthened through the subsequent historical experiences described above. This has implications for Roma living in the Czech Republic, whose ‘Czechness’ becomes questioned on the basis of their ethnicity. One aspect of Roma ‘exceptionality’ is the way they have been incorporated into the Czech state. Their rights to state care are questioned because the state is understood to be a nation state and Roma are not part of the Czech nation. Additionally, their political organisation is outside of the perceived normality; Roma are not a nation and do not have a nation state. The next section describes the history of Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and looks at the processes which contribute to Roma being constructed and created as different and as not belonging to the national body.
Roma in Czechoslovakia

Even though Roma have been part of the social landscape of Central Europe for a long time, not much is known about the lives of Roma in the region in the middle ages. The earliest written records which probably refer to Roma mention wandering groups that were not part of the feudal system and were seen as foreigners (Daniel 1994, Doubek et al. 2015). According to historical sources, from at least the 17th century, Roma in Central Europe were ‘an object of state control through banishment, expulsion or physical extermination’ (Ruzicka 2016:153; see also Crowe 2006, Horváthová 1964). Throughout history there were different approaches to Roma in the Czech and Slovak lands due to different state policies. In the Czech lands (under Austrian rule) Roma were able to wander but in the Slovak lands (under Hungarian rule), Roma became settled as a result of state intervention (Doubek et al 2015).

The Austrian state’s approach to Roma changed during the reign of Maria-Theresa (1745-1765), and later Joseph II (1765-1790); Roma were to be settled and assimilated (Crowe 2006) and were forbidden to speak their own language (Barany 2002). When these policies failed to reach their goals, they were later abandoned and replaced again by policies aimed at expulsion, rather than integration (Ruzicka 2016). Crowe (2006:120) argues that even though Maria-Theresa’s and Joseph II’s policies seemed to have failed, ‘they set in motion a policy of sedentarisation and assimilation that bore considerable fruit’ in the following century, at the end of which the majority of Roma who lived in the Hungarian part of the Empire were settled. Crowe (2006) further points out that Habsburg Roma policies were very similar to the policies of forced sedentarisation and assimilation adopted by the communist governments in CEE countries. Taking this longer historical perspective highlights
that the marginalisation\textsuperscript{15} and persecution of Roma in the region is not a recent development, instead it is long-lived and produced by the policies of successive governments.

During the interwar period, the Czechoslovak state adopted harsher policies aimed at Roma. The government created ‘lists of Gypsies’ and of people who were given a ‘Gypsy ID’ (Davidová et al 2010). These lists were later used during World War II for the identification of Gypsies who were then sent to concentration camps (Doubek et al 2015). The difference in approaches to Roma between the two main constituent parts of Czechoslovakia also persisted throughout World War II (WW2). The majority of Roma living in the Czech lands at the start of WW2 were Sinti Roma, a different group from the Slovak Roma as I discussed in the Introduction. During WW2, Roma in the Czech lands were persecuted by the Nazi regime and the majority of the Roma living there were moved into concentration camps. This was usually to one of the two camps on Protectorate territory, which functioned as ‘collection’ camps (Nečas 1999), and from where some Roma were later sent to Auschwitz. It is estimated that of the 9,000 Roma who lived in the Czech Republic during the interwar period, only about 600 survived the war (Daniel 1994).

The persecution and genocide of Roma during World War II was not recognised for many years in the same way as the persecution and genocide of Jews. For example, during the 1970s a large pig farm was built in Lety, the site of one of the Roma concentration camps in the Czech Republic. After the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the pig farm became privately owned and its existence has been a source of a long-term dispute between Romani activists, the Czech government, far-right groups, and the general Czech public. Romani activists asked for the pig farm to be demolished, but there was strong resistance from a local farmer. 

\textsuperscript{15} It is important to point out that Roma are not marginal from their point of view, but I refer to them as marginalised because they are marginalised from the point of view of the state – the state produces their marginalisation vis-à-vis itself and the gadže.
to be relocated so that the area could be used as a memorial to the Roma holocaust. The Czech government agreed to buy the farm from its current owners in August 2017 and to stop using the land for farming pigs. However, some Czech politicians (especially those on the far-right) have publicly said that the camp was not a concentration camp, but instead functioned as a work camp for people who were ‘work-shy’, despite there being historical evidence that the camp functioned as a concentration camp (Nečas 1999). Describing the camp as a work camp for the ‘work-shy’ or ‘vagrants’ plays on common stereotypes of Roma as lazy or ‘work-shy’, and reinforces them. It also serves to render invisible the collaboration of some Czechs with the Nazi regime, as operating a ‘work camp’ for ‘vagrants’ shifts the position of the Czech officials to a morally acceptable one.

As I describe above, the majority of Roma who lived in the Czech lands were killed during WW2. The Sudetenland became depopulated after WW2 and the state adopted policies that encouraged post-war internal economic migration to the Sudetenland, as I noted above. The combination of these factors resulted in a situation where most of the Roma who are now living in the Czech Republic arrived there from Slovakia as internal economic migrants after WW2. Consequently, there are kinship ties between Czech and Slovak Roma, even though members of extended families may now be citizens of different countries. According to Víšek (1999:208), Czech industrial towns received approximately 100,000 Slovak Roma between 1945 and 1992. Víšek (1999:208) estimates that the number of Roma in the Czech Republic was at least double that by the late 1990s. It is difficult to establish the actual number of Roma in the former Czechoslovakia. In the 2011 Census, only 5,135 people in the Czech Republic stated that they had Romani ethnicity and an additional 7,026 described their ethnicity as both Romani and Czech. However, according to the European Roma Rights Centre (2013), the estimated number of Roma living in the Czech Republic is between 150,000 and
300,000. In Slovakia, according to the 2011 census, there were 105,738 Roma living in the country, which was 2% of the population. This number is also considered to be an underestimate (Petrová 2004).

During the Soviet era, Roma often worked in manual jobs in factories or collective farms. The communist ideology was based on the theory of social evolution with communism being the pinnacle of the social evolution process. Cikáni (Gypsies), or Roma, were not given the legal status of a nation or a national minority. In the official discourse, Roma were presented as being part of the proletariat. As part of the working class, they were seen as belonging to the collective identity despite usually being assigned the jobs that were hard, of low prestige and undesirable (Sokolova 2008; see Stewart 1997 for a discussion of a similar situation in Hungary). For example, I remember that when I was a child the people who worked in refuse collection in my hometown were almost all Roma. Even though there was no racial terminology in the official state rhetoric, Roma were also still subject to racialised terms in their everyday interactions with non-Roma (Grill 2017; Sokolova 2008).

The collapse of the Soviet bloc was followed by economic restructuring and the privatisation or closing down of formerly state-owned farms and factories, as well as emerging nationalist sentiments. Nationalism and nationalist populism have emerged in recent decades across Europe, but they become especially salient in CEE. In an Introduction to an edited volume on ‘the emergence and spread of mostly right-wing populism in contemporary Europe’, Kalb (2011:1) links national populism in CEE to experiences of social insecurity, and to fear over and anger about the economic precarity that emerged in the region during the post-socialist transition. He states that anxieties about economic uncertainty tend to contribute to

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16 Roma were recognised in Czechoslovakia as a national minority in 1991.
‘receptiveness for populist ideologies of ethnic or religious neo-nationalism’ (Kalb 2011:8). The inequalities in material wealth between Western Europe and the former Soviet bloc have not disappeared. Following their entry into the global capitalist market and their ‘return to Europe’, Eastern European states still command only around 30% of the wealth of Western Europe (Drahokoupil 2008). Working class populations are especially affected by the economic changes in CEE states which brought outsourcing and the casualisation of work.

Roma were disproportionately affected by the shift to a capitalist economy and there were high rates of unemployment in some Roma communities (Guy 2001). Roma in Eastern Europe have become ‘a newly re-ethnicized, unemployed and re-casualized former working class’ (Kalb 2011:18). Many non-Roma Czechs were also affected by these economic changes and the increased precarity of work, but as the Czech state came to be defined in strongly nationalist tones, as a collectivity of Czechs, the right of belonging of Roma to this collectivity was questioned by some groups. Additionally, the idea of there being a collective experience based on belonging to the working class is associated with the communist era and communist ideology, and it has become almost impossible to speak about class. As a result, the working-class population in CEE is unable to formulate their experiences of disenfranchisement in terms of social class (Kalb 2011). The economic decline and insecurity experienced by the working classes thus becomes articulated in terms of ‘the imagined nation as a community of fate’ (Kalb 2011:1) and projected ‘onto supposed intruders into the national space’ (Kalb 2011:30). Through the historical processes I describe above, Roma have come to be perceived as not belonging to the Czech nation and have been portrayed in the media, by some politicians and far-right groups, as one group of such ‘intruders’.

During the 1990s, a number of far-right groups became active in the region. Among the far-right groups active in the Czech Republic in and since the 1990s are the
Vlastenecká fronta (Patriotic Front), Vlastenecká liga (Patriotic League), Bohemia Hammer Skins and the Bohemian division of the international organisation Blood and Honour. These organisations draw on Nazi symbolism and use ‘White Power’ rhetoric to proclaim the superiority of the ‘white race’. In the Czech Republic, as well as in other countries in the region, Roma are not considered ‘white’ (see e.g. Grill 2017; Lemon 2000; and see Chapter Five) and in the rhetoric of these far-right groups, they are portrayed as not belonging to the ‘white Czech nation’. Since the early 1990s, there have been attacks on Roma in the Czech Republic (and other countries in CEE) by skinheads and members of far-right groups. Between 1990 and 2009 over thirty Roma were murdered in racially motivated attacks (Strašíková 2009). According to the Czech Ministry of the Interior’s (Ministerstvo Vnitra 2016) report on extremism, there were 33 recorded racially motivated crimes against Roma in 2015, a decrease from the 53 recorded in 2014. However, as these are actual recorded crimes, it is possible (and likely) that there are more instances which go unreported or which are reported but not recorded as (hate) crimes.

This is supported by a recent study of hate crime in the Czech Republic (Walach et al 2017). Walach et al (2017) interviewed nine victims of hate crime about their experience with the criminal justice system. They found that out of the nine crimes, which were reported as hate crime (the motivation ranged from ethnicity, political belief, religion and sexuality), none resulted in a conviction of hate crime. Instead, they were either not recorded as a criminal offence at all, or in cases which resulted in criminal proceedings, the offence was not treated as hate crime. Walach et al (2017) state that among the factors that contributed to the invisibility of hate crime in the Czech Republic is a lack of awareness of what constitutes a hate crime and a lack of ‘soft skills’ among police. It is therefore impossible to say how many and how

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17 According to the same report, there were 47 anti-Semitic hate crimes and 5 hate crimes against Muslims in 2015. No other groups appear in the report. As a comparison, there were 49,419 race motivated hate crimes in England and Wales in 2015/16 (Home Office 2017a).
often Roma have been subject to hate crime in the Czech Republic. Nonetheless, all of my informants said that they experienced racism and prejudice.

Czech and Slovak Roma began to migrate to Western Europe in the early 1990s, either as musicians playing ‘Gypsy’ music or by applying for asylum on the grounds of persecution and racial discrimination (Grill 2011, Uherek 2007). According to Uherek (2007:754), current studies of Roma migration show that the movement of Roma from Slovakia to what is now the Czech Republic has never been a one-way migration from a source area into a destination area, but has always been accompanied by frequent movement between the two locations. In a similar way, migration of Roma from the former Czechoslovakia to the UK is a circular movement in some cases, where Roma move to the UK for a period of time to earn money and then return to Slovakia for a period of time and use the money earned in the UK to build or renovate their house (see Grill 2011). Roma migration to the UK thereby tends to be accompanied by frequent movement between the UK and the country of origin. Many Roma often visit or are visited by family members who stayed ‘back home’ and these visits can last several weeks or months, as I observed during fieldwork.

During the 1990s, Western European countries where Roma applied for asylum criticised the governments of CEE countries for their treatment of Roma, who were their citizens, and acknowledged that Central European Roma experienced discrimination which resulted in economic hardship. However, they did not often recognise this as a valid reason for granting asylum to Roma, and the majority of asylum applications made by Roma in the UK were unsuccessful (Guy 2001; Uherek 2007; see also Table 1 below). Some countries, including the UK, took measures intended to make themselves less attractive to asylum seekers by limiting their access to welfare benefits (Fletcher 2008; Uherek 2007). During the mid-1990s there was a large increase in the number of people applying for asylum in the UK,
largely because of people trying to escape the war in Yugoslavia. Roma were only a small proportion (see Table 1) of this but they were affected, like others, by the policies that were implemented as a result of this increase in asylum applications. Additionally, because the Czech Republic and Slovakia were considered safe countries – there was no violent conflict in either country and both countries were preparing to join the EU - their citizens were unlikely to be granted refugee status (Guy 2001; see also Table 1 below). I met two Roma in Leeds who were successful in their asylum application and had been living in Leeds since the late 1990s. However, I met many more Roma who were unsuccessful in their asylum applications and returned to the Czech Republic. They then migrated to the UK again after the enlargement of the EU in 2004.

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<td>Applications from the Czech Republic</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>1365</td>
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<td>Total applications</td>
<td>24,640</td>
<td>32,500</td>
<td>46,015</td>
<td>71,160</td>
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<td>71,025</td>
<td>84,130</td>
<td>49,405</td>
<td>33,960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications granted to Czech citizens</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>10</td>
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Table 1: Applications received for asylum in the UK, excluding dependants. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5. Source: Home Office 2005. We can assume that the majority of applications from the Czech Republic was made by Roma. There was no separate data from Slovakia. Instead, Slovakia was included in the category ‘Europe Other’.

Due to fear that large numbers of people from the poorer A8 countries would move to the ‘old’ EU member states, which have a higher income per capita, and that this would lead to lower wages and higher unemployment among their own citizens, most EU states put in place restrictions on the A8 nationals’ ability to work on their
The only states which allowed A8 nationals to work on their territory without any restrictions were the UK, Denmark, Ireland, and Sweden. These countries however put in place transition restrictions on A8 nationals’ access to welfare benefits (Johns 2013). Following the enlargement of the EU in 2004, Roma thereby had the right to free movement across national borders as EU citizens. However, the British state put in place policies that restricted access to welfare benefits of the citizens of the new member states. This in effect created different categories of migrants by distinguishing who has the right to make a claim on the state and who does not. I discuss this topic further in Chapter Six. In this section I outlined how Roma have been subject to state control and surveillance from at least the 18th century and how state policies and international events contributed to the current situation where Roma are placed in a position of ‘exceptionality’ in the Czech Republic, which contributes to their migration to the UK. However, even migration to the UK is entangled with the perception of Roma as an ethnic other and embedded within processes which produce this ‘exceptionality’.

Migration stories

This section introduces the main characters that feature throughout this thesis. Their migration stories touch on the main issues that I discuss in later chapters. The migration stories of some of the Roma whom I got to know during my fieldwork retell what they told me about their lives in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and their reasons for moving to Leeds. The narratives in this section indicate how some of the events, structures and processes described above shape the lives of concrete individuals. They also illustrate that Roma come to Leeds from diverse backgrounds and use different migration strategies in order to move there, but despite these

18 The restrictions did not apply to Cyprus or Malta, which joined at the same time as the A8 countries.
variations, they share similar aspirations and reasons for moving to Britain.

Iveta and Pavel

Iveta and her husband Pavel are in their early forties. They moved to Leeds from a village in the north east of the Czech Republic in the autumn of 2012. They have three children, seventeen-year-old daughter Yvonna, sixteen-year-old son Petr and six-year-old daughter Veronika, who all moved with them. Yvonna’s nineteen-year-old boyfriend Michal also moved with them to Leeds. In the Czech Republic, they lived in a rented flat. After completing compulsory education, Pavel started to study towards a vocational qualification but dropped out soon after he started dating Iveta when he was sixteen. He decided to find work so that they could start living together. Iveta finished her vocational training as a seamstress, a profession which she then continued for most of her working life. Before moving to Leeds, Pavel worked on an assembly line in a local factory which made cars for a Japanese manufacturer. Iveta worked as a seamstress in the same factory until her late thirties when she was diagnosed with osteoarthritis in the joints of her hands. She was declared unfit for work and started receiving invalidní důchod, a pension for people unable to work because of disability or a long-term medical condition. Michal already lived with the family before they moved to Leeds. He had been studying at a college in the Czech Republic to become a qualified car technician, but on several occasions experienced threats and abuse from some of his classmates there because he was Roma. He decided to drop out because of the threats and worked on an assembly line in the same factory as Pavel and Iveta.

When I started fieldwork in September 2013, Iveta and Pavel had been living in Leeds for a year. Pavel had been unemployed and was receiving Jobseekers Allowance (a welfare benefit for the unemployed) since their arrival and the family

39 All names have been changed.
also received other social welfare benefits. Soon after I started fieldwork, Iveta and Pavel described to me how they decided to move to Leeds after being convinced by a childhood friend of Pavel’s, Marek. Pavel and Marek used to go to school together and found each other on social media after many years of not being in contact. When Pavel and Marek got in touch, Marek was living in Leeds with his wife and five children. He told Pavel that there were jobs in Leeds and that ‘life is good here’. Despite Marek being unemployed at that time, Pavel and Iveta were convinced and decided to move. They told me that they had been considering ‘going up’ to England for a few years before this. As they were preparing to move to Leeds, Iveta and Pavel sold their car and furniture in order to have enough money to live on until Pavel found work and the family started receiving benefits. Initially, Iveta, Pavel and their family lived with Marek’s family after their arrival in Leeds. However, because Iveta’s standard of cleanliness was different from Alena’s (Marek’s wife), Iveta told me that she ‘had had enough’ after two weeks and she and Pavel used their savings to rent a house. I met them in August 2013. Pavel was still unemployed at that time. Michal sometimes worked at one of the local car wash outlets where he earned £30 for a day’s work. Yvonna and Petr attended college where they studied entry-level English and Maths. Even though their lives had been relatively secure in the Czech Republic, Pavel and Iveta told me that they wanted to ‘move up’ in the world and they imagined that moving to Leeds would improve their economic situation and social status. They told me that moving to Leeds was not just about becoming better off financially, they also imagined it as opening the possibility of new opportunities and a ‘better life’ for Yvonna, Petr, Veronika and Michal.

**Petra and Milan**

Petra and Milan are in their mid-thirties. They moved to Leeds from a town in the industrial north-west of the Czech Republic. They have three children, fourteen-year-old Erik, six-year-old Marek and two-year-old Lucie. This was their second
migration to the UK. Petra and Milan first migrated to the UK in the late 1990s and applied for asylum on the grounds of ethnic discrimination and persecution in the Czech Republic. Their eldest son Erik was born while they were waiting for their applications to be processed. Petra and Erik were granted asylum but Milan’s application was refused. Petra recalled to me how one evening, the border police came to their house to tell them that Milan was to be put on a plane back to the Czech Republic the following morning. Petra did not want to stay in the UK without Milan and so they gathered some of their possessions and left together.

More than ten years later, they decided to try to move to the UK again in the summer 2013. They chose Leeds as their destination because they had some friends there who said that they would help Milan find work. Milan had been unemployed in the Czech Republic and the family was living on unemployment and social welfare benefits. Petra was not working because she was looking after Lucie and Marek, who had not yet started school. Petra and Milan imagined that moving to Leeds would mean a better economic situation because they were told by their friends that work was available in Leeds. Their friends were employed in a potato-packing factory near Leeds and they helped Milan get a job in the same factory soon after the family’s arrival. They also helped Milan with transport to the factory by giving him lifts, until he was able to get his own car. The job was arranged through an agency and it was a zero-hours contract.

Petra speaks better English than Milan, she also speaks better Czech, and writes and reads more fluently than Milan, and it was Petra who always dealt with official people and authorities. This is my observation, as neither Petra nor Milan ever talked to me about this and I did not probe, but on several occasions, I saw that Milan found writing and reading difficult. I often heard Petra and Milan speak

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20 In the Czech Republic, children start attending school when they are six years old.
21 Zero-hours contract is a contract of employment with no guaranteed hours of work but where the employee is expected to remain available for work.
*Romanes* with each other and to their children when they were in another room or thought that I was not paying attention, but Milan always insisted on speaking Czech with me, even though on some occasions he struggled to find (difficult) words in Czech. My clumsy attempts to speak *Romanes* did not persuade him to speak *Romanes* in front of me, even though he seemed to appreciate it when I made the effort. As time went on and I got to know them better, they both became less guarded around me, but we continued to communicate mostly in Czech because it was easier.

**Martina and Gejza**

I first met Martina in the Life and Light Pentecostal church, which I attended during the second half of my fieldwork. She regularly attended the service, as well as the prayer and Bible reading meetings. She seemed to me to be very religious as she often prayed aloud during group prayers, with her eyes closed and a look of concentration on her face, and she was one of the few people that the pastor called upon to say the opening or the closing prayer during meetings. She always had her Bible with her during services. Her bible was indexed with sticky notes so she could easily find the different sections. Martina is forty, short and slim and walks slowly, with a limp. She is from Slovakia and came to Leeds in the autumn of 2012 after she met Gejza, a Czech Roma man and now her husband, online. Martina's seventeen-year-old daughter, Andrea, lives with them. Andrea has epilepsy and other medical conditions, and attends a school for children with special needs.

Martina told me that her first husband (Andrea's father) had been abusive and violent. After years of suffering from domestic violence, Martina called the police and her first husband was sentenced to four years imprisonment for causing Martina bodily harm. She divorced him while he was still in prison. He was released early due to good behaviour and moved back into the flat where they had lived together.
before. Not long after his release, Martina met Gejza online. She visited Gejza in Leeds a few weeks after meeting him, and he convinced her to move to Leeds. A couple of months later, Martina and her daughter were living in Leeds and she and Gejza got married soon after. Gejza is in his early fifties. He came to the UK in 2007 with his first wife, with whom he has five children. Gejza told me that he had lived in a number of other British cities before moving to Leeds. He lived from unemployment and welfare benefits and occasionally did some ‘cash-in-hand’ work. Gejza converted to Pentecostal Christianity after he married Martina and became a regular churchgoer.

Martina suffers from a number of chronic health conditions. In January 2006, while still living in Slovakia, Martina was diagnosed with chronic kidney failure, and since then she has been receiving dialysis three times a week. In February 2014, when already living in Leeds, she suffered a heart attack and was hospitalised for three weeks. Gejza initially moved to the UK to find better economic opportunities. For Martina, moving to Leeds was tied with escaping her first husband’s abusive behaviour.

**Margita**

Margita is a Slovak Roma woman in her early forties. She moved to Leeds from a Roma settlement in Slovakia where she lived with eight of her ten children. They lived in what Margita described to me as a house with one room which her husband had built. They had no running water and were illegally connected to the electric grid. In the winter, the house was heated by burning wood which Margita collected in the local woods. Three of Margita’s children have some form of disability; one of them, eleven-year-old Jano, is severely physically and developmentally disabled and requires constant care. I met Margita during her second migration to Leeds. She first came to Leeds with her husband and without their children, who were
looked after relatives in Slovakia. They stayed with friends, worked in a local food packing factory and were planning to bring their children over as soon as they were able to. But circumstances changed when Margita’s husband was killed in a car accident during a trip to Slovakia. Following her husband’s death, Margita returned to Slovakia and looked for other ways to move to Britain with her children. In 2011, she moved to Leeds again with the help of a local Slovak Roma man, who bought tickets for her and her children. He arranged accommodation for them and helped Margita with living costs while she applied for welfare benefits and was waiting to receive them. When Margita finally had her own income, she had to pay back all the money that he had spent in helping her move and settle in Leeds.

When I met Margita, she was receiving benefits and working two hours per day distributing leaflets door-to-door. Her eleven-year-old disabled son Jano was attending a special needs school. Jano was collected from home every morning by the school’s own transport and brought back home in the afternoon. Margita was very happy about this arrangement and about Jano being able to go to school. On several occasions she showed me pictures from school of Jano, such as photographs of him in a swimming pool or on a swing. In the photographs, Jano always looked pleased and as if he was enjoying himself. Jano had never been to school before moving to Leeds and his disability puts limits on Margita’s life because he requires constant care. Margita welcomed the fact that Jano was able to go to school both because he was able to experience new things, like swimming, and because it gave her respite and time to do some chores, as she told me. During my fieldwork, Margita started a relationship with a Czech Roma man called Tomáš whom she met on an ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language) course.

Maria

Maria is a Slovak Roma woman in her mid-twenties. She is a single mother to two
children, a five-year-old boy called Stefan and four-year-old girl called Julia. Maria grew up in a care home, away from her mother and her six siblings who also grew up in care homes. Not long after leaving care, she came to Leeds to join her mother and three of her siblings who lived there. After moving to Leeds, Maria managed to learn enough English to be able to look for jobs where an ability to speak English was necessary. Before my fieldwork Maria, her mother and some of her siblings, became involved with non-governmental organisations and with public sector services which work with migrants or towards increasing integration. I often saw Maria during fieldwork because of my work with Advocacy Support, where Maria also worked for a period of time. Despite our frequent contact, our interactions remained limited to work or to Roma-related events.

Conclusion

This chapter described the historical processes that contributed to Roma in the Czech Republic being defined as socially pathological or ‘abnormal’ and how this position shaped the discrimination and marginalisation that Roma experience in the Czech Republic. It described how exclusion of Roma can also be seen as the result of Roma not being incorporated into the Czech nation, both in terms of idea of nationality as a cultural identity, and in terms of a political structure because Roma lack political organisation as a Roma ‘nation’. These historical processes and the position that Roma have in the Czech society contribute to Roma migrations to Britain. They are not only defined as ‘other’, many Roma also live in conditions which could be described as outside of the normal range – they live in poverty, often with no possibility of improving their lives, and they cannot escape being treated as Roma because of their darker skin complexion. Migration opened possibilities for creating new connections among Roma migrants who would not otherwise have
interacted with each other. Migration however also created new hierarchies and inequalities amongst Roma, both among those who migrated and those who stayed behind and who were not able to find the resources to migrate (Grill 2012a). Even though migration of Roma to Leeds (and the UK in general) is in part economically driven, we must not overlook the fact that the limited access to economic resources that Roma experience in CEE is the result of years of discriminatory policies and practices as described above. The migration trajectories of Roma and their incorporation into Leeds are therefore shaped both by their ethnicity, by their positioning as working class and by their status as EU migrants. Following this discussion of the context of Roma migrations, the next chapter begins in Leeds and will discuss how Roma interact with others as they move around Leeds and strive to attain a normal life there.
Chapter 3: Roma in Leeds

I spent many days with Iveta and Pavel’s family, especially in the early part of my fieldwork before I got to know other Roma. Iveta, Pavel and their daughter Yvonna often complained that life in Anglie (England in Czech) was boring and that there was nothing to do and nowhere to go, apart from going to the shops. Shops and shopping were an important part of daily life and provided an interface between Roma and others in Leeds. One day, Pavel and Iveta recounted to me the first time they had gone food shopping in Leeds, while they still lived with their friends Marek and Alena, telling me how they had spent ‘too much money’. After their first shopping trip, they were worried that the money they brought with them from the Czech Republic would not last as long as they had expected. Iveta went on to explain that they went to an ‘English’ shop, by which she meant a supermarket. She continued, saying that their friends laughed when they saw how much money Iveta and Pavel had spent on a small amount of groceries. Alena and Marek then showed Iveta and Pavel where to shop in order to spend less money. This meant visiting several small local shops to buy their groceries, instead of buying all their groceries in one shopping trip to the local supermarket. Iveta’s and Pavel’s account of how they had to be shown where to shop illustrates a sense of unfamiliarity with their new surroundings that new migrants experience. Their account also describes the ability to shop on a budget and be thrifty as a skill that is learnt and is somewhat dependent on local knowledge and on having a support network that can provide a new migrant with information. By shopping in the local shops, Roma migrants are able to buy food for less than if they relied on shopping in a supermarket. In her account of their first shopping trip, Iveta contrasted an ‘English’ shop (a supermarket), where it was expensive to shop, with shopping in small local stores, which she said was cheaper.
This chapter introduces the reader to Leeds. It describes the movement of Roma through Leeds as they go shopping, and how they interact with the ‘consumer sphere’ and with others in public spaces. It considers how shopping and material goods are linked to ideas of ‘normal’ life(style) and how Roma understand this.

There have been a number of scholarly approaches to consumption. Douglas and Isherwood (1979) state that the essential function of consumption is not to simply fulfil people’s material needs, but to make sense of and order the social world. Material objects are given meanings and they are used to create, maintain, represent and re-affirm as well as disrupt social ties between individuals and between groups. Possession of certain material objects, like some makes of cars, designer clothes, or electronic goods, demonstrates the status of social groups and of individuals and is used to differentiate between them. These items can be referred to as status goods and tend to convey status onto their owner.

Graeber (2011) describes consumption as a process of ‘producing persons’ through a symbolic ‘eating up’ of things. When a person owns or stands in a relation to a particular object (such as a specific brand of clothes, or a car of a particular make) this object and its meaning become incorporated into that person’s social identity, they thus become symbolically absorbed into that person. Consumption is thus an important part of social reproduction. I use the term ‘consumption’ in the sense described above - as practices involved in the making of persons through engaging with objects, for instance by buying, looking at or desiring particular objects. In his book *The Theory of Shopping*, Miller (1998) states that shopping is an expression and construction of two forms of relationships and values. Consumption and shopping are about creating and maintaining relationships with our intimate others – with partners, children, parents, and extended kin (Miller 1998). The other form of relationships and values that are expressed through shopping decisions is a more general set of values, which can indicate a person’s class and beliefs. Consumption
is the practice of embodied expression, absorption or transmission of values (Graeber 2011). This chapter focuses on the second set of values and relationships; it looks at Roma interactions with others in public spaces.

I use the term ‘consumer sphere’ to describe people’s interactions with the global market and to describe an intersection where their positioning within the global economic system becomes visible. The ‘consumer sphere’ refers to interactions between retailers and customers (or consumers). These interactions include shopping and making decisions about shopping, market and non-market exchanges of material objects (and intangible products), as well as marketing, advertising, the circulation of images via media and ideas about style and fashion (see Chin 2001; Patico 2001). Through the circulation and exchange of objects and their images, people are then positioned in relationships with others who possess, make, sell or desire these objects and it renders visible the inequalities in access to material resources between individuals and between groups (Chin 2001). Persons and relationships between persons and between social groups are therefore produced and made visible through consumption and the consumer sphere. States contribute to the production of persons and to the production of differentiated social groups through policies which shape particular economic conditions, such as the availability of work, trade or food regulation. The state creates policies through which it gives particular individuals, or groups, access to consumer goods – and what can be understood as a normal lifestyle. These policies however are exclusionary and limit access to consumer goods, and normal lifestyles, to social groups or individuals who have less economic, social and cultural capital. Individuals or groups can then strive to attain goods which they associate with their desired or normal lifestyle, as a way to gain inclusion into a particular collectivity, such as class or nation (Fehérváry 2002, McCracken 1988).

This chapter considers how interactions that Roma have with the ‘consumer sphere’
in Leeds are an expression of their class, migrant and ethnic position. Cities have always been linked to both migration and consumption (and therefore shopping), because they rely on trade and thus on the movement of people and goods (Miles 2010). These two flows of movement are of course linked, as people move between places in order to exchange, sell or obtain goods or money in order to buy goods. Roma consumption practices in Leeds are shaped both by their transnational connections to the Czech Republic and by their positioning in Leeds, and they are also shaped by their past trajectory and ongoing relationships with kin and others in the Czech Republic. What Roma migrants in Leeds buy, eat and desire can change following their movement to Leeds, as they interact with new groups of people and their economic situation may change.

The chapter starts with background information about Leeds and the neighbourhood of Harehills. It then considers the different shops that my interlocutors visited across Leeds, how shopping shaped the movement of Roma through the city, and the interactions that Roma had with others as they moved around Leeds on their shopping trips. Finally, the chapter discusses social media as a site where ideas about desired or normal lifestyles are expressed, transmitted, shaped, and contested. Looking at consumption in the context of Roma migration is important because many Roma said that they migrated to have a better life, as I noted in Introduction. This normal life also meant escaping poverty or a precarious economic situation and having better economic opportunities. Better economic opportunities and higher social status can be expressed through consumption – by being able to buy goods that Roma were not able to afford in the Czech Republic.

**History of Harehills and Gipton**

My fieldwork mainly took place in the neighbourhood of Harehills and to a lesser extent the adjacent neighbourhood of Gipton. Harehills is located 1.5 miles north
east of Leeds’s city centre (see Figure 4 below). At the beginning of the 19th century, there were ‘less than a dozen dwellings’ in the area that is now Harehills and Gipton, and the area was mostly rural land (Callaghan 2015:3). In the 1810s and 1820s, a small number of well-off residents who wanted to move away from the busy city centre built houses in the area (Callaghan 2015). Since then, the area has experienced a long history of urbanisation and in-migration. The first migrations into Harehills began in the 19th century during industrialisation as people from the countryside moved into the area to work in the newly established factories and businesses (Mitchell 2000). In late 19th century Harehills experienced a wave of migration from Ireland, which was followed Russian Jews in the early 1900s. The next wave of migration came during World War II as people fled areas under German occupation. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, migrants from ex-colonies and Commonwealth countries (mainly India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Caribbean) moved into the area and were followed by their dependents in the following decades. In recent years, the area has been changed again by immigration from the enlarged European Union and by a large number of asylum seekers (Lewis et al 2008).

Figure 4: Map of Leeds. Source: www.google.co.uk/maps
The majority of houses in Harehills are back-to-backs, which means that they share both side-walls and the back wall with another house; they have neighbours on three sides. In 19th century, back-to-backs were a popular form of housing in many northern industrial cities because they were a way of accommodating large amounts of people in a small area. Because Harehills offered cheap housing, many migrants moved there after their arrival in Leeds. Additionally, as a result of Britain’s colonial history and the need for cheap labour, residents of former colonies migrated to British cities, like Leeds. Many of the migrants who moved into Harehills in the second half of twentieth century from former colonies now own properties in the area and rent houses to more recent migrants, including those from CEE. There has been an increase in the number of new migrants in the area since 2000. The legacy of the long history of migration into the area is visible in the diverse mix of people who live there. Harehills is considered to be one of the most ethnically diverse areas in England but also one of the most deprived in socio-economic terms (Leeds City Council 2015).

Despite the constantly changing population of Harehills, the structure of housing and the built environment, established during the period of industrialisation, remains largely unchanged (Callaghan 2015). Additionally, because of the prevalence of back-to-backs, the Harehills area lacks green spaces, especially when compared to Gipton or to the rest of Leeds. The only large green space is Banstead Park. In contrast, there are several large green and wooded spaces in the areas surrounding Harehills. This lack of gardens and parks has a consequence for the lives of the residents. As the only outside space where people can socialise is the street, or the doorstep of their house, the lives of many Harehills residents spill out from their

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22 According to the 2011 census, the number of people in the Harehills and Gipton ward who had been born outside of the UK increased from 20.5% in 2001 to 34.2% in 2011, and 60.2% of the people born outside the UK had arrived in the UK in the last ten years (Leeds City Council 2013). The largest ethnic group is Pakistani.

23 The Index of Multiple Deprivation places the Harehills and Gipton ward in the top 10% of most deprived areas in England, and the most deprived ward in Leeds.
homes onto the street. It is not unusual to see Roma residents sitting on the doorstep of their house, or in their concrete front yard. The streets in Harehills are narrow and the main streets tend to be busy with both traffic and pedestrians. When I was on Harehills Lane I often had a sense of the street being overcrowded. It is always noisy and there was often slow moving traffic. There are cars parked on both sides of the street, and people walking along or standing on the street outside shops chatting to each other or crossing the road to get from one shop to another.

The appearance of streets is different in neighbouring Gipton, which consists of a large housing estate of mostly semi-detached houses with gardens. The building of the housing estate started in 1934 with the intention to clear inner-city slums and to provide better living conditions for the residents of these slums (Callaghan 2015). With its wide roads and open spaces, the built environment and structure of Gipton feels very different to that of Harehills. However, many initial plans for the Gipton area remain unrealised - there is a lack of shops and the area is not well connected to the city centre (Callaghan 2015). Compared to the bustling streets of Harehills, the Gipton area feels very empty and quiet. Some Roma migrants have moved out of Harehills into council-owned or formerly council-owned semi-detached houses in Gipton, while others prefer to stay in Harehills, because of proximity to shops, family members, St James’ Hospital and easy connections to the city centre. I was also told by several Roma that they feared racism when moving out of Harehills into predominantly ‘white’ areas, and Gipton is less diverse than Harehills.

Both Gipton and Harehills were shaped by migration processes – Gipton by internal migration within the city, and Harehills by migration from outside of Leeds. The decline in manufacturing work in the UK in recent decades has transformed the area through a nationwide shift from manufacturing to a focus on the service economy. Sassen (2002) describes how the financialisation of the global economy drives the concentration of management and service operations of companies in a network of
cities, while at the same time, large parts of the same cities continue falling into poverty. In her paper, Sassen (2002) focuses on London and describes how the concentration of financial services and wealth in the City, the financial district in London, affects even those who live in other parts of London, as for example the prices of accommodation and services continue to rise in other areas. Leeds experiences similar concentrations of wealth (though on a different scale) in some areas, with other areas (like Harehills and Gipton) continuing to be associated with poverty. The position of Leeds as one of the major cities in the north of England helped the city to re-brand itself as a financial and business centre. According to Leeds City Council, Leeds is the largest centre outside London for financial and business services (Leeds City Council 2018). Recent migrants to Leeds, including Roma, do low paid jobs in packing factories, doing cleaning work, building work, or working at one of the local car washes, like Michal did. As I describe above, Roma envision their migration to the UK as a way to improve their lives, to find new opportunities and possibilities. The UK economy has shifted from manufacturing and production, and there are in fact limited opportunities for the work Roma can do in Leeds, as I discuss in Chapter Six. There are some food packing factories around Leeds where Roma work, but many Roma end up working in service jobs, like cleaning.

**Roma in the public space**

Many of my informants lived in the Harehills and Gipton ward, but ventured outside of the area daily to visit shops, the housing office or the Job Centre, to go to hospital or to work. In Harehills, interactions with the consumer sphere took place mostly along the three main streets (Harehills Lane, Harehills Road and Roundhay Road) where many of the shops they used were located. These main streets were a kind
of local town centre, where people went to shop, men visited betting shops, and people often stopped on the street for a chat. The Compton Centre (official name The Compton Joint Service Centre), on the junction of Harehills Lane and Compton Road, housed the library, the registrar service and there was a ‘One Stop Shop’, which provided ‘face-to-face advice on a range of council services’ (Leeds City Council 2017). Citizen’s Advice Bureau and Welfare Rights24 also run surgeries there, and at the time of my fieldwork there was a Job-shop service held there weekly, where people could get help with writing a CV or a job application. These services were available to anybody, but they were offered in English and therefore many Roma migrants had limited access to them. They could ask for an interpreter but that meant making an appointment, and often waiting two or three weeks, instead of being able to come to a drop-in session. Through personal communication with a member of staff of one of the council services, I also learnt that some Roma were banned from ‘knihovna’ (the library in Czech) as the Compton Centre is referred to. This was because ‘they gather here in groups and talk loudly among themselves’ which was considered by the staff to be disruptive. In addition to these services, a Roma woman called Marta started providing weekly advice sessions for Roma at the Compton Centre in the summer of 2014, with support from the Migrant Access Project run by Leeds City Council.

For many Roma who come to Leeds, Harehills is the ‘entry point’, the place where they move after arriving. There are no published data on the number of Roma migrants living in Harehills, and the estimates that I received ranged from 3,500 (from Migration Yorkshire – personal communication during fieldwork) to around 6,000 (from GRTAS – personal communication during fieldwork) Roma migrants in Leeds, but there are no data for specific areas. There is no category for Roma on

24 Both Citizen’s Advice and Welfare Rights are not-for profit organisations that provide free advice about benefit entitlements and help with benefit claims.
the census and the numbers given above are estimated from the number of children in local schools or from estimates given by services that work with Roma. A 2013 study by the University of Salford estimates the total number of Roma migrants in the UK to be 197,705, with 193,297 Roma living in England (Brown et al. 2013). The study used estimates provided by local authorities and had a response rate of 37%. We therefore cannot know for certain how many migrant Roma are in the UK or in Leeds, as the available data is likely inaccurate. Before and during fieldwork I observed high mobility of Roma within Leeds, within the UK as well as across borders with Roma returning to the Czech Republic or Slovakia, sometimes permanently but often only for a period of time and later returning to the UK, as I noted in Chapter Two. It is therefore likely that the number of Roma migrants in Leeds fluctuates. For the purpose of my study, the number of Roma migrants in Leeds or in the UK is not relevant in itself. Where it becomes relevant is in my discussion of interactions between Roma and the state (which includes non-governmental organisations, health services, local authorities, education and others) in Chapter Six. The state and its bureaucratic apparatus is interested in the number of Roma migrants for reasons such as the distribution of funds available for projects or organisations aimed at Roma.

According to the data in Census 2011, 64.2% of the population of Harehills and Gipton are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, compared to a citywide rate of 18.9%. The spatial distribution of people and resources shapes possibilities and impacts what is accessible. Regardless of ethnic background, all people make their housing decisions within a set of larger constraints, such as social class and disposable income (Stillwell and Phillips 2006). The ethnic geographies of Leeds are partly maintained by the avoidance of certain areas by some social groups - both minorities and whites (Phillips et al 2007; Stillwell and Phillips 2006). People from ethnic minorities may be reluctant to move into a
predominantly white area, and at the same time white Brits may avoid moving into areas with large numbers of people from ethnic minorities (Stillwell and Phillips 2006). Certain areas are portrayed as ‘bad’ or ‘problematic’. For instance, areas with a higher concentration of ethnic minorities tend to be described as ‘declining’ or as sites of ‘social exclusion’ (Phillips et al. 2007:219). Describing certain areas in such negative terms serves to create a negative perception of its residents and can reinforce negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities. The built environment of the city both represents the social, political, economic and cultural relations that shape the city, and constitutes a material structure within which these relations of unequal access to resources are re-created (King 1996). The high concentration of population in Harehills and the large numbers of migrants in the area compared to the rest of the Leeds mean that the area is disproportionately affected by migration (Callaghan 2015, Stillwell and Phillips 2006).

An example of how Harehills has been affected by both migration and high population density is that during my fieldwork all primary schools in the area were oversubscribed. I was told by GRT outreach workers and some school staff that because many migrant children do not speak English when they first move to Leeds, the schools need additional resources, such as more members of staff who can focus on teaching the children English. One non-Roma Czech interpreter, called Lenka, lived in an area neighbouring Harehills. Because the primary schools in Harehills were full, Roma children were given places in schools in neighbouring areas. Lenka once told me that she was not happy about the increasing number of Roma children going to the same primary school as her children and said that she had applied for her children to be transferred to another school. She said that one of the reasons for this was that she knew many of the parents through her interpreting job and knew confidential information about them, or as she put it ‘I know such things about them’. As I discuss in later chapters, Roma are often ‘outed’
as Roma by non-Roma interpreters and additionally, the interactions between Roma and the state often involve conflict and Roma tend to be treated as inferior in these interactions (see also Grill 2012b). As an interpreter, Lenka was entangled in these relationships of unequal power. This differed from the relationships that she wished to have with parents of the other children in the school, whom she envisioned as being her peers and as people with whom she and her children would socialise. Lenka also said that Roma children needed more attention than other children in order to keep up with the curriculum and that Roma parents were not doing enough homework or reading with their children at home. She thought that because of this, Roma children were holding the other children back. She summed this up by saying, ‘they drag you down, socially, academically’. As I mentioned in Introduction, interactions between Czech interpreters and Roma are the focus of Chapter Five. The example above illustrates how the urban environment and migration patterns shape interactions between social and ethnic groups who live in and move through this urban space. Interactions within public spaces are complex expressions of social relationships and hierarchies between ethnic groups and classes.

**Shopping and movement through Leeds**

Shopping was a frequent activity among my Roma informants: sometimes an enjoyable opportunity to treat oneself or one’s family to an afternoon out in the city centre, while at other times it was a chore, when one had to go and buy ‘essentials’ like food or cleaning products. Harehills offered many possibilities for shopping. My Roma informants shopped daily for food, household items and clothing in many of the local shops in Harehills. Sometimes different household members made several trips in one day. The three main streets in Harehills - Harehills Lane, Harehills Road and Roundhay Road - are lined with various shops selling groceries, clothes and
household goods. Apart from the various grocery stores, there is a Morrison’s supermarket in the middle of Harehills, on Harehills Lane. On the three main streets there are also estate agents, lawyers, pawn shops, betting shops, hairdressers and beauty salons and other small stores.

Several stores in Harehills sell food items imported from Eastern European countries including treats such as biscuits or waffles, rough-milled flour, flavourings, sausages and salami, or canned vegetables, as well as other foods. Some of these stores are owned by British Asians or Asian migrants, who in addition to selling food used in Asian cuisines, now cater to the most recent migrant population, selling Eastern European goods. Other stores have Polish owners, are commonly referred to as ‘Polish shops’, and sell mostly Eastern European food as noted above. Often, my informants visited several grocery stores during one shopping trip, buying a few items in each store, either because the individual shops did not have all the desired items or because some items were cheaper in one shop than in the others. The shops are usually small, with narrow aisles in order to fit the maximum amount of goods within a small space. My Roma informants usually bought a small number of items for immediate consumption in the local shops - food for the family meal, snacks or sweets, cigarettes, household items such as cleaning products. When I went to the shops in Harehills with my informants, it was common for us to meet other Roma acquaintances and to stop for a chat. Shopping trips were therefore an opportunity to gossip. At other times, shopping in Harehills was constituted around trying to avoid certain people. Iveta disliked going to Harehills because of the visible presence of other Roma, including Roma whom Iveta did not like such as Vlach Roma or Roma who were visiting betting shops or playing slot machines, behaviour that she found immoral. Like many other Roma, Iveta and Pavel also did a regular trip (usually every three to four weeks) to a butcher in Bradford where they bought

25 I refer to the grocery stores where Roma migrants buy Eastern European food jointly as ‘Polish shops’.
enough meat to last them until the next trip. Similar to the Asian owners of grocery shops in Harehills, the butcher’s was a family business which started catering to the new Roma customers who arrived after the expansion of the EU, and started selling the cuts of meat preferred by Roma, and items such as the large intestine of the pig which is used to make goja.26

Harehills has largely escaped urban redevelopment. The majority of buildings there are old brick buildings and while there are some ‘new builds’ in the surrounding areas, like Gipton, there are none in Harehills. As well as the medium-sized Morrison’s supermarket off Harehills Lane, there was a small Sainsbury’s branch27 further down on Harehills Lane next to the Compton Centre, and a small Asda (supermarket) about a mile further down on the same street. There is a Gregg’s28 on Harehills Lane but there are no high-street chain coffee stores, and no chain clothes shops. And even though there are many fast food outlets in Harehills, they tend to be locally owned small businesses or branches of smaller chains, and there are none of the main international chain fast food restaurants. As such, Harehills is a diverse place, which has been shaped by the residents who occupy its space and conduct their lives on the streets, in the shops and houses. It is local in the sense that many shops and other businesses there are run by residents of Harehills. It is embedded within the global political and economic system because many of these residents have transnational lives and links to cities and towns in other localities and other countries. Its global connections are visible in the products sold in Harehills shops, products which are imported from various countries across the globe. These local and global connections of Harehills are the result of the historical processes discussed above.

26 Goja is made by stuffing the large intestine of a pig with grated potato mixed with garlic and seasoning (in a similar way to how sausages are made) and then cooking it by boiling or frying.
27 Sainsbury’s is a British supermarket. The one in Harehills has closed down since my fieldwork and been replaced with Fultons, a budget end store.
28 Gregg’s is a budget end bakery chain.
The concentration of shops and retail in certain areas of the city structures the city and differentiates spaces into ‘residential’ or ‘retail’ areas (Falk and Campbell 1997). The concentration of small shops in Harehills that sell food and clothes that would be classed as ‘ethnic’ constructs Harehills as a ‘migrant space’. And as my teenage son told me at every opportunity during and after fieldwork, Harehills was nicknamed ‘Little Pakistan’ among the children in his school, many of whom lived in Harehills and who were of different ethnicities (including Pakistani). This nickname also marks Harehills as a specific kind of migrant space, and ascribes a certain ownership of the space to migrants and British Asians of Pakistani origin. In a similar way as the children in my son’s school, I heard Roma women in Harehills refer to local schools as ‘Pakistani schools’ because of the visible presence of British Pakistani children there. Iveta, and a couple of other Roma women, complained that their daughters wanted to wear long trousers and long-sleeved tops even in warm weather. According to Iveta, this was because Veronika wanted to fit in and dress like the ‘Pakistani’ girls in her school.

Less frequently, but still on a regular basis, my Roma interlocutors visited the city centre to buy food or clothes in the large market in Leeds city centre, or toiletries and toys in Poundland or one of the similar budget stores which they referred to as *librovka* (one-pounder in Czech). They tended to purchase clothes in one of the large budget clothing chain stores, such as Primark or Sports Direct. Other items, like mobile phones, they bought in pawn shops. During my fieldwork, my informants started to buy things online, first with my help and later by themselves. And as my interlocutors became more settled in Leeds, and some found jobs, they were able to get new mobile phones on monthly contracts. Shopping trips to the city centre often happened on the days when families received their benefits or wages and had money to spend. These trips usually involved ‘treating’ oneself and other family members, for instance by buying new clothes, going for a meal in a fast food store.
or in one of the restaurants which offer an ‘all you can eat’ buffet. When going without their parents, Yvonna, Petr and Michal liked to go to McDonalds or to a coffee shop. The items that were bought in city centre were usually items that were needed, such as new shoes, but at the same time items that were desired, such as specific sport shoes, if people could afford them.

Leeds, like many other cities, has a city centre that is mostly comprised of large department stores, shopping centres, cafes and restaurants, hotels and office buildings, but few people actually live in the city centre. A large part of Leeds city centre comprises a pedestrian zone and many of the stores, cafes and restaurants located there belong to large international chain stores. The wide pedestrian-only streets in the city centre, large shopping windows to display goods and many coffee shops where people can stop for refreshments are designed with an emphasis on the visual aspect of shopping and on shopping as leisure (Miles 2010). The streets and the built environment create different visual aesthetics between the city centre and Harehills. The city centre in Leeds is built around shopping and the visual aesthetics reflect this - the wide streets, big shop-windows and the displayed products create a sense of an ideal lifestyle (Miles 2010). I return to the link between shopping and a sense of an ‘ideal lifestyle’ in the last section of this chapter where I discuss aspirations and social media. Miles states that the physical environment of city centres was built around shopping and consumption and that ‘our experience of the city is defined by shopping’ (Miles 2010:4). It is true that the primary reason for visiting the city centre in Leeds for many people tends to be shopping (either making an actual purchase or ‘window shopping’), or interactions with other aspects of the consumer sphere, like going to a restaurant, a bar, or a cinema. My Roma informants tended to go to the city centre either to visit shops, to visit one of the Leeds City Council services, the Leeds General Infirmary hospital located there, or to work (as cleaners) in one of the hotels, bars or restaurants in the
I tended not to accompany my interlocutors on their shopping trips to the city centre for several reasons. As it was often an opportunity for a family to enjoy an afternoon together, I was usually not asked to go. I only went to the city centre a few times for some specific reason, such as when Pavel needed to speak to the sales assistant to order the correct sized ring that he wanted to buy as a Christmas present for Iveta, when Michal needed to open a bank account and had been unsuccessful on his previous attempts, or to try to make an agreement with a bank about an overdraft that Milan had not been paying and was not able to repay. These trips involved just going to our intended destination and then going back ‘home’ (usually to the informant’s home), rather than spending time walking around and visiting shops which is what my informants told me that they tended to do when out shopping. Even though I did not accompany my interlocutors on their shopping trips, I saw these shopping trips documented on Facebook where my interlocutors often posted pictures they had taken on their visits to the city centre or pictures of their new possessions. And frequently I was shown their new possessions on my next visit, and we discussed the prices of different goods and made comparisons between prices in different shops. My dislike for shopping as well as the fact that I did not update my clothes (and other possessions) very often were interpreted by some Roma as proof of my stinginess, and that I wanted to ‘hoard money’ instead of using money to enjoy myself and to ‘treat’ my family. Roma tend to view gadže in general as stingy and thus as not caring enough towards their families, as I discuss in Chapter Four.

In her study among ten-year-old African-American children in a working class neighbourhood in New Haven, USA, Chin (2001) observed that the children’s engagement with the consumer world was continually constrained by their positioning within the wider world, by their family, friends, neighbourhood, and larger
social entities such as the city, the state and the global economy. Several of the children in her study lived in single parent households or were cared for by someone other than their parents (for example a grandmother, or an aunt). This, in addition to the fact that they were from a working-class neighbourhood and African American, meant that the children in Chin’s (2001) study lived within limited material means. Chin (2001:92) observed that the experience and forms of interactions that the children had during shopping trips to local stores in the neighbourhood and to the downtown mall differed. During the trips to the local store, the interactions between the children and the local shopkeepers were shaped around the fact that the shopkeeper was a familiar person who knew the children and their families. For instance, when a child was sent to buy a certain item but was unsure about what brand, the shopkeeper allowed the child to call home from the shop to make sure that she bought the right item.

The local connection and familiarity were the central aspect of the interactions between the local shopkeeper and the children. Contrastingly, during the trips to the shopping mall, where the shopkeepers tended to be white and unknown, the interactions between the shopkeepers and the children were shaped by the children’s racial identity and working class background. On one occasion, the children were closely observed and followed by a shopkeeper who seemed to assume that the children were likely to shoplift. Chin (2001) describes how on one shopping trip, one of the children was looking at item that she liked and was teased by the salesperson who assumed (on that occasion rightly) that she did not have enough money to buy it. The girl was thus shamed by the shopkeeper who made assumptions about what she would or would not be able to afford based on her appearance. Chin (2001:92) argues that the experience and forms of interactions during these shopping trips shaped the children’s understanding of those places and of themselves and the society. The familiarity of the local shopkeeper which
contrasted with the performed superiority of the white shopkeepers in the downtown mall positioned the children differently in these spaces. Chin (2001:114) states that even though the mall created an illusion of anonymity, ‘people are not anonymous and history-less individuals and stores are not monolithic spaces’. She argues that ‘[i]n the confrontation between historically situated people and socially constructed spaces, people are reconstructed as particular people in that space’ (Chin 2001:114; emphasis in the original). While in local shops, the relationship between the shopkeeper and the children was based on the immediate and more intimate relationships constituted by daily interactions and proximity (both social and spatial), the interactions between the children and the shopkeepers in the mall were defined in terms of racial difference and historically created racial inequalities.

We can apply several points from Chin’s (2001) ethnography to the situation of Roma in Leeds. Roma migrants’ experiences differ when shopping in Harehills or in the city centre. Many of the high street shops in the centre of Leeds were inaccessible to my Roma interlocutors, not in the sense that Roma would not be allowed or able to enter them, but in the sense that Roma migrants would feel out of place in them. While they did not say this directly, they implied it in the distinctions they made between different shops. Not only could they not afford to shop in the high-end stores, but their clothes would make them look out of place with the surroundings. Many of my interlocutors liked to wear sports brands such as Adidas or Nike, which they bought if they were able to afford them. Wearing branded sports clothes was seen among Roma migrants as a mark of status. They usually bought them in Sports Direct, a budget end chain store which specialises in sports clothes and tends to sell them cheaper than other specialist sports shops. While wearing sports clothes may be seen as desirable by Roma, wearing sports clothes can be understood as a signifier of working-class status from others’ viewpoints. The clothes that Roma wear tend to mark them out as working class, while their accent
or limited English mark them out as migrants. Like the children in Chin’s (2001) account, Roma were therefore confronted with the possibility that the salespersons would make assumptions about whether they could afford to shop in high-end stores based on their appearance and that they would be treated as inferior or as not having the right to be present in shops which were too expensive for them. Their class and their migrant status inform the interactions between Roma and others in the city centre, and shops outside Harehills.

Once, when returning home after driving two of his Roma friends to a funeral, Pavel described to Iveta and me how they stopped on the way to buy flowers. Pavel said that they entered the shop and the English shopkeeper asked what they were looking to buy. Pavel described how his friends were unable to communicate with the shopkeeper, they ‘just stood looking at her and were not able to say a word’ despite ‘being here for two years’. He then described how he walked up to the shopkeeper and explained the situation and helped his friend buy the funeral flowers. In his narrative he presented himself as the one who had to facilitate the purchase and speak to the shopkeeper - by speaking English and acting confidently, he was able to present himself as having the right to occupy that space. By describing how he was able to speak English and communicate with the English shopkeeper, Pavel presented himself as being more cosmopolitan, which contrasted to the other two men whom he portrayed in his narrative as ‘backward’ because they had not been able to act correctly or to speak English.

The interactions that Roma had when shopping in Harehills differed, both because of their familiarity with the shops and with others who shopped there, and because Roma were able to afford to buy the items sold there. This was different to the branded clothes and other goods sold in the city centre, which my interlocutors desired but which were often inaccessible to them. Like the black children in Chin’s account (2001), Roma are aware of the judgments that others make about them and
in order to avoid being perceived as poor or as uneducated, they avoid places where they are likely to be confronted with being judged as such. The city centre in Leeds is constructed as a certain kind of space - it is constructed around the notion of consumption as leisure (Satterthwaite 2001), and ethnic and class differences become visible through such things as clothing, behaviour and where people can afford to shop.

Writing about the US and the ‘white flight’, Satterthwaite (2001) locates the change in the character of US city centres in the 1950s when the middle-classes started to move to the suburbs. The middle-classes were followed into the suburbs by city stores, which wanted to keep their custom, and large corporations remote from the specific locality opened their stores in city centres instead of the locally based stores (Satterthwaite 2001). Shopping in city centres became more impersonal as it became removed from the immediate and more intimate interactions of day-to-day life. In a similar way to that described by Satterthwaite (2001), Leeds city centre, characterised by the presence of stores owned by large corporations, contrasts with the small locally owned shops found in Harehills. The shift to corporate-led retail changed the forms of sociality that were formed through the practice of shopping (Miles 2010). The sociality in city centres is not based on familiarity and mutual interdependence, what Miles calls ‘networks of social exchange’, and it contrasts with sociality in more local-based shops (Miles 2010). Despite the city centre making class and ethnic differences visible, it also offered possibilities for new forms of social interactions. Michal is a keen musician and taught himself to play the guitar, bass guitar and keyboard. When he was with Yvonna in the city centre, he often visited one of the music shops and spent time there trying the different instruments which were on display. There are usually several buskers playing in Leeds city centre and Michal sometimes joined in with a busker if he liked what the person was playing. Yvonna often recorded videos of Michal joining in with a
busker, or trying various instrument in a music shop and uploaded them on Facebook. The city centre thus offered possibilities for new kinds of sociality, but there were some places which Roma experienced as inaccessible, as I discuss above.

**Social media**

Social media has become an important site where people engage with the consumer sphere and where desires for certain objects are shaped and documented, often through images. Social media and the use of various different platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype and so on) has become increasingly ubiquitous in the last decade. Social media made possible communication among groups of people via group chats or conference calls, as well as the possibility of reaching wider groups of people across globe (Miller et al 2016). It therefore provides a platform where common and established forms of sociality can take place, as a group of friends of family members can engage in a group conversation online. Miller et al (2016:7) define social media as ‘another place in which people live, alongside their office life, home life and community life’ because interactions and conversations that would normally happen in the ‘real’ world are transported into the online world but in fact remain the same in their content. What is different is the scale of social interactions made possible by online communication. Social media is a place for communication but also sociality because it enables communication and exchange over spatial distance, thus allowing people to practice sociality and maintain (or forge) their social relationships even at times when they are not physically present with one another (Miller et al 2016).

The availability of smart phones and access to social media was important for Roma migrants, as they often used various social media platforms to keep in touch with
one another as well as with family members who lived elsewhere. Roma did not use social media solely to keep in touch with friends and family, the other important aspect of their social media use was the ability to look at images and information shared by others. Facebook, which was the most used social media platform among my Roma informants, was a place where they looked at, ‘liked’ and shared images of desired clothes, shoes, hair styles, cars, home interiors, food and so on. As well as posting pictures of desired goods, my informants often posted pictures of their new possessions or of themselves, dressed up in their new clothes after a shopping trip to the city centre, or pictures and videos from church and prayer groups. Yvonna often shared pictures of women, which she considered good looking, posing in what she thought of as stylish branded sports clothes. She also frequently posted pictures of hairstyles and make up styles that she liked. Roma women often posted links to recipes, and both men and women posted pictures of food that they prepared or ate when out. Roma who had converted to Pentecostal Christianity frequently posted images with text which expressed religious sentiments or quotes from the Bible.

Like Roma in Leeds, many people document their lives frequently on social media, or share images that embody specific meanings to them; it is a way of creating and presenting an ideal lifestyle. In his ethnographic study of social media use in an English village, Miller (2016) found that some platforms such as Snapchat were used to communicate with only a small group of people that one knows well, whilst other platforms (such as WhatsApp, Twitter or Facebook) were used to communicate with larger groups of people, with some platforms such as Instagram being used to include communication with strangers. The intimacy of the images or information that people shared on social media changed in relation to the scale of the social group with more intimate images (such as embarrassing or ugly photos) shared only among the small group of trusted friends and the intimacy of
communication or images decreasing in relation to the increasing scale of the group of people who could see it. Miller et al (2016) thus call social media a place of ‘scalable sociality’. The ability to communicate with others, including strangers, and to access and share information is an important element in creating a sense of self. By sharing images, quotes or text and liking or commenting on other people’s content, people can reaffirm their values as well as compare their way of life with that of others. By posting pictures of such desired items on social media, and by looking at and talking about these desired items, people are able to engage with the imagined ideal lifestyle which they associate with that specific object. Material objects are thus used to create a notion of self. Additionally, consumption practices are embedded in complex value systems and the choices that people make about objects that they buy are an expression of personal and societal values (Fischer 2014). Daily decisions made during shopping trips are then constantly weighed in terms of moral questions and adherence to values which are embodied through these objects (Miller 1998).

Carrier and Heyman (1997) argue that consumption strategies cannot be analysed only in terms of people’s position within the global economy or only by looking at the meanings of objects. Consumption strategies also reflect the aspirations of diverse social groups. McCracken (1988) states that all societies seem to have a certain ideal as to what the social world should look like, but the real social life never quite matches this imagined ideal. According to McCracken’s (1988) concept of ‘displaced meaning’, ideals can be removed and transported (i.e. displaced) in time to an imagined future or past. An example of a ‘displaced meaning’ can be when someone is convinced that life will be better after some imagined revolution or after a much anticipated event, such as getting married. Ideals can also be displaced in space as for instance during the Soviet era, many people in the Soviet bloc imagined the ‘West’ as a place where life is perfect. This strategy of ‘displaced
meaning’ is also used on individual level where people imagine that they will attain their ideal life when they get a new job, or when they get married and so on. McCracken (1988) states that objects can act as bridges to an imagined ideal lifestyle. By purchasing an object that is associated with this imagined ideal lifestyle (such as an expensive suit, a BMW car, or an iPhone) people obtain a concrete material bridge to that lifestyle. McCracken states that ‘These bridges serve as proof of the existence of this style of life and even as proof of the individual’s ability to lay claim to it’ (McCracken 1988:111). Yet, by purchasing the ‘bridge item’, it becomes part of the lived reality of the person and becomes ordinary. Often another object is chosen to act as a bridge to the ideal, and then another (Corrigan 1997; McCracken 1988).

Migration to Leeds, and the consumer goods that some Roma were suddenly able to afford, also functioned as ‘bridge items’. During the course of my fieldwork, Michal had changed his smart phone several times through buying them at a pawn shop and then selling them on a few months later when he found a smart phone that he preferred available at one of the pawn or second hand shops. Like these ‘bridge items’ which act as material expressions of people’s aspirations, images posted online can act as bridges to an ideal lifestyle. These images then become an expression of their ideal lifestyle and of what kind of person they want to be, and therefore also act as way to express one’s aspirations. Social media is a place where private aspirations are shaped, played out, and contested. For my Roma informants, pictures of desired goods posted on social media were often linked to such ‘bridge items’. In a similar way, status goods like cars, mobile phones or branded clothes acted as ‘bridge items’ to what they imagined as a normal lifestyle and a normal standard of living.
Conclusion

This chapter introduced Leeds and Harehills and discussed interactions that Roma in Leeds have with others, and how social hierarchies are shaped, produced and made visible through interactions in public spaces and with the ‘consumer sphere’. In Leeds, Roma may not be immediately visible as Roma in some of their interactions in public spaces, for example in the interactions that Michal had with buskers in the city centre. However, they can still be identified as Roma in certain contexts, like in the school playground, and there are other local hierarchies present both in Leeds and in Harehills. Therefore, even though Roma may escape ‘exceptionality’ in certain ways when they are in public spaces, because they are not immediately identified as Roma and therefore not treated as inferior, they are still situated within local hierarchical relationships. And because Roma, as recently arrived migrants and low-skill workers, tend to have little social and economic capital compared to others, they can again find themselves in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis others. The interactions that Roma have with the ‘consumer sphere’ do not happen only in public spaces, as Roma also interface with the ‘consumer sphere’ through social media which they access in the private space of the home. This chapter described the interactions that Roma have with others in the public space in the context of shopping and consumption. It focused on interactions with those who are outside of the immediate kin group. Now that I have provided all background information and described how Roma are situated in Leeds, in the next chapter I zoom in on a Roma household. The next chapter considers consumption and materiality in the private space of the home and how they are an expression of relationships and hierarchies within a Roma household, as well as strategies of distance-marking and differentiating between oneself and others.
Chapter 4: Cleanliness, Care and Respectability

Introduction

I often went to Iveta’s house in the morning, and when I arrived (usually between ten and eleven), either Iveta or Yvonna would be in the process of cooking the main family meal. Iveta believed that having a hot meal ready for her family at lunch time was a sign of caring properly for her family. According to Iveta, a household without a daily hot meal, an untidy household, or household members wearing dirty clothes, showed a lack of care by the woman of the household. My Roma interlocutors often asked me about my family or what I cooked for lunch. Roma often told me that unlike Roma, gadže do not know how to pořádně se starat (to care properly in Czech) for their families. And unlike Roma, gadže are not caring enough about their families because they spend a lot of time at work, they let other people look after their children, and they are too concerned with money and wealth. However, it was not only gadže my informants criticised for their perceived lack of care, but also some other Roma families who, I was told, had untidy homes, whose children wore clothes that were dirty or had holes, or where a hot meal was not cooked every day.

This chapter focuses on daily life in a Roma household and describes practices of caring for others as part of daily life. These care practices include cooking, shopping, clothing and cleaning. The chapter considers how understandings and expectations of appropriate care demonstrate the recognitions of mutual obligations and are used to create a sense of belonging and inclusion in a social unit (or exclusion from it). The chapter describes how Roma gain moral personhood within the Roma social world, and how they make distinctions between themselves and others, through providing appropriate and expected ‘care’ to others within their families and within their wider social network.
In an introduction to their edited volume which explores meanings and practices of different forms of care in diverse contexts, Mol et al (2010) argue that care is a matter of being attentive to pain and suffering and trying to ‘continuously improve practices that have to do with the good’ (2010, my emphasis). They describe care as ‘practical tinkering’ which ‘implies a negotiation about how different goods might coexist in a given, specific local practice’ (Mol et al. 2010:13). The different ‘goods’ then reflect different values that coexist in any social context and different meanings that people give to practices, actions and material things. In the context of this chapter, I talk about care as a practice that has to do with ‘the good’. I use ‘care’ to describe practices that distribute the good (as well as goods) between people and create, establish, maintain, or have the capacity to disrupt, social relationships and ties. Care is thereby a practice of transmission of values (see also Fischer 2014, Miller 1998).

According to Alber and Drotbohm (2015), care has a dual aspect; we talk both about ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’ someone. Care is both a practice and an expression of a relation. Performing acts of care towards someone can be a manifestation of one’s relationship to the person who receives care, or a way of establishing a relationship. Performing care tends to be seen as a moral obligation - for example failing to care appropriately for one’s children, or for one’s elderly parents tends to be seen as a moral failure. Care then constitutes practices of producing and affirming social relations, both within the sphere of intimacy of immediate kin and within the larger social world and larger collectivities. Additionally, as caring properly for one’s family is seen as a moral obligation, providing proper care through correct practices, such as buying appropriate (and therefore ‘proper’) clothing, cooking ‘proper’ meals, is a strategy of presenting oneself as a moral person, as someone who deserves to be seen as respectable. These practices of caring for a person’s kin, or significant others, express and reaffirm the emotional aspect of care, the
‘caring about’ others (Alber and Drotbohm 2015). By providing care, people show that they care about others and thus that they understand themselves as belonging together. Care provision constitutes processes that inform a sense of belonging within or exclusion from larger collectivities, such as the nation state. Although what constitutes proper care tends to be viewed as commonsense and ‘normal’, understandings of what constitutes appropriate care vary both between and within social groups. This chapter looks at care practices and considers how they shape and produce a sense of belonging within a household and, at the same time, create boundaries between self and others.

A household is a social and economic unit formed typically by close kin, what we commonly refer to as family (it does not necessarily correspond to the nuclear family and can include relationships other than those of parents and children). According to de Grazia (1996:153) ‘[t]he modern household … defined as a site of provisioning, social relations and economic management, holds a vital historical position in relation to the modern state and class politics’. A household is formed by the social relationships within it, but it is also an expression of the positioning of its members with the wider social, economic and political structures. Even though a household is a social unit, it is ‘to a degree defined by the physicality of the house’ (Miller 2001:12). The house, as home, is the physical and symbolic expression of the relationships between those who constitute a household, and it is produced and reaffirmed through the relationships and practices of the household members (Clarke 2001, Miller 2001). As such, home is constituted as a private space. Different degrees of intimacy are expressed by who is allowed to enter the home, which parts of it, and how they are treated and expected to act inside the home, as I discuss below. Close kin tend to have access to all or most areas within the ‘home’ but guests tend to only have access to some rooms (Miller 2001).
Despite being constituted as a private space, ‘much of the encounter with the larger world happens at home’ through television, social media and the Internet (Miller 2001:3). The material objects that people have within their homes are also both an appropriation and representation of the external world (Miller 2001:1). Home is an expression of tensions between the state and individual persons, for example through the state’s restrictions on what can be sold, or through what people can or cannot afford to buy, or through diet and what people are told that they should eat, or shaped through adverts (Corrigan 1997). The private space of home is the site where the life trajectories of individuals and families are negotiated and where values, care practices and economic strategies are transmitted across generations and reproduced (Clarke 2001). The private space of home ‘acquires its meaning through practice, and as such, it forms part of the everyday process of the creation of self’ (Petridou 2001:87-8). The process of socialisation and the production of persons are thereby created through care practices. The notion of ‘home’ is often extended beyond the private space where individual households live for example by talking about a person’s ‘home country’. A person’s ‘home country’ tends to refer to the country where the person grew up and where he or she ‘belongs’, usually on the basis of their nationality or citizenship. ‘Home’ is therefore an expression of particular ideas of familiarity and belonging, of inclusion and exclusion, which become transposed onto a specific place or location.

The chapter starts by describing the day-to-day life in a Roma household. It does this by looking at food and how food preparation and consumption play a central role in the lives of Roma families. Secondly, the chapter looks at how gender relationships are negotiated through shopping and through material objects. Thirdly, the chapter looks at cleanliness and appearance, which are both material expressions of the relationships between and social roles of the individual household members. It then moves to the topic of hospitality and boundary-making.
between those who belong to the household and those outside of it. The chapter argues that the gendered identities of household members and their sense of belonging are produced, created, shaped, and maintained through the various practices of caring for, or being cared for by others within the household.

**Day-to-day life in a Roma household**

Among all the families that I visited during fieldwork, cooking was considered to be a woman’s task and women did almost all the cooking. In Iveta’s family, the cooking was divided between Iveta and Yvonna. Yvonna cooked on the days when she was not in college and Iveta cooked the rest of the week. The main family meal was lunch, eaten around midday. It usually consisted of a soup and a main dish, but sometimes the soup was omitted and there was only a main dish. In the Czech Republic, it is usual for people to have the main meal in the middle of the day, and it was therefore part of the ‘cultural baggage’ that the Roma migrants brought with them. Pavel sometimes cooked, but this was quite unusual - in other Roma families that I got to know, it was always the woman who cooked. Even though Pavel sometimes cooked, he was not responsible for cooking. Pavel only cooked when he felt like it and only food that Iveta did not cook and did not eat (such as seafood or food which he called ‘Mexican’ or ‘Chinese’). The food that Pavel cooked was not intended to feed the whole family, or to replace the main meal, rather it supplemented it. Children were socialised into their gender roles early. Yvonna had to help with cooking, washing the dishes, caring for her younger sister, and doing other housework. On the days when there was no college or when lessons started in the afternoon, her brother Petr was often asleep until midday, after playing on his Playstation until the early hours, and only got up in time for lunch. The situation was similar in Margita’s house, where her thirteen-year-old daughter Jana was expected
to help with cooking and other household chores, while her older brothers were allowed to go out and spend their afternoons and evenings with friends or girlfriends.

The college which Yvonna and Petr attended was very close to their house, and on the days when they had classes, Yvonna and Petr came home during their lunch break to eat. This was not only for convenience, but also because Iveta did not consider the sandwiches, jacket potatoes and other food on offer in the college canteen to be enough to pořádně se najíst (eat properly). The youngest child, Veronika, was given 'lunch' after arriving home from school. Iveta explained it by saying that ‘Veronika did not eat in school’. I observed similar behaviour in other Roma households, where women cooked a hot meal and children were offered their main meal, or oběd (lunch in Czech), after arriving back from school. Iveta, and other Roma women, often complained that their children did not eat in school and that they did not like the food there. The food offered in schools was described as anglický (English) food and Roma did not see ‘English’ food as sufficient to pořádně se najíst (eat properly).

In order to be considered ‘proper’, a meal has to be prepared, served and eaten according to specific rules (Douglas 1972, Murcott 1982). In her study of working-class families in south Wales, Murcott (1982) observed that the family relations and gender roles were embodied in the ‘cooked dinner’ which formed an essential part of family life. Murcott (1982:677) describes that among the Welsh families that she studied, a ‘cooked dinner is composed of meat, potatoes, at least one additional vegetable, and gravy’. Murcott (1982) goes on to expand the characteristics which make a meal into a ‘cooked dinner’. A ‘cooked dinner’ was to be eaten only once per day and not every day, usually three or four times a week, and the separate ingredients had to be prepared in specific ways in order for the meal to be considered a ‘cooked dinner’ (Murcott 1982). Meat had to be roasted or grilled,
potatoes had to be boiled or roasted, and vegetables boiled (Murcott 1982). Other ways of cooking the ingredients would render the meal as not constituting a ‘cooked dinner’.

We can find similarities between Murcott’s (1982) study and some of the characteristics that Roma found necessary in order to consider a meal an oběd. Among the Roma families which I visited, a main meal (oběd) was a cooked meal, which was served hot, and usually consisted of a carbohydrate or starch-based component (such as dumplings, potatoes, or sometimes pasta or rice), and a meat component, usually pork, beef or chicken, which was either cooked, fried or roasted. The two main components were accompanied either by fat from the meat or a sauce which was cooked separately. Sometimes, an already cooked meat (like sausage, ham or salami) was used instead of a cut of meat, but some form of meat or animal fat was seen as essential to a proper meal. Murcott (1982:693) says that in the Welsh families she studied, ‘the cooked dinner symbolises the home itself, a man’s relation to that home and a woman’s place in it’. The cooked dinner was an embodied expression of the man’s role to earn money, and the woman’s role to do the shopping and cooking: the cooked dinner thus defined the man as a breadwinner and the woman as a homemaker (Murcott 1982).

Even though Iveta often complained about having to cook, cooking and feeding her family a proper oběd was an expression of her position within the household and of her relationships to other household members, similar to the families in Murcott’s study (1982). Even though Roma family members often ate separately, the main cooked meal was an essential part of the families’ lives. As I noted above, having a cooked meal ready for her family (and to offer to any guests who happened to come by) was an important expression of the woman’s ability to care for her family and thus to her identity as a woman, a mother and a wife. However, what constitutes a lunch was not fixed; it was contextual and varied between individual Roma families.
Whereas Iveta used to buy ready-made dumplings in the Polish shops, and just re-heat them at home, Margita preferred to make them from scratch. She said that they tasted better and that it did not take long to make them. Margita told me that she considered buying ready-made dumplings lazy (though she also bought them when short on time). Petra, who worked and did not have a teenage daughter to help with cooking (unlike Margita or Iveta), tended to use more convenience food, like pizza, or baked beans on toast, but cooked ‘proper meals’ over the weekend.

Family eating habits and feeding ‘involve relations of dependency and power’ and the relationship between parents (especially mothers) and children is in part negotiated through food (Petridou 2001:91). In the distribution of food in families, children tend to be relatively powerless in terms of being able to choose what they eat (Charles and Kerr 1987). For instance, even if Roma children happened to like any of the meals served to them in school, such as jacket potatoes or fish and chips, in most families that I visited, they would not be able to have such food at home because their mothers would not make it for them. Food preferences are to a large extent created by people who care for children and as such they are embedded within the social rules of the group (Mintz 1985). Feeding is a way of making persons. ‘What we like, what we eat, how we eat it, and how we feel about it are phenomenologically interrelated matters; together, they speak eloquently to the question of how we perceive ourselves in relation to others’ (Mintz 1985:4).

Whenever I visited any of my Roma interlocutors, I was always offered food - this ranged from a slice of cake to homemade ‘placky’ (flatbread) with pork fat (a Roma dish), to dumplings with sauerkraut and roasted chicken (a popular Czech dish, not specifically Roma). Meat forms a large part of the Roma diet (as well as a Czech diet in general). Even though there are some differences between Roma and non-Roma Czech cuisine, there is a significant overlap. A Czech diet usually consists of a variety of meat-based dishes, often served with a sauce, and often either
dumplings, or potatoes. The Roma diet is very similar, and most dishes are based on meat. I was familiar with many of the dishes offered to me during fieldwork. However, as I had been vegetarian since I was seventeen, I was faced with a dilemma when offered food by my Roma interlocutors. Because of the stigmatisation of Roma in Czech society, the consumption of food prepared by Roma would be experienced as problematic by many non-Roma Czechs; because Roma are generally perceived as dirty in the Czech public discourse, eating with Roma is perceived by non-Roma Czech as polluting (see Sokolova 2008). In fact, some non-Roma Czech and Slovak interpreters and school assistants mentioned to me that they always made a point of accepting food and drink from Roma, or of using touch such as a handshake, as a way of showing their lack of prejudice against Roma. I felt that refusal to eat the food that I was offered would count not only as a refusal of hospitality, or as a sign that I was *barikani* (conceited in Romanes) but it could also be interpreted by my Roma interlocutors as a sign that I was repelled by food prepared by them.

The reactions of some of my non-Roma Czech friends or relatives to my plans to conduct fieldwork among Roma included the incredulous ‘You are going to live *s cikánama*?!’ (with some Gypsies) or ‘I would never want to learn Romani’. I asked several non-Roma Czechs whether they thought that most Czech people would refuse to eat with Roma because Roma were perceived as dirty. All of them said yes (but always with the disclaimer that they personally would not mind eating with Roma *if* they were clean). During one of my first visits to her house, Nadia offered me a plate of dumplings, roast chicken and sauerkraut with the words ‘*nemusíš se štítit*’ (literally ‘you don't have to be squeamish’ in Czech) and explained that she kept her house clean. This was intended to mean that I did not have to worry about eating food prepared by her. Roma are aware of the fact that they are seen by *gadže* as dirty and polluting and that many Czechs would refuse to eat with Roma.
or food prepared by Roma. Eating food prepared by Roma (and later in fieldwork drinking from the same glass or bottle, sharing a cigarette with my Roma acquaintances, giving a kiss to a Roma child) thus meant that I came to be seen as different from the majority of gadže. I did not manage to avoid eating meat completely, but I did my best to minimise the amount of meat I ate. Eventually, people realised that I was not trying to avoid eating their food, but that I simply did not want to eat meat. My avoidance of meat then became a running joke throughout fieldwork. I kept being questioned about what I cooked, and my informants often joked that all I cooked was pasta or rice and vegetables.

As I was quite slim, people joked that I was skinny because I did not eat meat and therefore I did not eat ‘properly’. Pavel often joked that they would ‘fatten me up’ and that my partner would finally have ‘something to grab onto’. Eating meat was considered necessary in order to eat ‘properly’, which they expressed by saying that a person should pořádně se najíst (to eat properly). Eating meat was thereby portrayed as connected to a person’s well-being, sexuality and to what a woman should look like. The fact that I did not have a hot meal ready for my family at midday, or that sometimes I said that we were just going to have leftovers from the night before, was a confirmation that gadže women are not caring enough. Okely (1983) describes how the Gypsies among whom she worked threw away uneaten food that had been cooked. In a similar way, my informants did not eat left-over food and when I asked Iveta about the food that had remained uneaten the day before, she tended to answer zkázilo se (‘it went bad’ in Czech). My informants saw left-over food as inferior to a freshly cooked meal and as a sign of laziness or inability to care for one’s family.

Decisions about food and individual preferences are positioned within and shaped by wider social structures. There are different and diverse values attached to different types of food, and different kinds of food are positioned hierarchically. The
Roma diet consists of a lot of meat, and meat is valued in the Roma social world. Meat is more expensive to buy than food staples like potatoes or bread, and being able to afford meat (and being overweight as a result of eating plenty) was considered a sign of doing well, of not being poor. On one occasion, when talking about how life in the Czech Republic was hard, Iveta described to me how many of her relatives there were suchý (dry in Czech, used here to mean skinny). She related this to the fact that her relatives were not able to afford to buy a lot of food due to low wages. Migration to Leeds can lead to an improved economic situation for Roma. Many Roma liked to treat their children by buying them sweets or chocolate. It was also common for people to buy sugary, fizzy drinks which can be bought relatively cheaply in supermarkets or grocery stores. Even though the increased consumption of sugary drinks, fast food, and processed meat can be displayed (either by offering to guests or via pictures posted on social networks) and used as a sign of status and of doing well, it can lead to other more detrimental consequences for health. Yvonna put on a lot of weight after moving to Leeds, and she went through phases of trying to lose weight through dieting and then giving up on her diet and going back to eating a lot of fatty meat and sugary food. The state uses the media, schools or healthcare to propagate its food policy. Frequent consumption of fat or red meat is currently considered problematic by British policy makers, because it can lead to medical problems such as obesity and heart disease (NHS 2017). Food and its consumption is a site of tension between individual preference and habits and ideas, and health messages disseminated by the state and by medical science.

**Gender, budgeting and status goods**

Most of the money received in benefits as well as any additional earnings that
Michal or Pavel made went to the family budget, which was in Iveta’s hands. She was responsible for the budgeting of the household’s income and for making sure that bills were paid and that there was enough money left for food and other necessities. Iveta often complained that she had to ‘think about everything’ because otherwise bills would be left unpaid and the family would be burdened by debts. After Yvonna turned eighteen and started openly sharing a room with Michal, Yvonna and Michal became considered and presented as constituting their own household unit. They became a household within a household. They contributed a certain amount of Michal’s earnings towards the budget of the main household, which helped with payments towards items such as food, water and energy bills, and they were allowed to retain part of their income to spend as they pleased. Despite being presented as an independent household, which was expected to be self-sufficient (to a degree), when Michal did not have much work, Iveta tended to give Yvonna and Michal a small amount of money from the main household budget to spend on items that they wanted, in addition to feeding them and providing them with accommodation. Even though individual household members were able (after negotiating) to keep some money for their personal spending, food was bought jointly for the whole household. As well as being an expression of wider social and economic relationships, as I noted in Chapter Three, the process of shopping reveals the relations and power dynamics within the family. The family, used here to describe those who live within a household, is the site of day-to-day economic decisions, such as who decides how money is spent, what food is bought, who does the shopping. Exploring how these decisions are negotiated can help illustrate gender and age dynamics within a household. Miller (1998:19) describes shopping as reflecting love, which he refers to as a ‘practice of caring for others’ and which is in part expressed through feelings of obligation and responsibility.

As well as essential items, such as food and clothes, Roma desired and bought
items that were used to convey status, such as gold jewellery, cars or mobile phones. At the start of my fieldwork Pavel liked to wear large gold rings, but he stopped wearing them a few months into my fieldwork for two reasons, as he told me. The first reason was that he had been unemployed for over a year and thought that people would be wondering how he was able to afford to buy golden rings without having a job. The second reason was his conversion to Pentecostal Christianity. Excessive or overt focus on material wealth is discouraged among converts to the Life and Light church, to which Pavel and later Iveta belonged, as I discuss in Chapter Seven. Even though I write about my Roma acquaintances as if their economic situation was constant, it is important to point out that the amount of disposable income which the individual persons and families had tended to fluctuate. Sometimes, their benefits were suspended, or there was a delay with payment and people found themselves short of money, sometimes for a few days, other times for several weeks or months, as I discuss in Chapter Six. Even those who worked often did not have a fixed income, as their hours tended to change from week to week. In such situations, Roma had to find other strategies to make a living: often this was a combination of relying on support network of relatives or friends, support services like the GRT outreach team or social care, and sometimes doing cash-in-hand work.

In her study of working-class women in the West End of London before World War I, Ross argues that women’s skills were at least as important as the husband’s wage in determining how comfortably the family lived (1983). The women in Ross’s (1983) study relied on support networks so that they had other women to turn to in times of need. The woman’s ability to create and maintain these support relationships was an important part of her family’s well-being and of her reputation. Ross’s (1983) point is relevant when looking at the Roma families that I worked with. Both Roma women and men also created and maintained support relationships with other
Roma so that they would be able to rely on them in times of need. Women relied on such networks for help with food or childcare and men used these networks for support with things such as finding out about jobs (women used this resource as well), getting lifts or finding out which garage was sure to pass one's car for an MOT certificate. Information on where it was cheaper to shop or where to get some cash-in-hand work was passed between Roma migrants by word of mouth through networks of families, friends and acquaintances. For those Roma who had families in Leeds, their kin network formed a large part of such support relationships. After Iveta and Pavel converted to Pentecostal Christianity, they became part of a support network comprised of Roma Pentecostal converts, which is the focus of Chapter Seven. But initially, they had to rely on acquaintances like Marek and his wife Andrea, despite Iveta often describing Andrea as lazy because ‘they don’t get up until ten’ whereas Iveta herself ‘had already been to the shops and by ten, I am cooking’. Iveta and Pavel themselves often helped a Roma couple who lived on the same street by lending them money, even though Iveta always complained that the neighbour spent the money on alcohol.

In her paper discussing mutual support among neighbours in a poor urban neighbourhood in Santiago, Chile, Han (2014) describes how people there helped their neighbours with ‘concealed gifts’. These concealed gifts could include just seemingly incidentally mentioning that an employer was hiring to a neighbour who had lost his job, or a woman saying that she ‘had made too much food’ after noticing that her neighbour had not cooked lunch (Han 2014:81). Han (2014:85) states that these acts ‘bring into focus a lived mutual vulnerability informed by the forces of economic precariousness’. The precarious situation of the neighbour was not explicitly acknowledged, and the acts of mutual support constituted a recognition of a shared position of insecurity and precarity (Han 2014). The mutual support among Roma in Leeds in a similar way indicated recognition of sameness and of a similar
position of precarity.

While Iveta was responsible for budgeting the family’s money, what was bought was negotiated between the household members. Pavel wanted to buy a car and spent several months looking online at used cars for sale. Because he was not able to save up for a car from his unemployment benefits, he took out a Budgeting Loan from Leeds City Council.\textsuperscript{29} When he received the money, he bought an old Renault Clio which he had seen with a ‘For Sale’ sign on one of the streets in Harehills. When he received his loan, he rushed out to buy the car the same day. After purchasing it, several issues arose which he had not expected. He was not able to apply for Vehicle Tax and consequently he was not able to use the car for several weeks. The car had been involved in an accident and had been repaired, which had to be checked by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) before he was allowed to register the car, get Vehicle Tax for it (in addition to already costly vehicle insurance) and then use it. This process took a month and involved a number of unexpected expenses, like the extra cost for the DVLA check. These unexpected expenses ate into the family’s budget and Iveta was upset with Pavel. Additionally, Iveta did not like the look of the car because it was a small car. She had wanted Pavel to buy a different car, a bigger Ford Focus, which added to her annoyance.

When they were finally able to use their car and Pavel suggested that they could drive to visit their family in the Czech Republic, Iveta refused and said that she would not want to be seen by them in this car. Shortly after Pavel bought the car, he managed to find a job as a cleaner (which required his own transport), and after several months of working he bought a different, bigger car.

Cars are an important status symbol and my Roma interlocutors expressed a preference for bigger cars and specific brands, like a BMW, Mercedes or Audi. Even

\textsuperscript{29} Budgeting loans are interest-free loans for people who receive welfare benefits. They are meant to offer support with buying essential items, like furniture, clothes, white goods and similar. (DWP 2017).
though Iveta often complained about how much money the maintenance of the car cost, she herself said that she preferred bigger, more expensive cars with more status attached to them. I observed a similar situation in Petra’s and Milan’s household. Petra also often complained about how much money she ‘had to give Milan for the car’. As in Iveta’s household, Petra and Milan received social benefits as a family unit and Petra was responsible for food shopping and budgeting.

The relationship of each member to the running of the family budget and who decides what to buy illustrates the position of the different members of the household. In the social world of the Roma I worked with, women are associated with the home and the private sphere, whereas men are associated with activities outside of the home. Pavel, as a man, was expected to ensure that the family had an income, either through going out to work or through going to the Job Centre and claiming benefits. Iveta, as a woman, was primarily expected to use this income to care for the family. This pattern was repeated for the younger generation. Michal went to work and Yvonna was responsible for some cooking and for other housework. I observed similar patterns in other households. Women bought (or decided what was going to be bought) everyday items and were responsible for cooking and housework. Men (who also tended to go out more often) were primarily responsible for work, for providing an income, and made decisions about buying status items, like cars.

**Cleanliness and appearance**

My Roma informants placed a high value on hospitality and cleanliness - which they understood as including appearance and presentation – both in terms of looking

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30 Other scholars studying Roma or Gypsy groups found that among the people they studied, women were responsible for working and providing income (see Engebrigsten 2007, Okely 1983, Stewart 1997, Sutherland 1975).
clean, well-dressed and groomed, and of having a clean house. My informants were not concerned with cleanliness simply because of hygiene, but also (and more importantly) understandings of cleanliness were an expression of symbolic classification and a way of differentiating between Roma and gadže, or among Roma, as I explain below.

According to the expected standard of appearance among my informants, women usually had long hair, while men had short hair and were either clean-shaven or had trimmed facial hair. Being hospitable to their guests by offering food and drinks was an important part of social interactions between Roma. Iveta always told me ‘we have to look our best, you know. We are cikáni, people look at us differently.’ She went on to explain that because they were Roma, their appearance and behaviour was under more scrutiny than that of non-Roma. For example, Iveta was convinced that Veronika’s appearance was closely scrutinised by her teachers. On one occasion, three weeks before the end of the school year, Iveta told me that she had to go and buy a new school uniform for Veronika because she had ‘ruined her uniform’. I did not think that the uniform was ‘ruined’ even though it looked a bit worn out. Iveta thought that Veronika’s teachers would be concerned if Veronika did not wear clean clothes, or if any of her clothes had signs of being worn out. Iveta often expressed worries that if the school had concerns about Veronika’s appearance or attendance, they would contact social services or that it would somehow affect the family’s welfare benefits. These worries were based on Iveta’s belief that Roma were under closer scrutiny because they were Roma.

When I worked as an interpreter, I encountered several Roma families in Leeds who had had their children taken into care. The children were either placed into adoption or into long-term fostering, or the family was involved in child protection proceedings. Several social workers I spoke to said that the number of Roma children in care or in child protection proceedings was high and seemed
disproportionate to the number of Roma in Leeds. The reasons for the initial involvement of social services were varied, but often either neglect, using physical punishment such as spanking (which social care tended to define as abuse) or poor school attendance were listed. All Roma that I met were wary of attracting the attention of social services. This fear that social services would take Roma children into care was increased by several reports in the Slovak and Czech media about Roma children being removed from families by British social services and placed into care. Considering these factors, Iveta’s concern with ensuring that Veronika’s school attendance is ‘stoprocentní’ (one-hundred-percent in Czech) and with Veronika being clean and wearing clean clothes is understandable.

Even though Roma are concerned about not being seen as dirty by gadže, Roma themselves see gadže as dirty. Once, Iveta was visited at home by an occupational therapist because of her arthritis. Iveta recounted to me that the occupational therapist was ‘very nice’ and well-dressed but the ‘cuffs of her sleeves were dirty’. Iveta said that she had to laugh at the fact that the occupational therapist was well-dressed but that her ‘nice clothes’ were dirty. From encounters like these, Roma create stereotypes about the ‘English’, or gadže in general, and what they are like. Even though gadže are able to afford ‘nice things’, they are not able to keep them clean. Roma in Leeds place value on having a clean house. Iveta and other Roma women I knew hoovered daily, washed the dishes throughout the day and kept their living room and kitchen clutter-free. Okely (1983) found a similar situation among the Traveller-Gypsies that she studied. Her informants told her that the Gorgios (non-Gypsies) only look at the outside of the Gypsies’ caravans, which were untidy and often full of waste or scrap metal, and thought of the Gypsies as dirty. The Gypsies, however, placed importance on the cleanliness inside of their caravans, not on the outside and on the symbolic boundaries between the outside (associated with dirt) and inside (associated with cleanliness). Okely (1983:86) states that ‘for
Gypsies, polluting dirt can be visible, but it must be a clear distance from the clean’. She recalls how one of her informants said that for Gorgios, it is the opposite: the outside of their houses look nice and tidy, but inside they are not clean (Okely 1983:87).

The separation between the inside and the outside of the caravan, and the organisation of domestic and public space, is according to Okely (1983) an expression of the inner/outer body dichotomy that is important in the Gypsies’ body symbolism. The inner body has to be kept ritually clean and unpolluted. It is polluting for parts of the outer body to enter the inner body, for example discarded hair in food. Some contact with Gorgios could also cause pollution. For example eating food cooked by Gorgios would be polluting because food enters the inner body. Okely (1983) states that the Gypsies had a separate cup in their caravans, which was kept only in order to be offered to outsiders, and it was unusable by the Gypsy family. The cup would be seen as contaminated because it came into contact with the Gorgios’ inner body (through saliva) and thus symbolically polluting. While I did not observe such inner/outer body dichotomy among my informants, cleanliness and appearance were also important ways of symbolically differentiating between Roma and gadže, and of creating a social distance between those perceived as insiders and outsiders, as I discuss more below.

Iveta’s concern with having clean clothes and a spotless house was not only due to her worry about attracting the attention of social services. Cleanliness is important within the Roma social world. Roma used different standards of cleanliness and hospitality as ways of showing status and creating internal distinctions among themselves. In the spring during my fieldwork, Iveta and Pavel were planning to move house. They wanted a house with a garden so that they could sit outside in the summer. They were also unhappy with their landlord who failed to fix several things in their house, such as a window which had been cracked from before they
moved in. Petra and Milan were also looking to move at that time - they had already told their landlord and their house was advertised as being available to rent. One day, Iveta and Pavel told me that they went to view a house and the people who lived there knew me - they had been to Petra’s house. They did not like the house, because it was in disrepair. Iveta also found the house dirty. Iveta said that there were scribbles on the wall in the living room, a pile of unwashed dishes in the kitchen and that the bin in the kitchen was overflowing with rubbish. She told me that ‘after we’d been there, I told Pavel that I cannot understand how Markéta can go and sit there in that living room.’ Iveta’s comment was a judgment on both me and on Petra - the comment implied that Petra was not a ‘proper’ homemaker because she did not keep her house tidy. It also implied that I did not care about proper cleanliness because I did not mind visiting Petra, sitting in her house and drinking coffee with her. Lastly, Iveta’s comment was a way of creating a symbolic distinction between herself and Petra.

As I noted above, Roma are often portrayed in popular and official discourse as being dirty and unclean. Thus, both Michal’s concern with his appearance, discussed below, and Iveta’s concern with the appearance of her home were expressions of what they imagined as necessary in order to construct a certain identity and a certain self. I was reminded several times during fieldwork of my own lack of concern for my appearance. My informants continually bought new clothes and shoes, but I kept wearing the same pair of outdoor trainers for most of my fieldwork, and replaced them only after they got completely worn out and had holes. One day towards the end of my fieldwork, when I arrived in Iveta’s house I put my old handbag, which I used during the whole period of my fieldwork and had bought few years before, on the worktop in the kitchen. It was obvious that my handbag had been used for a long time and the handles were getting worn out. Michal, who was sitting at the table, looked at my handbag and commented ‘I wish I were like you,
Markéta, you don't care what others think [about you]'. Michal's comment, which was a criticism couched in a compliment, illustrates his concern with others and their evaluation of him from his appearance. Not caring about what others think could also indicate that I did not care about them; it could signify a lack of recognition of a social relationship between self and the other person. On the other hand, Michal's concern about what others think about his appearance, or Iveta’s concern with having a tidy and clean house, signified the importance that they gave their relationships with those others. A person’s appearance also reflects on others who belong to the same social group, it is an expression of collective values and ideas of cleanliness. Adhering to the expected standards of cleanliness according to the Roma understandings expresses appropriate care for others and caring about Roma values. It demonstrates that it is important for the person to be included within the Roma social world, it is therefore a way of making symbolic boundaries between Roma and gadže.

**Hospitality, boundaries, and shame**

On the days when Pavel had to go to the Job Centre, he used to complain loudly about having to 'sign on', often while pacing around the kitchen and gesturing with his arms. The rest of the family and I sat at the table and quietly listened to his monologue and complaints. Sometimes, Pavel's monologues were interrupted by him snapping at his children about trivial matters, such as being in the way (in his opinion). Once, when it was his 'signing on' day, he directed his comments at me: ‘I don't think that Markéta has any family of her own. She spends so much time at our place, it looks as if she has nothing else to do.’\(^{31}\) Iveta later told me that they had an

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\(^{31}\) On the other hand, when on one occasion I did not visit or contact this family for a week, I heard the opposite comments, such as why I don't have time to visit them and that maybe I do not want to visit them anymore.
argument after I left because of the way he talked to me, which she thought was rude. This incident happened in the early stages of my fieldwork and I did not know Iveta’s family well yet. Pavel is probably the most confrontational person in his family, and this was the first of the few occasions where I was the target of his comments. I always felt that because of my position as a gadži and because of my English with which I was a useful resource to the family, Iveta tried to keep me out of family conflicts, especially in the early stages of my fieldwork. However, the fact that I was a resource and ‘useful’ to have around, was only part of the reason why Iveta, and sometimes Yvonna, tried to keep the family ‘on their best behaviour’ in front of me. I was considered a guest and Iveta and Yvonna often said that ‘it is rude’ to argue or misbehave in front of guests. Towards the end of fieldwork I once jokingly ask Yvonna and Petr if they ‘are not ashamed to argue in front of a guest’ when I witnessed them arguing, and Yvonna replied: ‘You are more like a family member now.’ The fact that Pavel directed his comments at me on that occasion was a sign of his stress and frustration as well as of the fact that I was becoming a common presence in their home.

Pavel’s comment reflected my ambiguous position during fieldwork. Even though I had a family, as would be expected of a woman my age, I seemed to prioritise spending time with Iveta and Pavel doing something which they did not perceive as ‘work’, over spending time with my own family. In the Roma social world, one’s children and family are the central aspect of social life, and how a person cares for his or her family reflects whether he or she is considered a moral person or not. With his comment, Pavel questioned my ability to care for my family. Because I was not yet considered to be ‘like a family member’ (I was still in the position of a guest), Iveta thought that Pavel’s comment was rude because he had commented on my private life. Arguing is an expression of a certain degree of intimacy and familiarity, whereas treating people with respect is a form of marking social distance. Close kin
can and are expected to argue, but only close kin of a similar status can argue, for example siblings or husband and wife. I was told that children should not argue with their parents. Roma children were expected to show respect to their parents, for example by not arguing with them. I was often told by Roma that ‘English children’ talk back to their parents, which was understood by Roma as not respecting their parents and as proof that Angličani (the English) do not foster appropriate social relationships within their families. Arguing expresses the intimate and immediate relationships between close kin and is thus a private activity. When a guest is in the house, the public domain (such as the guest or someone who is not kin) enters the private domain, the home, which is usually only occupied by kin. The boundaries between the public and the private must be maintained by appropriate behaviour, like not behaving towards guests with the same degree of familiarity that a person would have towards her or his kin.

A violation (actual or perceived) or transgression of a moral norm or boundary in front of others can lead to shame and result in the status of the person, to whom shame is attached, decreases (Lebra 1983). Shame requires an audience – it is about the evaluation of self by others. The transgression or violation of a moral norm must be observed by others, but the person who is judged also has to be aware that he or she is being morally judged. The perceived violation thus has to be publicly exposed (Fajan 1983). Shame is therefore contextual and depends on which audience one is in front of. Fajan (1983) explores the concept of shame among the Baining in Papua New Guinea. She says that the Baining differentiate between the inferior, natural level of the world and the superior, socio-cultural level of the world and that shame functions to separate the natural from the socio-cultural (Fajan 1983). ‘Shame is a disorder of the margins’ (Fajan 1983:174) and the fact that Pavel directed his comments at me as if I was a family member constituted a transgression of the boundaries between kin and a guest. While Roma cannot avoid
interactions with gadže, these interactions are usually limited and formalised. Treating a gadži or a gadžo, or a guest, in the same way as one would treat a Roma or someone who is kin disrupts the symbolic differentiation between Roma and gadže, between those inside the social group and those outside of it.

Roma maintain strict boundaries between genders, as I noted above, and discussing matters related to female sexuality and reproduction in front of men (other than the woman’s husband in some situations) is considered shameful. Once, Michal described to Iveta and me how he saw their Roma neighbour breastfeeding her newborn child through the window because she had not drawn the curtain and he expressed his disgust at seeing this. Because breastfeeding is linked to female reproduction, it belongs to the private domain and should not be done in front of men other than the woman’s husband. In this case, Iveta described her neighbour’s behaviour as shameful. Other anthropologists have observed similar beliefs among the Roma and Gypsy groups that they studied. Okely (1983) notes how transgression of boundaries or moral expectations would lead to symbolic pollution. In a similar way, among the Roma in Stewart’s (1997) study, transgression of boundaries or moral rules is described as shameful. As I also described in the examples above, Roma have to adhere to specific Roma morality through daily practice in order to remain Roma and different from gadže.

**Conclusion**

This chapter discussed how Roma use central aspects of daily life, such as food, clothes and cleanliness, as a way of making and reaffirming their identity as Roma and to create boundaries between themselves and others. I considered these aspects of daily life as constituting care. Roma gain moral personhood within the Roma social world by appropriately conducting their relationships with others – both
Roma and non-Roma. Appropriate behaviour is an expression and recognition of sameness, of belonging and inclusion, on the one hand, and of a social distance, on the other hand. I described the expectations of appropriate behaviour through examining care and expectations of care among Roma. Whereas some Roma care appropriately for their families, for example through cooking every day, keeping their house clean and buying clothes for family members, my informants criticised other Roma for taking inadequate care of their families.

Gadže have different standards and expectations of cleanliness, which my informants saw as insufficient. I showed that Roma have to adhere to specific rules and obligations, and maintain symbolic boundaries, through daily practice in order to remain Roma and different from gadže. Because Roma understand retaining their Roma identity as one of the conditions necessary for living normálně, adherence to specific Roma morality, and being recognised as Roma within the Roma social world, is important in order to have a normal life. This chapter focused on the Roma social world and how Roma create and maintain or disrupt social ties, as well as a distinction between themselves and others as part of a ‘normal’ life. The next chapter looks at interactions that Roma have with non-Roma Czechs and Slovaks and it looks at the processes which contribute to the production and reproduction of the discourse of Roma as different and as ‘other’.
Chapter 5: Language, interpreting and knowledge production

Introduction

In May 2014, nine months into my fieldwork, Iveta was diagnosed with stage 2B cervical cancer. The process of getting this diagnosis took some time. Because Iveta does not speak English, I accompanied her to her appointments. Initially, the GP dismissed Iveta's concerns about ongoing vaginal bleeding which lasted several weeks, saying that because Iveta's period had been delayed by a month, it now took longer for the bleeding to stop. Iveta was told to come back once the bleeding stopped, and that the GP would perform an internal exam at this next appointment. When another three weeks passed and the bleeding did not stop, Pavel and I convinced Iveta to go and see the GP again. This time, the GP sent Iveta to have a cervical screening test\(^{32}\) with a nurse, which I attended with her. When the test showed cancerous cells in the lab, the lab called the nurse who had done Iveta's smear test at the GP surgery because they (rightly) guessed from Iveta's name and from the fact that it was her first smear test in the UK that Iveta was a migrant and did not speak English. As the nurse told me later, they wanted to 'make sure that she understood her diagnosis.' The nurse called Iveta to tell her the diagnosis and advise what to do next, but she was not able to communicate this information. Neither Iveta nor Pavel were confident enough with their English to discuss medical information. The nurse therefore asked Iveta for 'your friend who speaks English' and I called the nurse later that day, when I was in their house. It was an understandably anxious time for the whole family, who all crowded into the kitchen around me while I was speaking to the nurse on my phone. Yvonna, Pavel and Petr were all talking over one another, trying to guess from my expression if the news

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\(^{32}\) A cervical screening test (also known as the smear test) is performed by taking a sample from the cervix in order to detect abnormal cells on the cervix. Early detection and removal of abnormal cells can prevent cervical cancer (NHS 2015).
was ‘bad’ or not. As the nurse told me that ‘there were abnormal changes’ on Iveta’s cervix and that the lab ‘found cancerous cells’, I wondered how I was going to tell Iveta the news in front of her children. When I finished the phone call I found myself saying just that the lab found abnormal cells and that Iveta would need some further tests done. It was only later, when Iveta, Pavel and I sat in my car as I was dropping them off at home after a visit to the Pastor, that I told Iveta her diagnosis.

After Iveta’s diagnosis, I was used as a contact person by the oncology department as Iveta’s treatment was being arranged. This took about six weeks. Even though Iveta had undergone further tests, such as an MRI scan, and was waiting for treatment to start, she was getting anxious because she felt that all the tests were taking too long. Although both Pavel and I tried to reassure her that things were progressing, that she was already ‘in the system’, as Pavel said, and had undergone various tests to determine the type of cancer and which treatment would be best, Iveta often considered returning to the Czech Republic and undergoing treatment there, while the rest of the family stayed in Leeds. When I said that she would have to go through the same thing even if she returned to the Czech Republic, meaning that she would need to have the same tests done again and to undergo the same type of treatment, she replied: ‘But at least I would be able to understand them [medical staff] there.’

This experience raised several important questions for me and led me to reflect on the importance of language for our experience of the social world and interactions with others, and for the transmission and production of knowledge, through which our lived worlds and lived experience are created. It also made me reflect on my positioning in the field and how anthropologists impact the lives and the well-being of the people they study. From what she told me, I knew that Iveta’s inability to speak English increased her initial sense of helplessness when faced with a life-threatening condition. Iveta told me that she would not have gone back to the GP
and insisted on getting further tests done if I was not there to translate for her. The GP practice did not provide interpreters for patients. Instead, the receptionists asked patients to bring someone who speaks English with them to their appointments. Before I started fieldwork and got to know Iveta’s family, Michal attended appointments with other family members and translated for them. Both Iveta and Michal told me (separately) that they would not feel comfortable speaking about matters related to female reproductive organs in front of each other, because of gender boundaries and the shame connected to transgression of boundaries, which I discussed in Chapter Four. In the weeks following her diagnosis, Iveta and I had long conversations via online messenger most evenings. Iveta told me in several of our regular evening chats that she believed that if I had not befriended her family before this happened, she would have left making an appointment with a doctor until ‘it was too late’, meaning that she would not have gone to see a doctor until her symptoms worsened and that the cancer may have been untreatable by then.

My presence meant that Iveta had someone she could rely on being present when speaking to medical staff in the hospital, instead of worrying if an interpreter would turn up at her appointments and, if so, which one. A common complaint that I heard about some interpreters was that they ‘do not translate everything’ or ‘they give their own opinion instead of translating what the doctor said’ or that they are ‘arrogant’ as I discuss below (for a discussion of Slovak interpreters in Scotland see Grill 2012b). While the majority of Roma in Leeds do not have sufficient knowledge of English to be able to communicate with medical staff (or staff at other public services) without an interpreter, many speak some English and are therefore able to understand parts of the conversation between the medical professional and the interpreter. Many Roma know certain key words which are often repeated during their appointments (for example angina, pancreas, blood test – depending on the person’s particular medical issue) and through their partial knowledge of English can assess whether
the interpreter is translating correctly or not. This can lead to misunderstandings, if a key word is missed but the overall meaning is conveyed. However, I observed during fieldwork that Roma are indeed right and that some interpreters miss out important information or give their own opinion instead of, or in addition to, translating what the other parties said.

This chapter examines the role of language, how it shapes interactions between individuals and between social groups and contributes to the production of particular forms of knowledge, categories, and discourse. Language is not a static entity; rather it is a dynamic process and is constantly shaped and recreated through social interactions. Butler (1997:1-2) states that humans are in a sense ‘linguistic beings’ who are ‘formed in language’. Language and speech are ways of creating meaning, of constructing our inter-subjective experience, and ‘language is a crucial interface between individual psychology and the cultural construction of the world’ (Majid and Levinson 2011:9). After moving to Leeds, many Czech and Slovak Roma found themselves in an environment where they could not understand the conversations of the people around them when going about their daily life. The ability to speak English, or the absence of it, was one of the defining aspects of Roma interactions with various facets of the state, including healthcare. Because Roma interact with the state through non-Roma interpreters, the interpreters are in a position where they are able to shape these interactions, and how and what knowledge is transmitted in them. Looking at interactions between Roma and non-Roma Czech and Slovak interpreters, this chapter discusses knowledge production and representation.

I started with the example of Iveta’s cancer diagnosis because it shows how interactions that Roma have with state care are fraught with uncertainty, as I examine further in Chapter Six, not only because of practices inherent in state care (including health care) provision, but because many Roma cannot avoid interactions
with non-Roma Czechs and Slovaks when dealing with the British state. Non-Roma Czechs and Slovaks then contribute to Roma being discovered as ‘Roma’. The chapter has three parts. The first section outlines the provision of interpreting services in Leeds and describes factors that contribute to the slippage between Czech and Slovak languages in these services. The chapter then looks at specific interactions between Roma and non-Roma interpreters and describes how boundaries and differences are created and maintained in these interactions. The last section discusses the interconnectedness between language and knowledge production and considers how language contributes to the ongoing racialisation of Roma.

**Language and identity**

Many Roma speak Romanes as their first language, and often the language of the country where they live is their second language. There are variations – some of my informants spoke Czech or Slovak as their first language and Romanes as a second. Yet, even those Roma who speak Czech or Slovak as their first language, tend to use categories of thought formed by Romanes, because ‘language regiments our communication, and in so doing, regiments our thinking’ (Majid and Levinson 2011:9). The majority of Roma who had lived in Leeds for some time spoke or understood some English, and a few were fluent or near-fluent. Nonetheless, the majority of Roma adults ask for an interpreter when they have to deal with authorities or healthcare professionals, even if they speak English well enough to go about their daily lives, such as going shopping, dealing with their landlord or at work. In order to have a full grasp of what people in public services or medical professionals are saying, it is necessary not only to have some English-
speaking ability, but also familiarity with a relatively large and specific vocabulary and grammar are required, usually gained by formal education.

During my fieldwork, I was aware of one Czech Roma interpreter who worked for the NHS, but she did not have any qualification (like many of the non-Roma Czech and Slovak interpreters). As a result of the still-widespread practice in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia of placing Roma children into ‘practical’ or ‘special’ schools (Amnesty International 2010), which I noted in the Introduction, Roma are less likely to have learnt English in school than non-Roma Czechs, and are also less likely to have the skills necessary to be given a contract by an interpreting agency. As I noted above, a small number of Roma were successful in their asylum claim in the 1990s and have lived in the UK since then, and some moved to the UK shortly after the enlargement of the EU in 2004. Therefore a generation of young Roma, who came to Leeds (or another town in the UK and then moved to Leeds) as children, have grown up in the UK, completed their primary and secondary education there, and speak fluent English. Yet, often their class and their background are reflected in the way they speak and because they usually speak English only in some contexts, their English vocabulary can be limited to these contexts. Additionally, in order to become an interpreter, a person has to possess not only language skills, it is also necessary for them to be able to navigate the bureaucracy of interpreting agencies and their recruitment processes. Some Roma, like Petra, have jobs as assistants in schools or work for organisations and support services for Roma, where interpreting between Roma and English-speaking staff is part of their job.

The NHS and other public services usually provide interpreters for non-English speakers. Yet, services do not always manage to do so, as I heard from many Roma, from people working for various services, and as I witnessed during fieldwork. When this happens, appointments usually have to be rebooked unless the
Roma have someone with them who could interpret for them. Because interpreters are often present during interactions between Roma and services provided by the state, what I refer to as state care, the provision of interpreting services and the interpreters themselves contribute to the way Roma experience the British state and to how the state ‘comes into being’ (Dubois 2014) which will be discussed further in Chapter Six. Most of the interpreters that I know, including myself, came to the UK not with the intention of working as an interpreter, but for other reasons. Some of the women who worked as interpreters mentioned the flexibility of interpreting as one of the reasons for choosing to work as an interpreter. Others that I met combined interpreting with other part-time employment or saw it as a temporary job while studying, looking for a full time job that would fit their qualifications, or setting up their own business. During fieldwork, I had the opportunity to observe interpreters during their work because I often accompanied my informants to their various appointments.

There is no regulation of language interpreting provision or a standard required interpreting qualification in the UK. Instead, there is a variety of interpreting qualifications which range in the abilities needed in order to gain them and in the rigorousness of the different examinations. Many Czech and Slovak interpreters work without any language qualifications. The majority of interpreters work on a self-employed basis, and register with different interpreting agencies, but there are some who are employed directly by public services. At the time of my fieldwork, there were two main bodies that provided interpreters for local authority services and for the NHS. Interpreting and Translation Team (ITT) was part of Leeds City Council (LCC) and provided interpreters for services within LCC, such as social care, the housing office, outreach workers and some other services which are not part of LCC, such as the probation service. Interpreters who wanted to register with ITT had to have at least a basic interpreting qualification and experience. Language Link
provided interpreters for healthcare services, such as hospitals, midwives, health visitors\textsuperscript{33} - services that are part of the National Healthcare Service (NHS).\textsuperscript{34}

In addition to the main providers, there are a few large and many small private agencies in the language sector. If the main interpreting providers are not able to find an interpreter for a specific job, they pass the job onto one of the other companies who often use unqualified and sometimes inexperienced interpreters. There are hierarchies among the different interpreters – based on qualifications and whether they work for agencies or not. Roma are not aware of the structure and relationships between interpreters and the service or their recruitment and qualifications. This opening up of interpreting jobs to unqualified Czech and Slovak speakers and the lack of regulation of interpreters and interpreting qualifications is an aspect of how Roma are affected by the changing nature of the state and state provided services, as I examine further in Chapter Six.

The fact that the Czech Republic and Slovakia previously formed one country, and the similarity of the two languages, can lead to invisibility of the differences between the Czech and Slovak languages. Czech interpreters are often booked to interpret for Slovak clients and vice versa, Slovak interpreters are sent to interpret for Czech-speaking clients.\textsuperscript{35} Some Czech and Slovak interpreters are fluent in both Czech and Slovak, but not all. And despite the fact that the majority of Roma speak the official language of their country (Czech and Slovak in case of my informants), many speak \textit{Romanes} at home and have \textit{Romanes} as their first language. Therefore, some Roma may not be as proficient in Czech and Slovak as they are in \textit{Romanes}.

Nikola, one of the Czech interpreters whom I interviewed during fieldwork,

\textsuperscript{33} Health visiting is a service aimed at children aged 0-5 years. Health visitors are trained nurses with additional experience and qualifications in child health and public health. They check the child’s development and provide information about local services and about health related issues such as immunisation, healthy eating etc.

\textsuperscript{34} Language Link ceased to exist in 2016 when a private company called Pearl Linguistics was awarded a contract for the provision of translation and interpreting services for local health services. Pearl Linguistics declared bankruptcy in early 2017. After this the provision of language services for local NHS was provided by the ITT on a temporary basis.

\textsuperscript{35} At the time of my fieldwork there was no \textit{Romanes} interpreter available in Leeds (as far as I know there is still no \textit{Romanes} interpreter available in Leeds at the time of writing).
expressed her concern about service providers not being aware of the differences between Czech, Slovak and Romans. She said that on a number of occasions, she had gone to school to interpret for a Roma child and ‘when I got there, I found out that it’s a Slovak child. I tried to speak Slovak to them, but my Slovak simply isn’t fluent enough’. Nikola went on to reflect that ‘when I am explaining to the children, what they are doing in school, and they don’t understand the language I am speaking, then how are they going to grasp it?’ She concluded with saying, ‘When the school makes the effort to get an interpreter, they should really focus on the children and give them an interpreter who speaks the same language as they do.’

Nikola’s reflections on children not understanding a language which they do not speak at home points to the fact that sending a Czech or Slovak interpreter can be a problem, particularly for Roma children growing up in Leeds in households where Romans (not Czech or Slovak) is the primary language.

The way people speak and present information is shaped by their social class and education. For translation to be possible, boundaries have to be crossed, but these boundaries are not only linguistic, they may be boundaries between social or cultural groups within the speakers of the same language. If we take the inner workings of organisations and institutions such as the NHS or social care as a form of culture, then communication with people from within those organisations requires a form of cultural knowledge that may not be available to outsiders. When translating, the translator has to determine what relevant context is necessary in order to convey the meaning from one language to another (Asad 1986:151). This will depend on the differences between the languages, but also on the background of the speakers. Therefore, the translator, or interpreter in this case, should have enough knowledge not only of both languages, but also of different ways of thinking, to be able to convey meaning from one language (and thought) to another. However, as Nikola’s statements illustrate, non-Roma Czech or Slovak interpreters
may not have sufficient knowledge of the two different languages. Additionally, translation is never neutral and throughout history translators and interpreters have been located within hierarchical structures of the distribution of power (Cronin 2002:58). According to Asad (1986), different languages are unequal, and some languages, such as English, are part of cultural hegemony and thus translations from subaltern languages into the more powerful languages often undergo transformations of style and form in order to more closely approximate the more powerful language. He continues to state that ‘such transformations signal in the power (i.e. in the capacities) of the respective languages in relations to the dominant form of discourse’ (Asad 1986:158). In the interactions between services and Roma migrants, the style of communication is more likely to be shaped around the procedural needs of the services than of the Roma clients.

Performing difference and maintaining boundaries

Language is part of the production of knowledge and discourse, as I discuss below, but it also plays a significant role in day-to-day interactions between people during which issues such as group belonging are experienced and negotiated. In his comparative study of social categories and personal networks in three different Swiss neighbourhoods with differing experience of immigration, Wimmer (2004) states that experiences and outcomes of everyday group formations vary depending on local and situational context. Boundaries are shaped by both discourse which produces categories of thought, and practice which refers to how these categories of thought are implemented in people’s everyday interactions. During interactions with Roma, Czech and Slovak non-Roma use techniques of ‘othering’ towards Roma, such as not including themselves in the same category as Roma (Wemyss and Cassidy 2017). I observed this among Czech and Slovak interpreters during
fieldwork who tended to refer to Roma as ‘they’ and at times explained to social workers or other professionals that the clients were ‘Roma’ and not ‘Czechs’.

Grill (2012b:49) observed similar practices during his fieldwork among Slovak Roma in Glasgow, and argues that non-Roma Slovak interpreters engage in ‘translating Gypsy difference’. He states that Slovak interpreters possessed certain ‘kinds of knowledge and opinions’ about Roma that were embedded within a field of prejudices and which the interpreters brought with them as part of their ‘socio-cultural baggage’ where Roma were identified ‘as the most problematic ethnic minority in Central and Eastern Europe’ (Grill 2012b:49). Most interpreters that he observed engaged in a form of ‘cultural translation’ and explained what they understood to be ‘common sense knowledge’ about Slovak Roma (Grill 2012b:50). This was one of the strategies that non-Roma Slovaks used to create and maintain boundaries between themselves and Slovak Roma. Grill (2012b) observes that this boundary was maintained even outside of interpreting settings, such as in workplaces where both Roma and non-Roma worked, or at language classes, where some non-Roma Slovaks refused to attend the same classes as Roma.

One day, I accompanied Margita to her appointment at the renal outpatients unit in St. James’ hospital. She asked me to accompany her in case there was no interpreter or if a Polish interpreter turned up instead of a Slovak or a Czech one, which had happened in the past. The clinic was very busy and after we checked in and sat down in the crowded waiting room, Margita said, ‘There is an interpreter here already’, and pointed to a middle-aged woman sitting a few rows in front of us, chatting to an elderly English woman. Tatiana, the interpreter, noticed us and came over to introduce herself to Margita, ‘You are Margita, are you? I am here to interpret for you.’ She used the familiar form of you (tykání), which is normally used to address friends or family, instead of the formal vykání, which would be more appropriate in this situation. Admittedly, Tatiana was older than Margita or me,
probably in her late fifties, but in a professional or work environment one would normally use the formal *vy* not the familiar *ty* when speaking to adults, even if they are significantly younger. Margita did not comment on this, but using the familiar form *ty* can be seen as an insult. In the Czech Republic the familiar form *ty* is sometimes used by people in official positions to address Roma. Addressing someone with the familiar form *ty*, when they address you with the formal *vy*, is an expression of hierarchical relations and can belittle the person being addresses as *ty*. I am not sure if Tatiana realised that she was being rude, or if her using the familiar form was a result of her limited skills in Slovak. Tatiana's use of the familiar form *ty* could also be understood as an attempt to create a sense of familiarity.

I had met Tatiana when I worked as an interpreter. Tatiana had Czech parents who emigrated from socialist Czechoslovakia in the 1950s. She was born and grew up in the UK. She spoke Czech well enough for someone who had never lived in the Czech Republic, but she did not speak it as a native speaker would. She spoke Czech slightly awkwardly and on the few occasions when I met her on my own, she always spoke to me in English. Clearly, English was her first language. Margita speaks *Romanes* and Slovak, not Czech. It is common practice in Leeds to use Czech and Slovak interpreters interchangeably, as I noted above. I suspected that Tatiana was not comfortable with using the formal *vy* form, because she had never lived in the Czech Republic and had learned Czech from her parents, who would have used the familiar form when speaking to Tatiana. Tatiana has lived in the UK for a long time, she has adult children who had grown up here and her English is excellent. The medical professionals, and other service providers, have no way of assessing Tatiana's ability in Czech or Slovak. Of course, there are not many truly bilingual interpreters, for the majority of interpreters one language is the dominant

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36 I met several interpreters who had Czech or Slovak parents but who either never lived in (the former) Czechoslovakia, or had moved away with their parents as children and were not as proficient in Czech or Slovak as a native speaker would be. Tatiana's background as described here is based on amalgamation of backgrounds of more people, but all details are based in fact.
language, their mother tongue, in which the interpreter is more proficient. Yet, the interpreter should be able to convey the meaning of spoken communication into both languages. When the situation is one of inequality and unequal power distribution, like the situations Roma migrants tend to find themselves in during their interactions with the British state, the less powerful party may be powerless to challenge the interpreter or to voice their disagreement with the way meanings are interpreted.

Tatiana used a number of techniques of ‘bordering’ or ‘othering’ (Wemyss and Cassidy 2017) Margita, such as engaging in small talk with the nurses in English when Margita was being weighed without translating to her what was being said. This excluded Margita from that particular social interaction. There were three nurses in the room and as Tatiana engaged in small talk, she forgot (whether intentionally or not) to translate questions that one of the nurses asked Margita. Tatiana even talked to me and thus included me in the social interaction while still not translating anything for Margita. I found Tatiana’s behaviour embarrassing and ended up interpreting to Margita what the nurse said. Because Tatiana included me in her conversation (by the act of talking to me), I felt as if I was being pulled into the practice of excluding Margita from the social interaction.

When we were called to see the doctor, instead of the usual practice of waiting for the doctor to finish speaking, then interpreting what he said, letting Margita respond and then interpreting what Margita said, Tatiana interrupted the doctor, offered her own opinions and added and omitted some information to what the doctor said. She spoke very quietly most of the time and it was difficult to hear what she was saying. Tatiana added her own opinions in between translating what others said and it was sometimes confusing to recognise if what she was saying was a translation of what the doctor said or her own opinion. On our way from the hospital, Margita told me that Tatiana had interpreted for her before and ‘it was always like this’, so that
Margita left her appointments without having a clear idea of what the doctor had said. Throughout the appointment, Margita hardly spoke, while Tatiana spoke most of the time, even interrupting others. It is normal that interpreters speak the most, because they have to translate what the other parties are saying. However, the expected practice would be to wait for others to stop talking, and translate what others are saying rather than offer their personal opinion, as Tatiana had done.

Tatiana’s behaviour revealed to me the differences in social status between Margita and myself. Margita was unable to challenge Tatiana's behaviour because she was not able to express herself and complain. Translation is never neutral, it is socially situated and as such, it is embedded within the power relations between the actors. Because of the unequal relationships between the doctor, the interpreter, Margita and me, neither Margita nor I felt able to openly question Tatiana’s ability to perform her job. I was present at the appointment as Margita's friend, not as a person in an official position. There are unequal and hierarchical relationships between the doctor, the interpreter and the patient, and these inequalities are visible in the process of interpreting.

Roma themselves sometimes use language as a technique of ‘bordering’ in order to maintain the symbolic boundary between themselves and non-Roma Czechs. Roma are often considered as ‘not white’, both by non-Roma and by Roma themselves (see Grill 2017; Lemon 1995, 2000). Once, I was filling out a Tax Credits application form for a Roma couple. When I got to the last page which asked about ethnicity, the Roma couple did not know what to put down as their ethnicity. They just looked at me blankly while I tried to explain what the term ‘ethnicity’ means. The options on the form were: an undifferentiated white category, and Asian, Mixed and Afro-Caribbean categories each with sub-categories. None of these categories would describe Roma. When I suggested that they just tick the White box, my suggestion was met with incredulous laughter and an exclamation of: ‘You want us to say that
we are white?!' In retrospect, this is understandable - Roma identity and morality are
in part shaped by acting differently from the white gadže - acting differently from
gadže is what makes them Roma, as I noted in Chapter Four. This incident
happened very early in my fieldwork and by suggesting that they tick the White box,
I was trying to include the Roma couple in a shared identity as East Europeans and
to emphasise a common experience of being an East European migrant. The Roma
couple, on the other hand, focused on their difference from non-Roma East
European migrants.

In Britain, Roma experience racialisation on two levels - first as East European
migrants, and second as Roma. The British state has throughout history used policy
measures to control immigration and at times to identify and distinguish between
desirable and undesirable migrants (Fox et al 2012:682). This desirability or the lack
of it was sometimes clearly stated in immigration policy, while at other times it was
covertly coded (Fox et al 2012:683). With the enlargement of the EU in 2004,37
citizens of the new member countries were able to enter the UK and to work there
without restrictions that are imposed on citizens from countries from outside of the
EU. As Europeans, these A8 migrants are assumed to be white. However,
differentiations exist even within the shared category of ‘whiteness’ and some
migrants are seen as more ‘white’ than others. Even though citizens of the A8
countries were able to work in Britain, the restrictions put in place on their ability to
access benefits, such as the need to pass the Habitual Residence Test38, were
used as new ‘bordering processes’ and created different categories of EU migrants

37 In addition to the 2004 enlargement, in 2007 the so-called A2 countries, Bulgaria and Romania, joined the EU.
Following the larger than expected number of migrants from the A8 countries, Bulgarians and Romanians faced
tougher restrictions on work and access to benefits in the UK. For discussion of the use of the ‘Roma beggar’ or
‘Gypsy criminal’ in connection with the enlargement of the EU and on the slippage between Roma, Romanians and
East European migrants in British media (see Wemyss and Cassidy 2016, Yuval-Davis et al. 2016).

38 The Habitual Residence Test is used to determine entitlement to welfare benefits of people arriving from outside
of the UK. I discuss it further in Chapter Six.
Communication and understanding, even among people speaking the same language, is possible only by contextualisation. Through socialisation, we learn context that then enables us to understand what others mean when they speak (Asad 1986). Languages are not static linguistic systems; they are constantly changing and are embedded within the social relationships between the speakers (Clifford 1980). Even within a specific language, there will be differences in the usage of certain expressions and in the way of speaking, both in the language used and in the performative act of speaking. Among the factors that shape these differences are social class, education and individual dispositions. According to Baumant (1975:294) ‘speaking … as a cultural system’ varies ‘from speech community to speech community’. However, speaking the same language does not necessarily constitute membership of the same speech community. Bauman (1975:295) discusses the concept of framing in speech and argues that framing ‘is accomplished through the employment of culturally conventionalized metacommunications’. He argues that any communication contains a range of messages, both verbal and non-verbal, through which instructions on how to interpret what is being said are transmitted. However, when these instructions fall outside of the expected range - that is, when there is a large difference between the expected way of communication between the two parties - these messages can be misinterpreted, such as having different understandings of what behaviour counts as ‘being racist’.

There were different aspects of behaviour which Roma referred to when describing a particular interpreter as racist, patronising or arrogant. For example, Michal once complained about Tereza, a middle-class university-educated Czech interpreter who is married to a middle-class British man, saying that she was ‘racist’. When I asked him what she did to make him say that, he replied that ‘it’s just the way she talks to me’. I replied that I never had any problem with Tereza and that I never heard her
say anything overtly racist, and Michal responded ‘that’s because you’re white’. Michal did not mention any particular incident when Tereza would act in an overtly racist way or mention race at all. Rather it was her disposition, embodied and manifested through her way of speaking, which reflected her education and her middle-class status, which Michal experienced as a form of expression of her higher social status or perceived superiority, and which Michal formulated as ‘being racist’.

I know that Tereza is in general sympathetic towards Roma. She told me that she had heard stories from Roma in Leeds of the prejudice that they faced in the Czech Republic and she was critical of the school segregation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. I heard her say on several occasions that she thought some social workers in Leeds were prejudiced against Roma. Yet, Tereza was also critical of the Roma who did not know what she assumed to be common knowledge, like knowing the names of the different welfare benefits that they had applied for or were receiving. The British welfare benefit system is complex and can be difficult to navigate, as I describe in Chapter Six, and many Roma do not know exactly what benefits they are entitled to, or what the benefits which they receive are called. When I later asked Tereza whether she thought that Czech and Slovak interpreters behaved in a way that would be seen as racist by Roma, she said ‘we all have prejudices that we brought with ourselves’ but said that she was not racist. Tereza continued and said that Roma themselves ‘are racist’ and that Roma speak about, for example, Pakistani or black people in an offensive way. Michal and Tereza thus expressed different understandings of what it means to be racist. While Tereza understood being racist as overtly saying things that may be understood as offensive to a particular ethnicity or a race, Michal experienced being treated as inferior or backward as an expression of racism.

Even though non-Roma interpreters may share some ‘cultural intimacy’ (Herzfeld 1997) with their Roma clients, having grown up in the same country, in the majority
of cases there are differences in their social and economic situation, class and education, to name just a few. Because their work involves regular contact with Roma, some interpreters act as if they have important and truthful insights into Roma ‘culture’ and their situation (Grill 2012b). Grill (2017) states that Roma are often treated as a unified category in political and academic discourse, but that Roma themselves also create and reproduce racial distinctions. Racialisation works as a process through which multiple categories of difference, such as class, ethnicity, generation or position within fields of power, become essentialised, biologised and conflated into one category of race (Silverstein 2005:364). Race is constructed as natural and as residing in the individual body, but it is in fact a socially constructed category used as a marker of difference. Race is then experienced as real because people act on the basis of the ideas and beliefs that they hold about race (Silverstein 2005). Racialisation is used to create relationships of inferiority and superiority (Miles 1989). Roma do not have a written history and much that has been written about Roma has been ideologically driven or built on ideas of Roma as ‘biologically different’ based on their ethnic identity and culture (Willems 1997). Consequently, Roma have been portrayed in media, literature, policy, and in some research as inferior because of their supposedly nomadic lifestyle, even though many Roma are sedentary and have been for a number of generations (Yuval-Davis et al 2017).

Non-Roma Czechs and Slovaks engage in a form of transmission of knowledge about Roma which contributed to Roma being ‘discovered’ as a problematic minority in the UK (see also Grill 2012b, 2017). The transmission and production of knowledge are crucial for the way categories are produced and how differentiation between people works. It is important to look at the connections between different places, such as the former Czechoslovakia and the UK, and look how racisms are shaped in the two places: ‘racial conception and racist practice are relational’
Goldberg (2009:1273). Goldberg (2009) states that racist arrangements in any one place depend on racist practice in other places – without racist institutionalisation in other places, local expressions of racism would have lesser impact. When looking at processes that lead to the ‘othering’ of Roma, and to their continued exclusion, it is therefore necessary to look at practices and discourse formation in both the former Czechoslovakia and in the UK. Looking at connections between places, what Goldberg (2009) calls the relational method, enables us to see the historical processes that shape the contemporary local conditions of racialisation of Roma. The ongoing racialisation and ‘othering’ of Roma is linked to specific European projects of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011). By creating certain ‘others’, the sense of national identity is strengthened. Yuval-Davis et al (2017:5) argue that ‘[a]s a result of multiple national projects of belonging across Europe, which seek to exclude Roma we have seen the emergence of a frame that posits Roma as a people that are everywhere but belong nowhere’. This focus on difference serves to disrupt feelings of solidarity between social groups, thus contributing to an ongoing unequal distribution of the ‘social good’ in the form of limited access to resources and opportunities for Roma.

The production and transmission of knowledge

Research and written knowledge have historically been used to create Roma as ‘other’. In the last decade there has been a significant increase in the amount of research done on, about and sometimes with Roma. This includes academic research, research by governments and public sector bodies, and research by activists and NGOs. Much of this research focuses on the poverty, marginalisation, and discrimination that Roma experience, but some researchers are critical of the way Roma have been created as the ‘other’. There is also an increasing number of
Romani scholars who are critical of the production of knowledge about Roma by non-Roma.

European states place emphasis on the written text as a technology for the distribution of power, knowledge and information (Cronin 2002). Institutions may encourage, and have done throughout history, the translation of certain texts, such as the Bible or selected literary works, and discourage translations of other texts (Gentzler and Tymoczko 2002). In this way, written text, and by extension language, are part of the reproduction of official discourse. Written text and other forms of representations, such as maps, have led to the commonly-held belief that equated a state with a nation (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), and a nation with a specific culture and language. However, stateless groups such as the Roma do not fit within this worldview. Ryang (1997) reflects on the role of language in knowledge production and on the fact that she is half-Korean and half-Japanese, and studies Koreans in Japan but writes about them in English. According to Ryang (1997:36) ‘[t]he privileged use of a particular language involves privileging of concepts and categories historically and epistemologically defined by that language, thereby simultaneously subjugating concepts and categories defined in other languages’. She critiques Rutherford’s statement that ‘home is where we speak from’ (1990 in Ryang 1997:39) because many stateless or homeless people are not able to speak their language, or their language is not given an equal status with other languages (Ryang 1997).

Ryang’s (1997) point about stateless people not being able to speak their language is important in relation to Roma, who are not able to speak Romanes in official contexts. Even when Roma are provided with interpreters, they are often silenced by not being able to even speak their language or not having their language recognised as an official language. In December 2013, I attended on behalf of Advocacy Support a workshop on working with Roma through interpreters
organised by the Roma Support Group\textsuperscript{39} for public and third sector employees. There were around twenty participants and we sat at tables in groups of four or five. I sat at a table with another researcher, a Czech interpreter, and two social workers. The other attendees included police officers, advocacy workers, and social workers. During one exercise, we were asked if we knew any words in Romanes or words that had a Romani origin. When another participant said: ‘Dikh, more!’ (‘Look, man!’ in Romanes), the Czech interpreter at my table said that ‘Dikh, more! does not have any semantic meaning’, and that ‘it is just an interjection, an expression of surprise’ (in a similar way as, for example, saying ‘wow’). When she was corrected by several other participants, she admitted that she was not able to speak or understand Romanes and apologised for being wrong, but she continued to insist that Romanes was a language with a limited vocabulary and not able to express complex experiences and ideas. Romanes is not an official language in any state, instead it is a marginalised language and as the example above illustrates, it is sometimes portrayed as inferior or as a mark of backwardness. This linguistic marginalisation is another aspect of Roma exclusion: it is embedded within the processes which push Roma towards ‘a state of exception’.

Anthropology has not considered the role of interpreters and interpreting, even though anthropologists have historically used and relied on interpreters. Yet, there are similarities between ethnography and interpreting, as both try to convey meaning and what is meaningful to a particular group of people to another group. And both anthropology and interpreting have boundary crossing as their central practice. According to Cronin (2002:53), ‘interpreters … cross boundaries of gender, class, nationality and ethnicity’ depending on the context and the identity of interpreter. Montgomery (2000) describes translation and texts as processes through which individuals and collectivities can move knowledge across boundaries,

\textsuperscript{39}Roma Support Group is a Roma-led charity that works with East European Roma. It based in London.
it enables people to convey knowledge and meanings from one language to another. Anthropologists and interpreters also move knowledge and meaning across boundaries and contribute to the production of particular identities. Appadurai (1988:39) states that the category of a ‘native’, which has been produced through anthropological writings, has been used to portray and construct ‘natives’ as having a static culture, and as being ‘confined to and by the places to which they belong’. As reality and meanings are created through interactions between social actors, translators, interpreters (and ethnographers) have an influence over the kind of reality that emerges.

In his study of the late socialist period in Soviet Russia, Yurchak (2006) looks at the processes through which the dominant discourse of that period was produced by the language used by the Soviet state. Yurchak critiques the models of language which treat language as only stating pre-existing facts, and instead views language as constitutive. He states that discourse and knowledge are ‘processes that are never completely known in advance and that are actively produced and re-interpreted’ (Yurchak 2006: 18). Knowledge therefore does not precede language, it is created through language. Yurchak (2006) draws on Austin who developed a speech act theory and argues that language does not contain only utterances that state facts (for example ‘it is cold’) but also utterances that do something, what he calls ‘performative utterances’ or ‘performatives’ (Austin 1962 in Yurchak 2006:19). A performative utterance, which can be for example a judge pronouncing someone ‘Guilty’ or saying ‘I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth’, changes social reality instead of just describing it (Yurchak 2006:19). Austin (1962) however states that speech acts which are intended as stating facts can have unintended effects and produce unintended meanings. Yurchak (2006:22) draws on Austin’s work and discusses the ‘performative and constative “dimensions” of speech and discourse’.
All speech acts are therefore both constative and performative, but to different degrees (Austin 1962 in Yurchak 2006:21).

For example, when I told Iveta that she had cancer, I was stating a fact but the telling of this fact engendered a change in Iveta's reality and her lived experience – it changed Iveta into a ‘cancer patient’. The constative dimension of that statement was the factual diagnosis and the performative dimension was the impact of that statement on Iveta’s life and her sense of self. Speech and language shape people’s identities. In a similar way, the practice of describing Roma as ‘backward’, as ‘nomads’ or as ‘originating from India’ by people in positions of authority (such as researchers, historians, policy makers, or interpreters) produces an effect - it is performative in Austin’s (1962) terms. Interactions between Roma and non-Roma who are in position of authority contribute to the construction of Roma as permanent outsiders who are ‘not quite European’ or ‘not quite modern’.

According to Cronin (2002), human languages have been mostly oral throughout history and the number of languages which have produced written literature is just over one hundred – a very small number when we consider the thousands of languages that have existed. In his book *The art of not being governed*, Scott (2009) proposes that some groups may have a preference for non-literacy because oral history provides a degree of fluidity and political plasticity (discussed in Michaud 2017). Oral histories survive through the re-telling of past events and each re-telling reinterprets past events and ‘reflects current interest, current power relations, and current views of neighbouring societies and kin groups’ (Scott 2009:230-21). This fluidity contrasts with the way past events and histories are fixed in written texts.

*Romanes* is one of the languages that has been oral for most of its history, although in recent decades, there has been literature published in *Romanes*. Oral cultures (and by extension illiterate persons) have often been assumed by 'external and
literate persons to be naïve, or even confused and dishonest’ (Cronin 2002:48). As I discuss in Chapter Two, Roma in Central Europe have been targeted by the state either through exclusionary or assimilative policies from at least the 17th century (Ruzicka 2016). Such state policies operated with specific categories. In the absence of Roma history written by Roma, non-Roma produced written accounts of Roma where Roma tend to be portrayed in essentialising terms as either untrustworthy, beggars or thieves, or romanticised as free or as musicians, and Roma culture has been portrayed as timeless and unchanging and thus located in the past (see for example Lemon 2000, Trumpener 1992). Whereas fluidity and non-literacy may be advantageous as a way to evade some forms of state control (Scott 2009), in other contexts they produce disadvantages, because domination and hierarchies are created and supported by particular forms of knowledge, which are produced through written accounts and histories.

Historiography and historical knowledge shape current hierarchies and power relations between peoples, locations, languages and interpretations of events. Chakraborty (2000) states that even critiques of colonialism are posited within a European intellectual tradition and treat European history as a form of ‘master narrative’. Other histories and intellectual traditions are placed in the past and treated as variations on this master narrative. By locating some cultures and schools of thought in the past, these are portrayed as not modern or not civilized (Chakraborty 2000). Despite Roma being European, the history of Roma has been written by non-Roma and, like other subaltern groups, Roma have been portrayed by scholars as an uncivilised, ‘static’ group that is stuck in the past and needs help to become more civilised and modern. In his study of a Holocaust museum in Poland, Vermeersch (2008) states that the Romani section of the exhibition uses dominant stereotypes of Roma culture, such as horse-drawn wagons and traditional clothes. He states that these dominant stereotypes ‘place the Roma in an ahistorical
and placeless past and present’ and thus portray Roma as having a static culture (Vermeersch 2008:366). This creates the impression of Roma as being located outside of and disconnected from the dynamic processes through which social life is shaped. Additionally, throughout history studies which portrayed Roma as a group with a static and ‘exotic’ culture ‘provided a kind of smokescreen for the real work of identification that has been carried out by police forces and state officials who … have put so much effort into determining who is and who is not “a Gypsy” ‘(Stewart 2013:423).

Knowledge production is therefore always political, and scholars have contributed to the formation of a particular knowledge about Roma and to dissemination of such knowledge by the ‘state apparatus’. Even though I critique the notion that Roma identity is based on a pre-existing and static ethnicity, and instead I argue that ethnicity and the perception of Roma as an ethnic group are shaped by dynamic processes, both from within and from outside of Roma collectivities, throughout my thesis I am forced to discuss ‘Roma’ as a group of people because I need to define the subjects of my research. My research is located within this discourse on Roma. Because this is the way Roma are constituted in the European imagination, it is impossible to write about them outside of this discourse. I am not able to talk about my informants as ‘Czech migrants’ because their positioning in Leeds differs from non-Roma Czech migrants, as I discuss throughout this thesis. Additionally, distinguishing themselves from gadže was important to my informants despite seeing themselves as being both Czech and Roma.

**Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the production of knowledge about Roma – there are various processes that contribute to the production of a particular knowledge about
Roma. Through the interactions between Roma, interpreters and services, non-Roma interpreters contribute to the ongoing racialisation and ‘othering’ of Roma. Language is an important aspect of how we experience the world, how we interact with one another and how categories of thought are created. I started the chapter with an ethnographic example of Iveta’s cancer diagnosis because the event of Iveta’s cancer diagnosis revealed to me how important language is to the production of self-knowledge and to our constructions of belonging and being ‘at home’. Language also has the potential to create a sense of being excluded and vulnerable, and is thus an important part of the production of categories and boundaries. Their insufficient knowledge of English means that Roma migrants need to interact with non-Roma Czechs and Slovaks. These interactions then lead to particular forms of knowledge and racialisations migrating from one location to another (Grill 2017). Additionally, speaking *Romanes* is sometimes seen as backward, as I have shown with the example of the Czech interpreter who claimed to have knowledge about the Romani language without actually speaking it and reducing it to a language that complexity in comparison with other languages. Roma are marginalised or excluded from some interactions just by the fact of speaking a different language. Language is thus one of the ways in which Roma are constructed as ‘not belonging’: it contributes to some forms of Roma exclusion. This is both because *Romanes* is not recognised as being equal to other languages, instead it tends to be treated as an inferior language, and because language is used to construct categories through which Roma are produced as inferior, as ‘backward’ or as socially problematic. Roma interactions with the British state operate within these categories. The next chapter focuses on the interface between Roma and the British state through the prism of care provision.
Chapter 6: The complexities of navigating state ‘care’

Introduction

During my fieldwork, I often heard my Roma interlocutors exclaim that the state (or gadže in general) ‘does not care about us’. This absence of care was noted in two ways. First was in the expression that stát se nestará which means that the state ‘does not provide care’ (in Czech). The second was by either exclaiming that oni to nechtějí vědět (‘they do not want to know about it’ in Czech) or saying that oni se nezajímají (‘they do not care’ in Czech). These statements express the interconnectedness of the two aspects of care – caring for and caring about (Alber and Drotbohm 2015) - which I noted in Chapter Four. This exclamation was usually preceded by some frustrating encounter with one of the various aspects of the state apparatus. The frustrating encounter could be a phone call to a benefit helpline and being told that there was no update on the person’s benefit application despite weeks of waiting, or being told that the person would have to wait several weeks or months for a medical appointment, or that there was no interpreter available for them, or being told that one’s benefit application was refused, among other things.

Yet, I also heard the phrase that ‘they do not care’ following interactions that Roma had with the various support or advocacy services aimed at helping Roma in Leeds and at improving their well-being. My informants sometimes complained that people working in such services were only concerned with getting their paperwork done or ‘ticking the boxes’. As several Roma explained to me, the state ‘does not care’ because it does not create conditions which would help Roma get jobs and have a ‘normal life’.

The ‘state apparatus’ is not a single or a homogenous entity; it is rather an assemblage of different actors with varied and sometimes conflicting interests, or what Bourdieu (1994) describes as the bureaucratic field. The bureaucratic field
encompasses different aspects of the state that mutually support and reinforce each other. Bourdieu (1994) further describes ‘the left and the right hand’ of the state, where the left hand (the public sector including welfare) is retreating whereas the right hand (the financial sector and the interconnection between the state and corporations) is expanding. The ‘left hand of the state’ includes practices and services which I include here under the term state care. Yet, even state care and its provision in the neoliberal British state (in the form of welfare services such as unemployment benefits) is being reformed through outsourcing to private companies and corporations. Functions formerly performed by the state apparatus, such as dealing with sections of the unemployed population or medical assessments of people who apply for disability benefits, are increasingly being shifted onto private companies, and the formal state apparatus seems to be rolling back.

The processes inherent in this shift to the neoliberal state reshaped the connection between the state and the market and led to the emergence of new forms of regulatory powers accompanied by increased bureaucratisation. Ferguson (2012:172) describes neoliberalism as a ‘field of specific government techniques’ which implement mechanisms developed within the market to work within the state apparatus. Neoliberalism is often used to refer to a set of public policies that have been used to enrich those with capital while at the same time resulting in increasing inequality, loss of public services and the deterioration of the quality of life of the poorer sections of population (Harvey 2005). Through the selective provision or withdrawal of care, other actors, including NGOs, private corporations, international organisations or supra-national bodies come to govern instead of the state in sectors from which the state has withdrawn, in what Ferguson and Gupta (2002) call ‘transnational governmentality’. While the state seems to ‘roll-back’, to become less intrusive through privatisation and deregulations for those with economic and
cultural capital, it is becoming increasingly ‘paternalist and intrusive’ for those lacking this capital (Wacquant 2012:74). This duality of the state seemingly ‘rolling-back’ for some while becoming more intrusive for others is also present in its attempts to control or restrict some forms of movement across borders (Fox et al 2017, Nagy 2018). For example, while border crossings are relatively unproblematic and unrestricted for the purposes of tourism, the British state attempts to put in place measures to restrict the flow of unskilled or low-skilled EEA migrants, as I discuss below.

This chapter focuses on two types of state care which Roma in Leeds encounter. The first type of state care focuses on the conditions which shape the economic situation and strategies of Roma migrants. This type of state care includes social welfare and the processes and actors that shape Roma migrants’ experiences with the benefit system and their ability to claim welfare benefits or access work. The second type of state or political care is extended through support services (like the Gypsy Roma and Travellers Achievement Service, which is part of Leeds City Council as I noted in Introduction) and what are commonly referred to as third sector organisations. Third sector organisations are quasi-state services such as NGOs, charities, and advocacy and community organisations, which exist between the public and the private sector. The third sector services discussed in this chapter provide various forms of support, or care, to Roma. This care can include filling in benefit forms, chasing up benefit applications, assisting with job applications or helping with easing the effects of financial destitution such as through arranging food parcels. An important aspect of this care, and the one on which I focus in this chapter, is based around the notion of ethnic difference and the need for Roma integration and inclusion.

This form of care from both public services and third sector organisations is often based either on the narrative of the victimisation of Roma, or on an essentialised
view of Roma culture, which I described above. It is supported by the discourse of Roma as socially problematic and as needing state support in order to ‘integrate’, which is produced through the processes discussed in Chapter Five. There is no sharp distinction between the two types of state care described here because they support and mutually reinforce one another. As the state withdraws or makes conditional some type of care, like the provision of welfare benefits, it then extends another type of care through support services, which contributes to reproducing the narrative of victimisation of Roma, as I describe below.

Jansen (2015) discusses the understandings of normal lives among residents of an apartment block in Sarajevo, discussing how the state there fails to create conditions which would facilitate the unfolding of such ‘normal lives.’ Here, I argue that the British state creates conditions which hinder the unfolding of normal lives for Roma by withdrawing or restricting their access to state care. This withdrawal of, restrictions on and conditionality of state care then push Roma towards a position of ‘exceptionality’ because their rights as equal citizens are questioned through the state’s bureaucratic processes. In Chapter Five I showed how the discourse of Roma as different, as ‘inferior’ or ‘backward’, becomes produced and reproduced. This chapter focuses on the bureaucratic practices that operate within this discourse, and contribute to the exclusion of Roma from some forms of state care, and to the production of other types of state care. These dynamic processes of discourse (re)production and bureaucratic processes then create conditions which shape the ability, or its absence, of Roma to have a normal life, as they understand it.

This chapter is comprised of two parts. The first part focuses on welfare benefits and I discuss how the ability of Roma migrants to claim benefits and their ability to stay in the UK is linked to work and to being seen as a worker or a jobseeker. After outlining the regulations related to EEA migrants’ entitlement to social benefits, I
look at ethnographic examples of Roma migrants’ engagement with the welfare system and with work. The second part of the chapter discusses support services and third sector organisations which are aimed at improving the well-being of Roma, and looks at the limitations of such services, organisations and projects. The chapter argues that in their interactions with state bureaucracy in Leeds, Roma are marked by their class, their status as migrants from the expanded EU and increasingly by their ethnicity. In order to access different forms of state care, Roma have to present themselves according to the expectations of those who control access to these different forms of care. The welfare system is becoming increasingly exclusionary and restricting access to welfare for EEA migrants can be used as a form of policing and of immigration control (Nagy 2018). Support services and third sector organisations, often funded by the state (through, for example, the local authority) or by supra-state bodies (like the EU) attempt to remedy the effects of the exclusionary measures used by individual states through the reduction in or increased conditionality of welfare provision. The narrative of victimisation and the focus on ethnic emancipation by support services and third sector organisations then locates social problems in Roma ethnicity thus rendering wider social, political and economic structures that lead to the ongoing political exclusion and economic marginalisation of Roma invisible.

Part One: Being a ‘worker’ and navigating state bureaucracy

Precarious work and benefits in Leeds

There are high unemployment rates among Roma in the Czech Republic and Roma who work often do so in manual, low paid jobs, as I described in Chapter Two. This means that many Roma who come to the UK have very little savings. Being considered unskilled workers, the jobs that Roma look for in the UK tend to be
manual jobs that do not require qualifications. The different types of work that individual Roma migrants did, like cash-in-hand work, agency work, or jobs with a long-term contract, in turn shaped their relationship and interactions with the British state. Work is both a way of accessing money and a way of gaining the legal ability to settle in Britain. It is entangled in the state's attempts to police immigration and therefore having work or being considered a 'worker' is not only important for financial reasons, but also for securing one’s place in the UK in the context of the changing situation of EEA migrants, as I discuss below.

I conducted my fieldwork during the period when 'austerity' was being implemented by the Coalition government of the Conservative and the Liberal Democratic parties. The stated aim of the austerity measures implemented first by the Coalition and then by the subsequent Conservative governments was to reduce spending on welfare benefits in order to reduce the deficit in the state’s budget. At the time when the actual benefits paid to claimants were being cut, many of the functions of the benefit system were being shifted onto private contractors. In addition to Job Centres, the Work Programme was created to deal with the 'long-term unemployed'. Anyone who has been unemployed for a period of twelve months is now considered 'long-term unemployed' and required to attend a Work Programme centre. This shift created new office and call centre jobs. Dealing with the unemployed and with benefit claimants has become an integral part of the UK service economy; it is an aspect of governmentality (Foucault 1991). With the privatisation of state functions, such as the processing and delivery of benefit claims, private companies and corporations now have access to and have created new forms of regulatory powers, for example through making decisions about who is and who is not entitled to receive welfare.

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40 Even though some Roma migrants have vocational qualifications, I have not encountered a case where these qualifications were recognised by British employers.

41 The Coalition government was formed by the Conservative party and the Liberal Democratic party after the 2010 general elections. It was in power until the 2015 General Election when the Conservative Party achieved a parliamentary majority.
The processes which create and shape unemployment and which determine the positioning of a specific social category of workers in the labour market are also embedded within transnational social fields (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). These transnational social fields shape relationships between localities, states, supranational structures and social groups and individuals within those groups. According to Trouillot (2001:133) '[t]he respatialization of various state functions and effects is taking place in a context already marked by the differential respatialization of markets’. In the case of Roma migrants, the processes that shape their access, or lack of it, to the labour market must be examined across national borders. The relationship of the Czech state to its Roma citizens, and the economic and political relationship between different parts of Europe are elements in the structures and processes that lead to the high unemployment rates and exclusion from the formal economy among Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, as I note above. These past experiences, together with the current economic situation in Britain nationally, as well as locally in Leeds, contribute to the economic strategies of Roma migrants and the type of jobs that Roma migrants perform.

**Benefit entitlement of Central and Eastern European migrants from 2004-2014**

The British benefit system is complex and has undergone significant and frequent changes since the enlargement of the EU, under the Coalition government (from 2010 to 2015) and under the Conservative government elected in 2015. The situation described in this chapter therefore depicts a particular point in time and describes the benefit regulations in 2013 and early 2014. The economic strategies of Roma migrants change in response to changes in both the benefit system and job opportunities. There are various welfare benefits available in the UK for British and EU citizens who are unemployed, on a low income or who have a disability. I describe the main benefits that Roma migrants apply for below. I outline the
regulations around benefit entitlement in general, and the specific regulations relevant for EU migrants.

In general, unemployed people in the UK can either claim Jobseeker’s Allowance or Income Support. A person can claim Jobseeker’s Allowance if he or she is looking for work and is able to work, meaning that if someone is unwell, they may be told to claim a different benefit as I describe below. Income Support can be claimed by single parents or by people who are employed but their income is lower than the amount they would receive from Income Support. In this case, Income Support is used to top up their income to the amount considered by the state as the minimum income necessary to live on. In addition to this, people are able to claim Housing Benefit and at the time of my fieldwork were able to claim Council Tax Benefit (this benefit no longer exists), which Roma referred to as peníze za popelnice (‘money for bins’ in Czech). As implied by the name, these benefits help with the costs of rent and of council tax.

Housing Benefit is means tested (as was Council Tax Benefit), meaning that the claimant has to provide proof of all their income – both from employment and from benefits – together with details of all the people living in their household. This information is then used to calculate the amount of Housing Benefit people are entitled to. Housing Benefit can either cover the whole cost of rent or only a part of it, depending on the claimant’s income. Prior to changes introduced by the Coalition government in April 2013 unemployed people were able to have the full cost of rent and council tax covered. Council Tax benefit has since been scrapped and replaced by Council Tax Reduction. While Housing Benefit can still cover the full cost of rent, council tax costs are not covered in full by the Council Tax Reduction. In addition to

42 This amount varies, depending on the age of the claimant and whether they have any children, if they are single or a couple. For instance, in 2013 the weekly rate of Income Support was £56.80 for 16-24-year olds and £71.70 for those aged 25 years and above (DWP 2013a).
these benefits, people with children are able to claim Child Benefit\textsuperscript{43} (which Roma referred to as \textit{malý peníze} – small money in Czech) and Child Tax Credit (\textit{velký peníze} – big money in Czech). Child Tax Credit is a means tested benefit and can be paid jointly with Working Tax Credit, if the claimant is employed. There are additional benefits for people with a disability or people who are temporarily unable to work because of illness.

After the accession of the A8 countries to the European Union in 2004, the former and wealthier\textsuperscript{44} member states were able to put in place temporary measures restricting the A8 nationals’ ability to work or access welfare benefits on their territory during a transition period of up to seven years, as I noted above. The UK, unlike most other EU member states, did not put in place any restrictions on A8 nationals’ ability to work on its territory, but used measures to limit their ability to claim welfare benefits. In May 2004, the UK government put in place the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). Under the WRS scheme, migrants from the A8 countries were able to take up employment in the UK, but they had to register with the WRS and pay a registration fee. The fee was £50 in 2004, and subsequently increased every year in line with inflation. After registering with the WRS, migrants gained the status of a worker and were able to claim some benefits, such as the Housing Benefit and Tax Credits. After 12 months of continuous and registered employment, A8 nationals became entitled to claim social security benefits, such as Jobseeker’s Allowance and Income Support. Therefore, entitlement to welfare benefits was dependent upon being considered and registered as a worker. Even in the case of losing their employment, A8 migrants were able to retain their status of worker and entitlement to benefits, providing they could prove a prior continuous registered employment for 12 months and they had a WRS card. After the seven-

\textsuperscript{43} Child Benefit was previously paid to all families with children under 16, or under 18 if they were in full time education. From January 2013, families with at least one parent earning more than £50,000 per year are not entitled to full or any Child Benefit (HMRC 2016)

\textsuperscript{44} Considered wealthier in terms of per capita income.
year transition period, the WRS ended in April 2011. Since the end of the transition period, migrants from A8 countries have the same rights and are subject to the same regulations as migrants from other countries within the EEA, with the exception of Romania and Bulgaria who joined the EU in 2007.

When the WRS ended, A8 nationals no longer needed to register in order to be considered a worker. From this time, they were able to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance and Housing Benefit after their arrival, without the necessity of having worked first. After the end of the WRS, new measures to assess EEA migrants’ entitlement to benefits were put in place. In order to qualify for Jobseeker’s Allowance, or other welfare benefits, EEA nationals have to pass the Habitual Residence Test (HRT). 45

The HRT has two parts. First, the person has to prove that they have the ‘right to reside’. This means that they have the legal right to live in the UK. EEA migrants have the right of free movement across the countries of the EU, and the ‘right to reside’ does not affect their ability to travel between EU countries. Rather, the ‘right to reside’ is linked to the person being considered a resident of the UK, and it affects their ability to have access to public funds. In the second part of the HRT, the person has to prove that they are habitually resident in the ‘common travel area’. The ‘common travel area’ consists of the UK, the Channel Islands, Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland. 46 Being ‘habitually resident’ means that you ‘intend to settle in the UK and make it your home’ (CAB 2017). To be considered as having the ‘right to reside’, an EEA national has to be either actively looking for work, working, studying or be self-sufficient (i.e. not dependent on public funds). The ‘right to reside’ part of the HRT also applies to Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

Despite the fact that EEA nationals are now able to claim out of work benefits even without having previously worked in the UK, as long as they are looking for work,

45 The Habitual Residence Test is also applied to British nationals returning to the UK after living abroad.
46 Different regulations apply to Irish citizens living in the UK than to the citizens of other EEA countries.
being considered a ‘worker’ is still a requirement. EEA nationals are able to claim the status of worker even when not working, as long as they are looking for work. However, since the end of the Worker Registration Scheme, EEA nationals are no longer able to retain their status of a worker if they are not in employment or looking for work. This change affected single parents without childcare and people unable to work because of an illness, as I describe below. I have seen cases where Roma were able to retain their worker status even after the end of the WRS in 2011, if they could prove that they had worked continuously for 12 months under the WRS. However, women who had not worked because they had children and who had separated from the fathers of their children who had worker status, were in danger of not being considered as having the ‘right to reside’ and therefore losing their benefits.\footnote{Family members can gain a ‘derivative right to reside’, for example if a husband works, his wife or partner gains the right to reside through him. Parents of a child that is ‘in education’ can also gain a ‘derivative right to reside’ but only if one of the child’s parents worked in the UK while the child was also in the country. This is a complicated area of the benefit law and I do not have the space to discuss it in detail here.}

From 1\textsuperscript{st} January 2014, the UK government implemented further changes that affected EEA nationals’ entitlement to welfare benefits. EEA nationals are no longer able to claim benefits soon after their arrival, they must have lived in the UK for at least three months before they are entitled to Jobseeker’s Allowance. Additional changes mean that jobseekers from EEA countries are no longer entitled to Housing Benefit (DWP 2014a). From March 2014, EEA nationals have to earn a certain amount of income, called the Minimum Earnings Threshold (MET), in order to be considered workers and entitled to in-work benefits (such as Housing Benefit and Tax Credits).\footnote{The MET is based on the amount a person must earn in order to start making National Insurance contributions. This is equivalent to working 24 hours per week at minimum wage. In 2013-2014, the MET was £150. From April 2014, the amount was £153 per week, and from April 2015 to April 2016 it was £155 per week.} Earning less than the MET amount excludes people from claiming these benefits. From the summer of 2014, EEA migrants who had been claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance for six months may be asked to undergo a ‘Genuine Prospect of Work’ assessment. At this assessment, claimants have to prove that
they have a good prospect of finding employment or their Jobseeker’s Allowance might be stopped. A good prospect of finding work can be shown either by having a definitive offer of employment, or by having a change of circumstances such as having completed a vocational course or having learnt English since first applying for Jobseeker's Allowance (Krishna 2014).

The list of benefits, regulations and changes outlined above is not exhaustive. I have included only an outline of some benefits, regulations and their changes over time in order to illustrate just how complex the UK benefit system is. Successfully navigating the British benefit system requires work and resourcefulness because of the many clauses, or catches, built into it. Claims for different benefits are assessed by different parts of the benefit system; Roma may therefore have to deal with several sections of the bureaucracy at the same time and be asked to provide the same documents separately for each benefit claim. The fact that the majority of benefit queries are dealt with over the phone in English and forms processed remotely in processing centres adds to the complexity of navigating the system. My informants did not have clear knowledge or understanding of the various regulations related to their benefit claims. They find the benefit system confusing and their experience with it tends to be frustrating, as I describe in the next section where I look at ethnographic examples of Roma interactions with the benefit system. My informants perceived social benefits as a moral right, as part of the state care to which a person who is legally resident within the state, and as such has (or expects to have) equal rights as others, is entitled, as I describe below. I will argue that the ethnographic examples in the next section show that the complexity of the benefit system and the special regulations for A8 nationals serve to push Roma into a position of exceptionality through the frequent questioning and scrutiny of their entitlement to social benefits.
Falling out of work and falling out of the benefit system into work

Petra and her husband Milan arrived in Leeds in the spring of 2013. As I noted earlier, Milan worked twelve-hour shifts but had no guaranteed hours of work per week because he was on a zero-hours contract. Before leaving the Czech Republic, Petra informed the relevant authorities in the Czech Republic that the family was moving abroad and the Czech authorities stopped the family’s social security benefits. Petra brought with her to the UK letters from Czech social security offices confirming that the family's welfare and child benefit in the Czech Republic had been stopped. She told me that she hoped that having these letters would speed up the process of claiming benefits in the UK. Soon after their arrival in Leeds, Petra went to the Welcome Group to get help with applying for Child Benefit, the Tax Credits and Housing Benefit, and school places for two of their children. I first met Petra at the Welcome Group before I started fieldwork. During fieldwork, I met her at a Saint Nicholas party organised by Advocacy Support for Roma children. Petra needed help with her benefit applications which had still not been processed and I was looking for Roma willing to participate in my research. Petra invited me to her house and from then I visited her regularly.

Despite Milan's employment and the letters from Czech authorities, it took several months for the family to start receiving benefits. As Milan did not have guaranteed hours, the family sometimes found themselves short of money while they were waiting for their benefit applications to be processed. Their financial situation became even more precarious when Milan’s employer fell behind in paying his wages. In October 2013, Milan was lifting a heavy sack of potatoes at work and hurt his back. During my visits he often said that the pain he had in his back was sometimes shooting down into his leg. He found walking painful and walked with a limp. It later turned out that this was caused by a slipped disc which was pressing on a nerve and the spinal cord. As a result of this accident, Milan had to stop
working and decided to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance. However, when he came to the Job Centre to apply and the advisor saw his limp and obvious difficulties with walking, Milan was told that he could not apply for Jobseeker's Allowance as he was 'obviously not fit for work'. He was advised to apply for Employment Support Allowance (ESA), a benefit for those who are temporarily unable to work because of illness or a medical condition. However, his application was refused because he was not able to retain his worker status if he was not looking for work or working, and he was therefore not considered 'habitually resident for benefit purposes'.

Following the refusal of ESA, Petra went to the Welcome Group drop-in for help from the GRT outreach team. The GRT team helped Petra and Milan write to the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and ask them to reconsider the decision to refuse his application for ESA. When they received a reply, the decision was the same. Petra told me that she could not understand why Milan was refused ESA even though a Job Centre advisor initially advised him to claim it. With the help of the GRT team, Petra protested against this decision again, but because of the regulations about benefit entitlement, the end result was the same. The couple was told that Milan was not entitled to ESA because he was only entitled to benefits as a worker or as a jobseeker. And he could not apply for Jobseeker’s Allowance because of his health problems. The process of applying for ESA and appealing against the decision took a couple of months. While they were waiting for the application and the appeal to be dealt with, the family lived on their weekly Child Tax Credits and monthly Child Benefit payments. They also sometimes received food parcels from the GRT outreach team or borrowed money from friends or from me.

It was likely that the Job Centre advisor was not aware of the different regulations that applied to EEA nationals when he told Milan to claim ESA. In their study of how people try to navigate the British welfare system with the help of legal service providers in London, Forbes and James (2014:74) argue that ‘the state at the local
level provides its services in an uncoordinated manner’ and those who work in the lower levels of state bureaucracy are becoming increasingly inexpert. During fieldwork, I witnessed several similar situations to that of Milan where people were given incorrect information and refused benefits (or lost their benefits in some cases) as a result. Several cases involved women who were single parents or who had separated from their partners and were advised by the Job Centre that they could claim Income Support because they had young children. Yet, similar to Milan, these women had their applications for Income Support turned down because they did not pass the Habitual Residence Test due to not being a ‘worker’ or a ‘jobseeker’. In relation to welfare provision in England and Wales, Forbess and James (2014) observe that different departments exist to provide different resources and navigating between them requires increasing levels of knowledge and skill as well as time. Additionally, ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky 1980), those who interact directly with claimants and public in general, are becoming increasingly inexpert and advisors and advice centres are becoming necessary in order to challenge the incorrect decisions made or incorrect information provided by the low level bureaucrats. In order to challenge the decisions made about benefits, claimants have to prove the system wrong. However, this is impossible for many claimants because of the complexity of benefit regulations and poor language or literacy skills of many claimants (Forbess and James 2014:74).

Because of cuts to legal aid and local authority budgets, it is becoming increasingly difficult to access advice services in general (Forbess and James 2014). The lack or low level of English of many Roma migrants adds to their difficulties because they often have to rely on being able to have an interpreter or on having a relative or a friend who speaks English, as I discussed above. Sometimes those who provide advice services do not have the required knowledge or training either. Milan sought the help of the GRT outreach team at the Welcome Group but the outreach workers
were not trained in dealing with benefit enquiries. Information about benefits, laws
and regulations is passed between Roma migrants by word of mouth, via social
networks or via Czech or Slovak media. Concrete and reliable information about
benefit rules can be difficult to obtain, especially for those who do not speak English
and have to rely on someone else to accurately translate information to them. Even
frontline workers at various services may only have information related to their
specific area (for example, housing) or they do not have time to give clients
additional information for which the client did not specifically ask. In addition,
because of the frequent changes to the benefit system, frontline workers may not
have the most recent information and end up giving out inaccurate or misleading
advice, as in Milan’s case. In Howe’s (1990) study of the unemployed in Northern
Ireland, the Job Centre advisors did not inform their unemployed clients about what
they were entitled to, because the advisors assumed that clients knew 'how to play
the system' and therefore already had all the information needed. Some sections of
the British media have promoted the narrative of ‘benefit tourism’ in relation to Roma
which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Five (see also Nagy 2018). It is possible
that in addition to the loss of expertise of low level bureaucrats, some service
providers had similar assumptions about Roma knowing ‘how to play the system’
and not needing to be given information.

The provision of state care can be a form of creating a sense of belonging within a
larger collectivity, often defined in terms of national belonging as I noted in Chapter
Two. Yet, if the provision of care ‘means the inclusion and protection of certain
individuals and groups, it can also mean exclusion and neglect for others’
(Drotbohm 2015: 97). The withdrawal of state care or its conditionality, as with the
above example, can lead to feelings of exclusion from or marginalisation within this
larger collectivity. In her ethnography of Cape Verdean migrants in Portugal,
Drotbohm (2015) found that Cape Verdeans who worked in care homes in Portugal,
in turn expected to be cared for by the Portuguese state in times of need. Similar to the Cape Verdean migrants who had expectations of reciprocity from the Portuguese state (Drotbohm 2015), Petra and Milan felt that the state should take responsibility for Milan because of his injury while at work. Both of them stressed to me on several occasions that the fact that Milan injured himself at work should count as proof that he came to England to work and not just ‘aby bral peníze’ (to claim benefits, literally ‘to take money’ in Czech). As Milan was fulfilling his obligation to the state by having a job, Petra and Milan expected the state to then fulfil its obligation to Milan by providing him with benefits when he was incapacitated and not able to work.

However, Milan was told that he was not entitled to benefits and to ask his employer if he was entitled to any sick pay. Milan’s contract was with the employment agency, not with the actual company where he worked and where the accident happened. Milan was not able to get an answer from the agency or his employer about any liability, and he did not know whether he was entitled to any compensation or sick pay. Because of his lack of English, he was not able to deal with his employer by himself and had to approach the Welcome Group for help in getting his employer to pay him the wages that he was owed. Milan found having to stay at home frustrating, he put on a lot of weight in the months following his accident and Petra told me that he was taking anti-depressants. It took several months before he got to see a specialist in hospital but despite undergoing a medical procedure aimed at easing his back pain, his condition did not improve.

After discussing her family’s situation with the GRT outreach workers, Petra decided to apply for Jobseeker’s Allowance herself in early December. I did not see or hear from Petra over the Christmas school holidays. When I saw her in January, more than a month after applying, Petra was still waiting for her Jobseeker’s Allowance despite being told that her application would be processed within three weeks.
When she went to her local Job Centre to ask about her claim, she was told to call the Benefit Enquiry Line because local Job Centres do not have information about applications that have been sent off.

Despite the regular personal contact between the applicants and staff at a Job Centre, local Job Centres do not make decisions about benefit applications. Instead, they send application forms to a centralised department called the processing centre. There is no direct interaction between the claimants and the decision makers. It can take several weeks before a decision is made after sending in an application form. All communication between claimants and decision makers is mediated either via Job Centre staff or via a call centre. Claimants can call the Benefit Enquiry Line if they want to get an update on the status of their claim. Information about the status of a benefit claim is input into the computer system during different stages of the process, but often this information is vague. Often, when I called the Enquiry Line with my informants, we were told that the information on the system was that the claim was still being processed and that we should call back in a week or two. There is no face-to-face contact between claimants and the decision maker and even the staff at the Job Centre did not have any more details than what was on the computer system. This creates a lot of frustration for Roma claimants and it makes it difficult to challenge any decision because all communication has to be conducted indirectly and often in writing. After unsuccessfully trying to get the information on her own via the Job Centre, Petra asked for my help. When we called the Benefit Enquiry Line, we were told that the benefit office did not have proof that the children on Petra’s claim were her children and that they were living with her. Following this phone call, Petra told me, ‘I sent the birth certificates with Milan’s application [for ESA], then I had to send them again when I applied [for Jobseeker’s Allowance] and now they want them again! But they

49 From autumn 2014, the Benefit Enquiry Line is no longer available and has been replaced by other help lines.
had them and they sent them back, so they must have seen them. How can they now say that they are not my children?!

Petra was becoming increasingly frustrated by having to deal with the benefit system and by the continuous questioning of her entitlement to benefits and of the validity of her information. Towards the end of January 2014, while still waiting for a decision about her Jobseeker’s Allowance claim, Petra went to the local primary school, which her son Marek attended, to ask whether the school needed a cleaner. The school, like other schools in Leeds, uses a private contractor that supplies the cleaners. Instead, Petra was offered a job as a support assistant for Czech and Slovak Roma children. Petra accepted the job and told me that she helped Roma children in the class by translating for them if they did not understand. She also sometimes mediated between the school and Roma parents, which meant that the school did not have to book an interpreter and school staff could speak to Roma parents any day, if they needed. It was a part-time position, for sixteen hours per week, which suited Petra well. She would not have to attend the Job Centre and look for work, which she found stressful and time consuming. And she would be entitled to claim in-work benefits such as the Tax Credits, and Housing Benefit. Petra thought that her family would thus have enough money to live on.

In March 2014, shortly after Petra started working, new regulations regarding in-work benefits for EEA nationals came into force, as I noted above. EEA nationals would only be entitled to in-work benefits if they earned at least £149 per week, which was set as the Minimum Earnings Threshold (MET). The MET does not apply to British citizens and it was ‘introduced as part of the government’s long-term plan to cap welfare and reduce immigration’ (DWP 2014b). The MET equals weekly pay when working twenty-four hours per week at the minimum wage rate. Petra did not know about this upcoming change when she accepted the job offer.

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50 It may be also applied to British citizens who return to the UK after living abroad.
After starting her job, she asked me to call the Tax Credit office with her so that she could apply for Working Tax Credit. When a letter with a decision arrived a couple of weeks later, she was informed that she was not entitled to Working Tax Credit because she did not work enough hours. Petra told me that she felt that there was no point in her working, because she could not earn enough to support her family. She said she found this very frustrating, because even though she tried to 'do everything right', she kept coming across new obstacles. After discussing her situation with someone in the school where she worked, the school agreed to increase her hours so that she would qualify for in-work benefits.

Petra's case illustrates the complexity of navigating the benefit system and combining legal work with in-work benefits. The minimum or low pay jobs that many Roma have do not provide them with sufficient income to earn enough money without supplementing it with benefits. However, combining benefits with formal employment has its own complications as claimants have to determine how much they need to earn in order to qualify for benefits. Earning too little or not working the required number of hours means not being entitled to benefits, but earning above a certain amount results in either a deduction in or loss of benefits. In their recent study of young men's transition into the workforce in southern English towns, Hardgrove et al (2015) found that having family support played a significant part in the young men's ability to participate in the precarious labour market. If the young men were not able to live with their family members, they were better off remaining unemployed. As unemployed, they had access to full housing benefit and social housing. Any earnings would be deducted from housing benefit but having unstable and precarious work meant that the young men were not able to keep up with rent payments without housing benefit. Having a support network is also important for Roma migrants who rely on them in times of financial difficulties or crisis, as I outlined in Chapter Four.
The situation of Roma is different from that of British people because of the combination of economic and legal uncertainty. Roma have to prove not only that they are ‘genuinely seeking work’ but also that they have a right to stay in the UK and claim benefits. Even though as EU citizens, they have the right to free movement across the EU and to settle in other countries in the EU, their right to make claims on the British state and state care is constantly being questioned through practices and regulations which are inherent in the benefit system. Petra would not have been able to make a living had the school not agreed to increase her hours, which enabled her to claim in-work benefits. Additionally, Petra and Milan would not be able to claim housing benefit or any other benefits without at least one of them being considered either a jobseeker or a worker. Petra eventually received her Jobseeker’s Allowance which was backdated to when she had first applied. However, she was already working by the time her Jobseeker’s Allowance application was processed. Petra and Milan were worried that their second attempt to migrate to Britain would also be unsuccessful if they were not able to earn enough money to live on. Their situation is an example of how the British state attempts to police immigration through creating harsher economic conditions for some groups of migrants, for example low skilled EEA nationals like Petra and Milan.

**Becoming 'long-term unemployed'**

Unlike Milan, Pavel did not have a job waiting for him after moving to Leeds and he had to apply for Jobseeker’s Allowance. Whilst unemployed, Pavel occasionally did casual work for his landlord, decorating or fixing the landlord's other properties for some cash. I have come across other examples where Roma did decorating or building work on their landlord’s other properties. This was usually in return for cash or as a contribution towards rent, while they were waiting for their housing benefit to be processed. Pavel and Iveta wanted to settle in Leeds permanently. Their long-
term plan was for Pavel to find work with a contract which would provide him with some job security and regular income. Pavel was hesitant to take a temporary job because of the changing benefit system. He was worried that if he stopped claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, and had to reapply again after having a temporary job, he might not be successful. Dealing with the Job Centre was a large part of Pavel's unemployed life and as he explained to me on more than one occasion: “I worry every time that even though I look for work and write jobs down and do everything that they ask, it will not be enough for them.” When he said ‘for them’ Pavel meant the advisors at the Job Centre, one of which he had to see every two weeks. The advisor would then assess what Pavel had done to find work in the two weeks since his previous visit. Pavel was anxious that his Jobseeker's Allowance would be stopped if the advisor at the Job Centre decided that Pavel was not doing enough to find work.

When a person applies for Jobseeker's Allowance, they are expected to be actively looking for work in order to qualify for it. The claimant has to sign a contract called the Jobseeker's Agreement which sets out the activities that the person has to perform as part of looking for work. The claimant then receives a booklet into which he or she has to write their job-finding activities. Whether they are genuinely looking for work is evaluated through this booklet and through their activity on a government website called the Universal Jobmatch (UJM). When a person applies for Jobseeker's Allowance, they must set up an account on the UJM website where they have to look at vacancies and apply for jobs. Their advisors at the Job Centre can log into the UJM website and see the activity of the individual claimants. While looking for work through UJM tends to be a requirement in order to receive Jobseeker's Allowance (DWP 2013b, see also Foster 2017), at the start of my fieldwork it was just being introduced. From 2014, some of my interlocutors who were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance were asked to look for work through UJM.
Even though all Roma migrants I got to know used the internet for things like Facebook, Skype or reading Czech or Slovak media, the majority found other computer tasks (for example using Microsoft Word) difficult or impossible to do. For example despite using social media daily, Pavel still asks for my help whenever he wants to book flight tickets or check-in online, because he worries about making a mistake when filling in some important information. He struggled with all the administrative aspects of signing on, such as online job searches and applications and paperwork.

In October 2013, Pavel had been signing on for a year and he was getting increasingly frustrated about not having found work. In the weeks before his yearly review appointment at the Job Centre, he often started lengthy speculations about whether he would be sent to the Work Programme or not. As I noted above, when a person has continuously claimed Jobseeker’s Allowance for twelve months, they are considered by the DWP to be long-term unemployed. From 2011, the long-term unemployed have to attend the Work Programme, which is a government ‘welfare-to-work programme’ (DWP 2012). Under the Work Programme, ‘a range of private, public and voluntary sector organisations’\(^{51}\) were commissioned to ‘facilitate the entry of the long-term unemployed into employment’.\(^{52}\) Once a claimant is referred to this service by the Job Centre, regular attendance is a requirement for the continuous receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance and perceived non-compliance may result in sanctions and loss of benefits. Being sanctioned means having your Jobseeker’s Allowance temporarily suspended, typically for at least three weeks. During the sanctioned period, when claimants are not receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance, they are still required to sign on, look for work and comply with any other

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\(^{51}\) In West Yorkshire, the Work Programme was delivered by Interserve and Ingeus. Both are private companies.

\(^{52}\) It has been reported that only 2% of Work Programme attendees are in work after 6 month.
requirements set them by the Job Centre.\textsuperscript{53} Having one benefit suspended could lead to the suspension or revocation (sometimes retrospective) of other benefits and could mean further and more serious financial problems for the claimants (Forbess and James 2014; Foster 2017).

From the point of view of Roma claimants, like Pavel, the way the Work Programme works is very similar to the way the Job Centre works. Similarly to the Job Centre, claimants have to attend the Work Programme every two weeks. They have to write down job-finding activities and bring the sheet of paper with those activities to each fortnightly appointment with their Work Programme advisor. Because claimant’s appointments are fortnightly at both the Work Programme and the Job Centre, these are usually scheduled for alternate weeks. In practice, the result is that claimants have an appointment related to their Jobseeker’s Allowance every week, and have to produce a list of ten job-finding activities every week, one week at the Job Centre and the following week at the Work Programme. After he was sent to the Work Programme, Pavel seemed both anxious and hopeful. A friend of Pavel’s had recently found work as a cleaner in one of the local primary schools with the help of his Work Programme advisor. Pavel was hoping that he would also have a job through the Work Programme soon. Instead of finding a job quickly, after starting to attend the Work Programme service Pavel’s advisor sent him on various additional courses, such as an Employability course, a Basic literacy and numeracy course, and a six-week Cabling course. While attendance at these courses was voluntary, Pavel worried that declining a course suggested by his advisor would be seen as non-compliance and his Jobseeker’s Allowance could be stopped. He therefore accepted all the courses that his advisor suggested.

Pavel told me that instead of actually helping him to find work, which he envisaged

\textsuperscript{53} In 2015, a Job Centre newsletter was leaked which showed that Job Centre staff were pressured into sanctioning people and that Job Centres were given targets as to how many people they were expected to sanction.
as being informed about specific vacancies and sent to job interviews, he felt subjected to increased pressure to perform tasks that he did not perceive as useful for finding work. The frustration that Pavel expressed was not caused only by him not being able to find a job, but also by having to attend his appointments and various courses with no concrete job at the end of them. Foster (2017) studied the experiences with, understandings of and values attached to work among the unemployed in Manchester. He did this by attending and volunteering at ‘Job Clubs’, third sector organisations which help unemployed people with tasks like writing a CV, looking for work online or preparing for interviews in order to make them more ‘employable’. He found that despite the long-term unemployment that many of the Job Club attendees experienced, work was important to them as a source of value and meaning. On one occasion, Foster (2017) went with his informants, the Job Club attendees, to a presentation by a potential employer and found that the number of the unemployed exceeded the number of vacancies by several thousand. Foster (2017) argues that there were not enough vacant jobs in Manchester for all the unemployed people there. Following years of de-industrialisation, some types of work (in particular manual work or factory work) have become degraded but participation in work is being imposed on people by the state through various bodies and organisations, like the Job Centre or the Work Programme, the ‘employability sector’, as well as through the official discourse (Foster 2017). Unemployment is thereby re-framed as a problem of employability of the individual person, instead of being seen as a result of structural changes (Foster 2017).

My informants had similar experience with the employability sector as the unemployed described in Foster’s (2017) study. One day, Iveta and I were sitting in their living room. I had just helped Pavel call the Cabling course provider to tell them that he would not attend because he was ill and Iveta exclaimed: ‘So England doesn't have money, but there is money for these things?! It seems to me that they
are making work [jobs] like this, but only such work, that is for them. Not the type of work that would be for us.’ Iveta’s remark expresses the frustration that I often observed among my informants during fieldwork. As a result of the changes that the British economy underwent and the accompanying de-industrialisation, the availability of manual work, which both Iveta and Pavel did the majority of their adult lives, has decreased whereas the availability or service and office work, from which they were both excluded, has increased. Iveta’s comment also expressed her frustration with the increasingly restrictive regulations surrounding benefit entitlement and the austerity measures which the government presented as being necessary because of the state not being able to afford to pay for services and benefits. Even though there was money for services like the Work Programme and for courses intended to improve the Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants’ employability, the actual amount of money available to the unemployed or precariously employed was decreasing through measures like benefit changes or the benefit cap. The courses and services which were part of the employability sector created office jobs, but neither Iveta nor Pavel had the skills necessary for office work.

In January 2014, during the period when he had to attend the Work Programme, Pavel said that he was just going to take a job at the local car wash where Michal and a couple of his acquaintances worked on a cash-in-hand basis. Pavel told me that the car wash owner ‘said that if I pay him £100, he will give me a contract and pay slips’. Migrants, including Roma, develop strategies in order to get around the restrictions imposed on them by the British state. In her study of Roma migrants’ interactions with British bureaucracy, Nagy (2018) illustrates how increasingly exclusionary measures around benefit entitlement create conditions that can lead to Roma making fraudulent benefit claims, for example, by providing false information, withholding information about changes to personal circumstances, purchasing false payslips or work contracts, or claiming for someone else’s children. Such fraudulent
claims were sometimes made with the knowledge of advocacy or support workers or even staff working for ‘state services’. Nagy (2018) argues that restrictions to benefit access can be used as a strategy of policing the mobility of unwanted migrants, such as Roma, who are perceived by the state as a threat to its financial security. By restricting access to welfare benefits, the British state creates the conditions which make the economic situation of low-skilled EEA migrants, like Roma, difficult. This increased economic precarity and low standard of living can act as a disincentive for other Roma to move to the UK. And those who come may end up in cash-in-hand work, like Michal did, and therefore not be able to access other forms of ‘state care’ like welfare benefits.

The owner of the car wash where Michal worked was aware that some of his employees needed to have pay slips in order to qualify for in-work benefits. This depended on individual situations. Michal did not need payslips because he lived with Pavel and Iveta and did not have to pay for his accommodation. He contributed to the household’s finances but was not responsible for providing the main income, as I described in Chapter Four. Pavel, on the other hand, had to ensure that his family had the means to pay for their accommodation, bills and food, which they would not be able to do if they relied only on income from work like the one offered at the car wash. Being paid £30 per day cash-in-hand, Roma migrants provided the car wash owner with cheap labour, but they also needed welfare benefits in order to be able to make a living. The car wash owner agreed to provide his workers with a contract and payslips in order to retain cheap labour, without actually paying them the full amount given on the payslips. Restrictions on access to benefits can therefore work not only to police immigration but also to contribute to migrants’ increased precarity and their strategies to get around such restrictions, for example, and as mentioned for Pavel, through obtaining false work contracts and payslips.

While considering taking a job at the car wash in order to avoid having to deal with
the Job Centre, Pavel also worried about the fact that working at a car wash is physically demanding. He was in his forties and said that he was unsure if he would be able to do the work. He worried about injuring himself and his family not having enough money to live on as a consequence. We can understand Pavel’s caution in taking this kind of work, for which he did not feel fit enough, as his main source of income when we take Milan’s situation, as described above, into account. Pavel’s dilemma was resolved when in March 2014, he found a part-time job as a cleaner. The job was a permanent position with a contract and even though it was initially for 18 hours per week, Pavel was able to negotiate extra hours every week in order to earn the required MET and thereby qualify for in-work benefits.

Unemployment processes and experiences of joblessness must be seen in relation to the local, national and global labour market (Perelman 2007). While unemployment as it is currently experienced by working-class people in de-industrialised cities in Northern England could be described as caused by structural changes, the current official discourse views it as being caused by a lack of skills or responsibility of the individual person (Foster 2017). As with Manchester in Foster’s study (2017), Leeds is another de-industrialised city in northern England where the work which is available is in the service or public sectors. It is thus not only Roma migrants who experience exclusion from work or who have to take up precarious work, many British people experience similar precarity and exclusion. What is specific to the situation of Roma is that they are being excluded not only from work, and from accessing social welfare, but as Milan’s experience illustrates, potentially from their ability to stay in Britain.

In his study of interactions between benefit investigators and claimants in France, Dubois (2014) found that the state ‘comes into being’ through the practices of low level bureaucrats and their encounters with claimants. It is through the daily encounters such as those described above that Roma experience the British state.
When Job Centre advisors provide incorrect information or decide to reject a claim, they shape both future policy and the claimants’ experience of the state. Yet, these encounters between claimants and the state are becoming increasingly mediated through data collected and collated online. Roma have to perform tasks and activities asked of them by state bureaucrats, even if they do not see these tasks as leading to work. Like Pavel when he attended the Work Programme and various courses, the unemployed have to perform these tasks in the sense that they have to be seen to be doing them. There has to be a digital record of tasks completed such as job searches or course attendances. Roma thus construct themselves (both in person and digitally) as employable through these bureaucratic performances (see also Nagy 2018). While being seen as a worker or a jobseeker is an important part of being able to stay in the UK, Roma also strive to be treated with dignity and to be recognised by the state as deserving respect and ‘care’. Iveta’s comment above about there ‘not being work that is for us’ illustrates how the withdrawal of state care contributes to her sense of being excluded, to not being ‘cared about’ by the state. However at the same time as withdrawing some forms of care, the state directs other types of care towards Roma who are then constituted as an ethnic minority. I now turn now to this second type of care.

**Part Two: Being Roma: performing the proper ‘ethnic subject’**

**Introduction**

The focus of the second part of this chapter is on the ways Roma figure in the imaginations of non-Roma that work in service-provision and are in frequent contact with Roma. In this section I look at the work of the public and third sector organisations whose work and remit was a form of state care intended to improve
the well-being of Roma migrants. During my fieldwork, as well as state-funded services for Roma in Leeds, there were a number of projects aimed at Roma. These state-funded services and projects aimed to address the social problems which were perceived in public policy to be relevant to Roma: they included unemployment, poor health, low education levels, and the perceived need for Roma inclusion. Typically, these projects were aimed at educating Roma or at working towards the inclusion of Roma through changing behaviour perceived as inherent in Roma ethnicity or culture. However, the exclusion and marginalisation of Roma have underlying structural causes and, as I have argued above, are linked to the exclusion of Roma from work and from social welfare. Here I discuss whether, by focusing policies and services on Roma as an ethnic group and by aiming to improve Roma well-being through ethno-political emancipation as a means of creating Roma inclusion, the structural causes of precarity, exclusion and marginalisation are overlooked. Looking at Roma as a group that needs specific policies and services also renders internal differences among Roma invisible.

Roma have emerged as a group that is subject to persecution and discrimination through a number of interconnected processes. In order to comply with the criteria necessary to join the EU, the Czech Republic (and other CEE countries) had to show that the treatment of Roma on its territory had improved. Since the 1990s there has been a significant increase in the number of NGOs, projects, activists concerned with and funds directed towards ‘Roma issues’ and the ‘integration of Roma into society’ in the Czech Republic. The increased concern of transnational NGOs, advocacy organisations, activists and supranational organisations led to the increased visibility of Roma as an ethnic category. This visibility however had negative connotations and CEE Roma became associated with poverty and misery (Rövid 2013). Some of my informants did not want to engage with the projects or services I discuss here, because of the negative connotations associated with being
recognised as Roma. Despite the various projects and funding, there has been little visible change in the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic. Many still experience unemployment, and live in poverty, often in segregated and run-down areas. As this attention to Roma as an ethnic minority that is subject to persecution and discrimination emerged not as a national discourse, but rather through the actions of various local, national and transnational actors, Roma did not escape institutional attention even after migration. At the time of EU enlargement, the international attention to Roma as well as the flow of money, knowledge, and people working with Roma was already established. The migration of Roma to the UK was thus followed by the emergence of services and projects in the UK aimed at the integration of Roma and, by implication, at improving their well-being.

I often heard Roma described as a ‘close-knit’ and ‘hard-to-reach’ community by people who worked in NGOs and public services. ‘Community’ is a slippery term that is used in many different ways and contexts and generally tends to describe belonging to a certain collectivity which is ‘greater than kinship but more immediate than society’ (Cohen 1985:15). It is increasingly being used to refer to people who are thought to form a group on the basis of a shared characteristic. This could be ethnicity (the Roma community), sexuality (the LGBTQ community) or religion (the Sikh community). The term ‘community’ tends to be used as a self-evident term which describes a way of understanding and navigating the social world (Creed 2006). Creed (2006) notes that the concept of ‘community’ tends to be loaded with positive affective value: it is seen as indicative of a sense of local belonging and of good social relationships within the particular collectivity which is being described as a ‘community’. In contrast with the rhetoric of the NGO and public services staff, who often talked about ‘Roma community’ and ‘Roma communities’, the majority of my Roma interlocutors did not use the term community and did not engage with the concept. I only heard it used by Roma activists and those who engaged with NGOs.
work and discourse. Creed states that the concept of community is promoted by the state and that ‘communities are constituted by and constitutive of different regimes of knowledge’ (Creed 2006:13 italics removed). Using a particular category, such as ethnicity or religion, as a main characteristic which indicates belonging to that community then shapes knowledge that the members of that community have of themselves and their relationship with those outside of the community. Collectivities that do not fit a particular image of a ‘community’ tend to be either abandoned by the state, defined as backward or described in other terms (like gangs) (Creed 2006:13). Collectivities defined as communities are often the focus of NGO projects intended to overcome political barriers created by the state (Creed 2006).

These ‘regimes of knowledge’ are embedded within specific power structures and used to define who has right to access state-distributed resources, or whose access to resources is limited. These regimes of knowledge also determine the self-knowledge that people have about themselves and their collective identities. This is important in the context of discussions about Roma, because Roma tend to be talked about as a ‘Roma community’ and therefore as a collectivity, which is somewhat insulated, bounded, and the membership of which is determined by one’s ethnicity.

The portrayal of Roma as a ‘community’ which is ‘close-knit’ and ‘hard-to-reach’ has important consequences. Describing Roma as a ‘close-knit community’ implies that the people within such a collectivity are tied together closely, that they have close relationships. This tends to be seen as positive by services and NGOs, but at the same time ‘close-knit’ can lead to being ‘hard-to-reach’, which implies that the group’s interactions with those from outside of the group are minimal. They are so ‘close-knit’ that it becomes difficult or impossible for outsiders to pass into this closely-knit fabric of social ties. Such a description can lead to the homogenisation of Roma as a single ‘community’ which erases internal differences amongst Roma.
Another consequence of such a description is the assumption that only a Roma can understand and work with other Roma. The Roma ‘elite’ are expected to act as both gatekeepers and as ‘role models’ for other Roma, as someone who despite the multiple barriers that Roma face has managed to get a good job, to overcome their poverty and escape the negative view associated in public policy with Roma ethnicity. Their role as gatekeepers works in two ways - they provide the state and state-like actors with access to the Roma ‘community’, and to other Roma they present a way to access resources controlled by the state and state-like actors (Engebrigsten 2007).

**Roma projects and services in Leeds**

There were two types of support services directed at Roma in Leeds. The first type were statutory services directly aimed at Roma. These included the Gypsy Roma Travellers Achievement Service, the Welcome Group and Gypsy Roma Travellers (GRT) outreach workers, already mentioned above. Many of the local primary and secondary schools employed a Czech or Slovak speaker (either Roma or non-Roma) who often acted both as a teaching assistant for Czech and Slovak Roma children and as an interpreter between school staff and Roma parents, (just as Petra had). The statutory services were run on an on-going basis and typically addressed immediate needs of Roma, such as filling in benefit application forms, calling the benefit helpline, dealing with landlords, or helping communication between school and parents. These services tended to be very busy and worked to remedy or ameliorate the effects of austerity measures, which I discussed in Part One.

The second type of support included projects which tended to be run by, or attached to, a third sector organisation. During my fieldwork I visited, or was involved as a volunteer in, three such projects. Even though they were run by a third-sector
organisation, they were all connected to the public sector through their funding. All three of these organizations received funding from Leeds City Council; either directly for the project described here or the organisation was receiving funding from Leeds City Council for its other activities and had secured external funding for their Roma project. Rather than focusing on immediate needs, the projects tended to have a more long-term goal of ‘educating’ or ‘empowering’ Roma and helping Roma integrate.\textsuperscript{54} The duration of their existence was limited by the amount and timeframe of their funding. They tended to be led by non-Roma, although two projects had involved Roma as low level employees or volunteers. The practice of employing Roma as staff or volunteers is often used as a way of claiming legitimacy as a Romani project or organisation (Synková 2010). What the services and the projects shared was their aim to improve the lives of Roma in Leeds. I now turn to two of these projects. The first project was aimed at ethnic emancipation of Roma and the second at educating Roma women about ‘healthy lifestyles’, and thus to improve the health of Roma migrants.

The Roma Club

The Roma Club was started by Advocacy Support. Advocacy Support was based in Harehills and did not work specifically with Roma, it worked with a variety of migrant groups who lived locally. The main work of Advocacy Support was to provide multilingual advocacy services and help with benefit issues for migrants living in Leeds. A large part of these services was done with the work of volunteers. Advocacy Support had a small number of advocates who were trained to provide help with benefit applications. At the time of my fieldwork, all the advocates at Advocacy Support were either migrants or British Asians, perhaps reflecting the fact that these were the largest ethnic groups in the area. In order to provide multilingual

\textsuperscript{54} There was some overlap with providing help with immediate needs (dealing with benefit issues) but it was not the main focus of these projects.
services and not be limited to the languages spoken by the advocates, Advocacy Support relied on volunteers, who were themselves migrants and who interpreted between clients and the advocates. Andrew, the director of Advocacy Support told me that after the enlargement of the EU in 2004 there was an increase in the number of Roma migrants who approached Advocacy Support for help with benefit issues. In 2010, Advocacy Support secured funding for a three-year project called Roma Voice.\textsuperscript{55} According to Andrew the aim of the project was to ‘give Roma voice on a local level’.

Thanks to this funding, Advocacy Support were able to employ initially one person, and eventually three people, to work as part of the Roma Voice project. The people who were employed as part of the Roma Voice at the time of my fieldwork were two young Roma, Michal and Maria, and their supervisor who was an English woman called Jayne. Jayne had previously worked on a project aimed at (mostly Polish) Roma in Bradford, which lies fourteen kilometres to the north-west of Leeds. During my fieldwork, I spent one day a week working at Advocacy Support. My work involved supervising the two Roma employees, Maria and Michal, and helping them to set up a community organisation for Roma, or the Roma Club as it came to be called. Andrew intended that this Roma community organisation would provide ‘a place for Roma to socialise and a platform to promote Roma culture’. He explained to me that promoting Roma culture would lead to ‘increased awareness of Roma culture among non-Roma’ and that he hoped that it would lead to ‘Roma being proud of their culture and their heritage’. He saw this as a way for Roma to overcome their marginalisation and as a way for Roma to start participating in public life.

\textsuperscript{55} The Roma Voice project, initiated by Advocacy Support, ran from 2010 to 2013, and included employing and training Roma workers to provide advocacy services to Roma and setting up the Roma Club. In 2015, a project called Supporting Roma Voices was set up which was a partnership led by the University of Salford alongside BHA for Equality, the Roma Support Group and Migration Yorkshire. The two projects are not linked.
During fieldwork, I attended numerous planning meetings for the Roma Club, went to the weekly Roma Club sessions and was part of many discussions in Advocacy Support about the Club. On several occasions, Michal questioned the idea behind setting up the club. During one of the planning meetings he asked Jayne, 'Why do people always talk o cikánech (about Gypsies)? Why don’t they also talk about Pakistanis, or Indians? There are even more of them here than of us, so why does everyone always just talk o cikánech (about Gypsies)?’ Jayne explained to him that the government and other institutions recognise that Roma experienced discrimination and there were now attempts to support Roma to overcome it. Michal did not seem convinced and he continued to ask this question on other occasions. With his questions, Michal was also questioning the equation of Roma with poverty and social problems that was present in the notion that Roma need support in order to become ‘emancipated’. Spivak (1988) argues that subaltern people are powerless to describe their experience, and their position is defined by Western intellectuals or the dominant discourse. As I noted above, Roma are constructed and produced through popular and official discourse as ‘backward’ and as ‘not quite’ belonging to the West (Sokolova 2008). Like the subaltern in Spivak’s (1988) paper, in the interactions with services and projects which are based on the notion of Roma being oppressed and marginalised, Roma struggle to subvert their subaltern position. Their experience tends to be defined in terms of marginality and discrimination. Michal tried to question (albeit unsuccessfully) the existence of ‘Roma projects’ and to question the understanding of Roma as ‘needing help’ because it did not define his experience. Michal had experienced racism in the Czech Republic. He told me that he had dropped out of college because some of his classmates were skinheads and threatened him, and members of his extended family had been violently attacked. Even though Andrew intended for the Roma Club to benefit Roma, the Roma Club was situated within the discourse of Roma being inferior and ‘other’. As I noted in Chapter Five when I discussed diverging
understandings of what constitutes racism between Michal and Tereza, Michal perceived being treated as inferior by gadže as an expression of racism. While questioning the definition of Roma as not being able to speak for themselves and thus needing non-Roma to set up an organisation for Roma (although only when he was not in the presence of Andrew or Jayne), Michal continued to work for Advocacy Support because it provided him with a regular income, which he supplemented by continuing to work at the car wash.

The Roma Club ran from January to April 2014 and the sessions were held in Harehills Primary School. To provide an incentive for people to attend, the first session was organised as a party with music and cakes and chlebičky (open sandwiches topped with various garnishes, meat and cheeses). The club was attended mostly by members of one extended Vlach Roma family. This was experienced as problematic by Michal, who was not a Vlach Roma, but not for Maria who knew several of the regular Vlach Roma attendees from her childhood. On several occasions, Michal became very agitated at the Club and exclaimed that he was ‘going to leave’ and that he was ‘not going to be there among them’. Michal explained to me that the Vlachs did not know how to behave and that he did not like socialising with them. He was unhappy about having to go to the Roma Club where he had to interact with Vlach Roma and perform a certain kind of ‘Gypsiness’ under the gadže gaze. Following an argument he had with a Vlach Roma woman during one Roma Club session, I asked him why he did not tell Jayne about it. Michal replied that ‘she tries so hard, I don’t want her to feel disappointed.’ Michal’s reply suggested that he wanted the Roma Club to be seen as successful in Jayne’s eyes, which was why both he and Maria kept some things from Jayne. Because Jayne did not speak any of the languages used by Roma (Czech, Slovak, Romani, and Hungarian) she was not aware of a number of arguments or conflicts between Michal and Maria, or between Michal, Maria and the Roma Club attendees.
During planning meetings, Michal always agreed with Jayne's or Andrew's suggestions. For instance, he enthusiastically agreed to bring his keyboard and guitar to the Roma Club when Jayne asked him if he could arrange live music. After this meeting, as we shared a cigarette outside, he exclaimed: ‘She thinks that I am going to bring my keyboard so that they can ruin it! She must be crazy!’ On several occasions he agreed that his girlfriend would cook food for the Roma Club. He always managed to get out of these promises in the end but it led to Andrew expressing concern that Michal was unreliable. It is likely that Michal felt unable to openly question Jayne or Andrew. Both Michal and Maria told me that they felt intimidated by Andrew and said that this was the reason they did not openly disagree with him. They expressed their disagreement to me on several occasions when we were sitting alone in the office or sharing a cigarette outside. Once when the three of us were sitting alone in the office, I asked them why did they not speak out and say they disagreed with something. Michal explained: ‘I can’t tell him that I don’t agree with something. He is the manager. And who am I here? I am nobody. He tells me what to do and I do it.’ When Michal and Maria were in Andrew's presence their performed actions served to re-affirm the distinction between Andrew's role as manager and their role as staff. Their performed actions reflected the hierarchical relationship between Andrew and them and served to uphold the unequal relationship between them and Andrew and Jayne.

Following the first session of the Roma Club, the Club ran every week. Sometimes there were board games set out for people to play or if the weather was good one of the Polish volunteers at Advocacy Support played football with the children. As well as being a space for Roma to meet, there was an advocate present every week to provide help with benefit issues. This advocacy service was intended to act as an additional incentive for people to attend, as Andrew told me. There were always requests for music to be played at the club, which became an issue of contention.
between the school and the club organisers. The Club eventually stopped running because of complaints from teachers about noise and about the lack of supervision of children by their parents during the club. The noise that the teachers complained about was Roma music being played loudly. During several Roma Club sessions I saw Roma women teaching girls how to do some traditional Roma dances. Music and dance are the two main things that tend to be perceived as central aspects of ‘Roma culture’, which Andrew said that he wanted to promote through Roma Club. However, the teachers experienced the music, which was being played for the enjoyment of Roma, instead of as part of a particular performance for non-Roma, as ‘too noisy’.

What became apparent during successive meetings between the headmistress and her assistant and Maria, Jayne or Andrew, was that the teachers and the school management wanted the Roma Club to be organised around specific activities which would be led by a specific person, similar to the way in which school is generally organised. However, the Roma who attended the club used it as an opportunity for enjoying themselves as a group. Maria told me that she believed that if the Club was organised the way the school wanted, people would stop coming. Following several weeks of complaints from the teachers, the school said that Advocacy Support would no longer be able to use the school hall for the Club. Additionally, the funding for the Roma Voice project ran out at the end of March 2014 and Advocacy Support was undergoing changes in organisational structures and did not have the resources to continue running the club in another venue.

It is interesting to reflect on the conflict between the school management and the teachers and the Roma. In her ethnography of Roma in Russia, Lemon (2000) states that Roma tend to be romanticised and seen as ‘free’ but this ‘freedom’ is at the same time being perceived as problematic because it is seen as leading to lawlessness. Roma therefore figure in European imagination as not properly
civilised or being aware of their ‘culture and heritage’, as is shown by Andrew’s statement that he wanted the Roma Club to lead to ‘Roma being proud of their culture’. Music and dance are possibly the most visible aspects of what could be described as Roma ‘culture’. Yet, when Roma played their music and danced for their own enjoyment, without performing it for non-Roma, the school viewed it as problematic. The different actors involved with the various aspects of the Club therefore had their varied expectations of what the Club would mean. The school management (and to a lesser degree Andrew) wanted the Club to be a way of sharing ‘their culture and heritage’ but only inasmuch as Roma culture would be performed in the way that the non-Roma saw as acceptable.

**Roma Women’s Health Champions**

The second project was called the Roma Women’s Health Champions. It was funded by Migration Yorkshire, which is a regional partnership of local authorities. The Roma Women Health Champions was funded as part of their Roma Matrix Project\(^{56}\) and it was awarded to the Big Life Group who then delivered the project. The aim of the Roma Women’s Health Champions project was to recruit Roma women who would then attend a series of workshops where they would receive information about health services available and about health issues perceived by the project coordinators as relevant to the Roma community (The Big Issue in the North: 2014). The idea was that the women who were recruited for the project and received this information would then spread the information among other Roma and thus educate the wider Roma community and influence people’s behaviour towards a ‘healthier lifestyle’ as it is defined by the government and the NHS guidelines (Department of Health 2010).

\(^{56}\) Roma Matrix was a partnership of twenty organisations from ten EU member states and ran from April 2013 to March 2015 (Migration Yorkshire 2014) and as such it was funded by the EU. The partnership aimed to ‘tackle discrimination’ and ‘promote inclusion’ of Roma.
Several studies that looked at different European countries have shown that Roma have poorer health, more long-term health conditions, and ten to fifteen years lower life expectancy than the majority populations (European Commission 2014). The same report found high incidences of smoking, alcohol or drug consumption, obesity, and of teenage pregnancies among Roma across Europe. All these are perceived by the British health services as unhealthy and problematic. The Health Champions project intended to improve the health of Roma in Leeds by educating them about a ‘healthy lifestyle’. However, the assumption that Roma need to be educated in a ‘healthy lifestyle’ without addressing issues like poverty or inadequate housing, which are associated with poor health, places the blame for poor health on Roma and on individual behaviour. Additionally, educating Roma about a ‘healthy lifestyle’ needs to be looked at in the context of Roma historically being subject to pressures to ‘integrate’ or ‘assimilate’.

The Roma Women’s Health Champions sessions were held at The Hub on Thursday afternoons. Women received £10 supermarket vouchers as an incentive for each session they attended. The women who attended regularly also received a £30 voucher at the last session together with a graduation certificate. Information often spreads among Roma by word of mouth, and attendance at the Health Champion’s sessions increased every week as more women learnt about the project and the possibility of getting a voucher. Ensuring participation was important because the number of participants had to be written in the final evaluation report. The project consisted of eight two-hour sessions on different topics related to health. The sessions were: Introduction, Midwife, Stop Smoking, Zumba, Health Visitor, Healthy Living, Mental Wellbeing, Graduation. Every week (except for the Zumba session) a different healthcare professional attended and, with the help of a Czech interpreter called Lucie, talked about the specific topic set for that week. There was

57 The Hub is a community space in Harehills, and was set up by CATCH – Community Action to Change Harehills – together with West Yorkshire Police and Leeds City Council.
usually an activity and time for discussion and questions after the talk. When I decided to start attending these sessions, I told Iveta about the project and asked her if she wanted to go with me. I hoped that if I went there with Iveta, a Roma woman, it would be easier for me to speak to the other Roma women there. Iveta however refused to go because she did not want to ‘be there with these people’ by which she meant Roma that she did not know, and whom she often describes as people who ‘don’t know how to behave’. Another reason was that Iveta disliked being identified as a ‘Roma’ by institutions: she said, ‘they will look at me and just think cikánka’ (a Gypsy woman). If she went to the Health Champions sessions, all the complexities of her identity would be reduced to being viewed primarily as a ‘Roma woman’. A third reason for her refusal was that she did not want to be seen as needing money (in the form of the voucher). Iveta told me that she did not need the voucher because she was managing to live on the income that her family had, unlike others.

After Iveta’s decision not to attend the meetings, I attended the sessions on my own. At every session, I sat among the Roma women rather than sitting with Claire, the project manager, and Lucie, despite knowing both of them, and I joined in the activities with the other participants. The project took place in the summer and the room in the small pre-fabricated cabin was usually hot and stuffy. One of the women, Anna, sometimes dozed off during the talk, only to wake up suddenly when the rest of us started laughing after someone had made a joke.

The Roma Women’s Health Champions project ran across Yorkshire and Humber, and every week after the session in Leeds, Claire went to Bradford where she held the same session with another group of women, in this case they were Polish Roma. The Health Champions project was concerned with Roma as an ethnic group, the divisions along lines of citizenship, as well as internal divisions that Roma make among themselves (these do not always coincide with different citizenship) or
Roma understandings of health were rendered invisible. Belák (2015) studied differences in the understandings of health and health practices among Roma in a segregated Slovak settlement and among medical workers who worked with these Roma. Belák (2015) looked at the factors that contributed to the non-compliance with medical recommendations to change practices and behaviour affecting long-term health, such as smoking, drinking alcohol or hospital stays and treatment. He found that there was variation in compliance based on age. There was high compliance in following medical advice, staying in hospital and taking medication in relation to children or the elderly, but low compliance for adults. The Roma in Belák’s (2015) study saw some practices, like staying in hospital away from family and having to eat hospital food, as not compatible with a ‘good Roma life’. Things that were necessary in order to have a ‘good Roma life’ included spending time with family or neighbours, smoking, or eating ‘good Roma food’ and not being too gizdaví (proud, snobbish). Being gizdaví was linked to local hierarchies with Roma of higher status (and usually better off) who were more gizdaví than Roma of lower status (and usually poorer). Gadže were seen as being more gizdaví than Roma and it was necessary to not be seen by other Roma as too gizdaví because that would cause one to lose his or her Roma identity. Worrying too much about one’s health or practices that were complying with long-term medical recommendations (such as long hospital stays) would cause one to be seen as too gizdaví and thus as moving away from his or her Roma identity. There were therefore internal pressures in the settlement that contributed to non-compliance with medical recommendations (together with external obstacles, such as transport to medical appointments or costs). Belák (2015) further states that the Roma in the settlement viewed worsening health in older age as an acceptable price to pay for having a ‘good Roma life’.
Similar to what Belák (2015) found in Slovakia, I observed that for Roma in Leeds a ‘good life’ meant eating ‘good Roma food’ and not worrying too much about complying with recommendations from gadže. Roma have restricted material resources, and they are often told that they should change their behaviour, through initiatives like the Roma Women’s Health Champions. Not complying with gadže’s recommendations is part of performing and reaffirming that one is Roma. Additionally, through focusing on ‘educating Roma’ about healthy living, the project did not address the structural barriers that Roma face when trying to access health services. The project organisers did not ask the women who attended what barriers they faced when accessing healthcare or in changing their lifestyle (or even whether they wanted to), instead the organisers directed information at the women and told them how to improve their health. The women were therefore positioned as someone who needs to be educated, and therefore in a position of inferiority towards the project organisers.

Limitations of Roma ‘projects’: state care as a practice of ‘othering’ Roma

The two projects in Leeds shared several characteristics and limitations. Both had a limited timescale and were restricted in their scope by their funding. The Roma Club (and even the larger Roma Voice project of which Roma Club was part) and the Health Champions were only funded for a specific period of time. The projects were all led by non-Roma and when Roma were involved, this was in supporting roles. Another limitation of the projects was that they implicitly portrayed Roma as a problematic group – a group in need of being educated. This focus on ‘educating’ Roma in how to live properly, in the various aspects such as how to live a healthy lifestyle, how to become proud of their culture, how to become integrated, served to render the Roma migrants mute. The projects were shaped around the concerns of the organisers – what the organisers considered a ‘healthy life’, ‘Roma culture’ or ‘integration’ into British society. Additionally, what the projects had in common was
the understanding of Roma as an *a priori* group that is bounded and defined by a specific ethnicity. The two projects were a form of state care or political care because their stated aims were to improve the well-being of Roma. Yet, in effect they were attempting to police the behaviour of Roma by locating social problems in Roma identity. Roma were defined as the ‘suffering subjects’, as a group that is defined by its marginalisation, exclusion and persecution. When Michal tried to question this narrative of victimisation, he was unsuccessful.

Identity is an aggregate of several qualities, such as personhood, gender, and a sense of collectivity. The sense of collective belonging can emerge through different processes, such as shared experience or collective struggle (Rouse 1995). Third sector organisations which aim to represent and advocate on behalf of Roma, and public policy discourse, often consider Roma ethnicity as the main characteristic of a Roma person’s identity. In this discourse, solidarity is expected to run along ethnic lines, rather than being based on different attributes, such as shared citizenship, religion or political beliefs. Ethnic and national identity are always political and relate to the issue of belonging to a wider collectivity and the relationship between this collectivity and the state. The case of Roma in Europe is specific because Roma do not have a claim to a territory. The varied peoples described by the term Roma or Gypsies live all across Europe but do not have their own state. Roma are thus sometimes called a ‘stateless nation’ (discussed in Vermeersch 2006). The construction of ‘Roma’ as a nation has been part of the attempts at ethno-political mobilisation of Roma.

The concept of ethnicity rests on the belief that people can be classified into bounded groups according to certain characteristics. These can be shared ancestry, language, beliefs or physical characteristics. Ethnic identity is however not an inherent characteristic of individuals and groups, nor is it based in biology. Rather it is produced and shaped through specific political processes and interactions.
between groups. Barth (1969) argues that ethnicity is produced on borders and through interactions between neighbouring groups. For him, ethnic groups are categories of identification and ‘have the characteristic of organizing interaction between people’ (Barth 1969:10). Rather than an inherent characteristic, ethnic identity is thereby a tool used for defining membership of a group. The act of ascribing ethnic identity to a person or a group of people also serves to distinguish those who belong to the group from those who are considered to be outside the group. Barth further states that ethnic groups develop ways of maintaining group boundaries despite constant movement of people across boundaries through processes such as intermarriage (Barth 1969:21). Ethnic groups therefore need to be marked by positing persistent differences in behaviour or cultural differences in order to remain separate from other groups. A person is ascribed an ethnic identity by virtue of their origin but to maintain this ethnic identity, it is necessary to perform specific roles and behaviours in order to continually conform to that which is expected within the group. Barth’s (1969) argument that ethnicity is produced on borders is relevant when we look at Roma, because Roma tend to live dispersed within and in close interaction with other groups. Because of this close contact and pressure from outside, that is from gadže, constant performance of and reaffirmation of a non-gadže identity becomes important. Roma do not engage with the concept of ethnicity, instead being Roma has to be performed through daily practice (see Gay y Blasco 1999, Nagy 2018, Stewart 1997).

In the last three decades there have been efforts by non-Roma and some Roma intellectuals to mobilise Roma into an ethnic, or national, entity and use these efforts for political purposes. Brubaker argues that the actions of people such as those he calls ‘ethnopolitical entrepreneurs’ have a performative character (Brubaker 2002:166, italics in original). The performative actions of invoking groups call the groups into being and thus, by reifying groups, the ethnopolitical entrepreneurs may
in fact contribute to producing the object around which they mobilise. Even though the two projects I discuss in this chapter state their aims as the 'empowerment' of Roma, to give Roma people a voice in their local area, or to improve the health of Roma in Leeds, these initiatives contribute to the reification of Roma as ‘other’: as different and as needing additional support in order to be ‘empowered’. Despite the rise in the number of Romani NGOs and projects aimed at Roma throughout Europe, the Romani emancipation movement has not been very successful in the widespread mobilisation of ordinary Roma (Vermeersch 2006; Stewart 2013). Even though ethnic emancipation has the potential to increase a sense of well-being, for instance it has the potential to change public perception of ethnic minorities, it needs to be accompanied by structural changes which would enable Roma to have access to resources.

Conclusion

The frustration that many of my interlocutors expressed following their interactions with the state stemmed from their expectations that the state should provide care for people who reside legally within its territory and who fulfil their obligations towards the state, just as Milan did when he was unable to work after injuring himself when doing his job. And as Iveta implied in her comment about there not being ‘the kind of work that is for us’, the state does not ‘care’ because it does not create the conditions for Roma to have a decent standard of living and a sense of dignity. The fact that the state ‘does not care’ was at times presented to me as a confirmation of the moral failure of the state, especially by those Roma migrants who tried to ‘do everything properly’, as I illustrate with the example of Petra and Milan. ‘Doing everything properly’ was used to describe conducting one’s life according to moral and legal norms and expectations, at least as much as possible. This meant

58 Similar criticisms could be directed at knowledge production and research on Roma, which contributes to the ongoing perception of Roma as separate from the rest of the society and as different, as I note in Chapter Five.
working, having payslips, sending one’s children to school, not making fraudulent benefit claims – all these behaviours were presented to me as a sign of ‘doing things properly’ and as part of striving to achieve a normal life.

In the second part of this chapter, I discussed how framing social issues in terms of ethnicity and providing state care on the basis of one’s ethnic identity contributes to making institutional factors and structural inequalities invisible. These structural causes of inequality and continued marginalisation are not addressed and the image of Roma as a problematic group is reproduced. The availability of funding for projects meant to support Roma is part of the trend of increased visibility of Roma as a group that is marginalised and needs additional services. I have argued that the projects discussed in this chapter need to be put into a wider European context. The ongoing representation of Roma as socially excluded contributed to the emergence of local, national and transnational actors who claim to act on behalf of and represent Roma in recent decades (see Rővid 2013; Vermeersch 2006) and continues to contribute to the ongoing perception of Roma as somehow different. However, the focus on social exclusion identifies Roma with misery and thus reproduces stereotypes, albeit unintentionally (Rővid 2013:3). In addition, increased visibility does not guarantee that it will lead to increased ability to participate in public life and influence decisions that affect Roma individuals, because institutional factors prevent minorities such as the Roma from having access to decision making (McGarry and Agarin 2014).

As I have shown in this chapter, the British state implements policies and practices that contribute to the continuous exclusion of Roma from state care. In order to access state care, Roma migrants must participate in the employability sector or they have to participate in performing Roma ethnic identity as it is understood by the state apparatus. While Chapter Five described how notions of difference and inferiority are located in the discourse on Roma, this chapter discussed how Roma
‘exceptionality’ is produced through the social practices of non-Roma actors, institutions and bureaucratic practices. As I discussed in Chapter Four, care between kin is used to create, forge or maintain relationships, to create a sense of home and of belonging with one another. State care, in a similar way, can be used to create, maintain or disrupt a sense of collectivity and belonging together. The withdrawal or conditionality of state care can lead to a sense of exclusion. The final chapter describes religious conversions of Roma and discusses ways in which Roma seek to escape their position of ‘exceptionality’.
Chapter 7: The Life and Light church, Suffering and Care

Introduction

In the second half of my fieldwork, after first Pavel, then Iveta and later the rest of their family converted to the Life and Light church, I regularly attended religious services and events with them. In April 2014, Iveta told me that Martina, another church member, needed help with filling in an application form for a disability benefit and did not know who to ask. Iveta asked me if I could help her with this and I agreed. After my first visit to Martina’s house with Iveta, Martina invited me to her home for coffee regularly, and I also went to several hospital appointments with her. Martina had a number of medical conditions including kidney failure and had to undergo dialysis three times every week. Martina did not receive any welfare benefits, but her husband Gejza (who had worked in the UK previously) did. Martina did not have any income of her own and was therefore financially dependent on Gejza. As well as attending hospital appointments with Martina to interpret for her, I found myself dealing with banks, bailiffs and energy companies on Gejza’s behalf. As Martina learnt during this time, Gejza had unpaid debts from his past, which the couple now had to pay off. During my visits, Martina often talked to me about God and religion. I was curious to learn more about how, or whether, religion had helped Martina to deal with her illness and other forms of hardship which she experienced, and I asked Martina if I could attend one of her dialysis sessions with her, which she agreed to.

During the dialysis session, Martina and I sat and talked quietly, while Martina’s blood circulated through the dialysis machine for four hours. I had an ambivalent feeling about this bodily connection between Martina and the dialysis machine, which filtered toxins from her blood, and thus prolonged Martina’s life while neither
curing nor healing her. ‘Care’ and ‘cure’ tend to be treated as two different and separate things (Mol 2008). ‘Care’ describes activities done to make daily life more bearable whereas ‘cure’ describes ‘interventions in the course of disease’ and the possibility of achieving the absence of a disease (Mol 2008:1). In practice, care and cure often overlap and for chronic conditions, cure does not actually ‘cure’, it does not result in the absence of a disease, rather it makes life more bearable (Mol 2008:1). The dialysis machine provided a form of care in the sense that it aimed to lessen the bodily suffering caused by kidney failure: but it did not just make life more bearable, it made Martina’s life possible because she would have died without regular dialysis. Yet, as I illustrate below, Martina experienced her distress and suffering not as located solely within the failure of her biology, but as encompassing several aspects of her life.

In her book *Casualties of Care*, Ticktin (2011) writes about the ways in which the French state creates particular bureaucratic regimes, which she calls ‘regimes of care’, which are then used to distinguish between migrants who can stay in France and those who cannot. Ticktin (2011) states that in the context of an increasingly anti-immigration climate in France, the French state put in place humanitarian clauses which allowed asylum seekers who were sick and unable to get medical treatment in their country of origin or women who were subjected to violence to stay in France. Care, protection, and immigration status were redefined as ‘a moral imperative to relieve suffering’ (Ticktin 2011:3). Migrants were allowed to stay only as humanitarian exceptions and were made visible as victims who need help, what Ticktin calls the ‘suffering body’, not as citizens with equal rights (Ticktin 2011). These humanitarian exceptions clauses were accompanied by new forms of policing and surveillance, where those who did not fit the criteria of ‘humanitarian exception’ were excluded from receiving state care and ultimately from being able to stay in France legally. The situation of Roma migrants in Leeds is different because as EU
citizens they are able to stay in the UK legally. However, as I noted above, state care is becoming increasingly conditional. In a similar way as noted by Ticktin (2011), the British state invests resources into selectively caring for ‘suffering bodies’. Even though Martina was able to access medical care and have regular dialysis, in order to relieve one form of suffering, the bureaucratic practices around benefit entitlement excluded Martina from receiving other forms of state care, like welfare benefits.

Using the same narrative that Martina used when I was with her in hospital as a background, this chapter looks at religion and conversions of Roma to the Life and Light church. The narrative of conversion, which tends to be an account of a sudden embodied experience of being in the presence of God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit, is an important technique which Life and Light converts use in the construction and presentation of a new self. My informants used the figures of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit used interchangeably. Michal explained to me the relation between them as them being ‘three in one’. Using an analogy of an egg, I was told: ‘you have the yolk, the egg white and the shell. So they are three things, but they are all part of one egg. And it’s like that with Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit. They are three different entities, but they are part of one whole.’ As I illustrate in later sections of the chapter, conversions to the Life and Light church and practices such as religious healing and prayer centre around people’s embodied experiences. The embodied experience of Pentecostal religious healing and religious services with music and prayer engages people’s senses and contrasts with the embodied experience of biomedical care and treatment, where the focus is on the body as an ‘object of suffering’ (Kleinman 1988, Taussig 1980).

Both religion and medicine are concerned with human suffering and attempt to provide ways to overcome or deal with this suffering, but they do so in different ways (Csordas 2002). Biomedicine ‘has developed in tandem with the international
development of capitalism’ (Hahn and Kleinman 1983:320) and is an aspect of state care. It is legitimated by the state to provide care for the bodies of the state’s subjects and to attempt to relieve or reduce some forms of suffering. Through biomedicine, the state provides some form of care for Martina as a ‘suffering body’ (see Ticktin 2011), but Martina was excluded from other forms of state care. Her inability to work, her financial reliance on her current husband, and her positionality as a Slovak Roma woman in the UK were to a large degree overlooked by the state and not addressed through state care provision. As I discussed in Chapter Six, state care in Britain in the form of welfare benefits is becoming increasingly conditional on being seen as employable. Martina applied for Personal Independence Payment\textsuperscript{59} but her application was turned down because she had never worked in the UK. As I argue throughout the thesis, care practices are a vehicle for expressing or forming a sense of belonging, and withdrawing or refusing to provide care where it is expected disrupts social ties and creates a sense of exclusion. This chapter argues that at a time when state care is changing and becoming more precarious, exclusionary and difficult for Roma to access, religion can be used to provide aspects of care which the state has withdrawn and thus to create a sense of belonging to a religious collectivity.

In the four hours that I spent with Martina during her dialysis, she told me the story of how, in the years that followed the onset of her kidney dysfunction and the start of her dialysis treatment, she experienced domestic violence from her then husband, and how this experience of suffering led her to eventually convert to Pentecostal Christianity. In her narrative, her conversion to Christianity and her physical vulnerability and reliance on biomedicine, which she also experienced as being unpredictable, were interconnected. Martina was diagnosed with ‘end-stage kidney disease’ in 2006, and the long-term dialysis has taken its toll on Martina’s body, as

\textsuperscript{59} A welfare benefit for people unable to work due to long-term illness or disability.
she said. She has developed other medical issues, some directly connected to
dialysis, such as loss of strength and sensation in her right hand because of poor
circulation into the hand caused by the fistula in her arm, and some indirectly, such
as thyroid problems which have resulted in joint and muscle pain. I look at how
Martina's relationship to her past and future life is shaped both by biomedicine and
technology, and her religion. Martina's experience of being diagnosed with a life-
threatening illness and her dependency on technology in order to stay alive has led
to Martina's re-negotiation of her position within the wider social world, and the re-
negotiation of her relationship with others. Through her conversion to Pentecostal
Christianity and her relationship with Jesus, who is experienced by converts as an
‘intimate other’, Martina has gained a new sense of self. This new position vis-à-vis
the world and a new sense of self is articulated in the narratives of Life and Light
converts as a sense of being spasený (‘saved’ in Czech). Being saved is sometimes
used interchangeably with being uzdravený (healed). In this chapter, I argue that
being spasený or uzdravený in the sense in which it was used by my interlocutors is
not about being cured of disease in the biomedical sense, but about the re-making
of self so as not to be defined by suffering.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: first it provides a brief overview of recent
religious history in the former Czechoslovakia and outlines the main information
about the Life and Light church (Vie et Lumière) which my informants attended. I
then give a short account of anthropological approaches to the body, the self and
embodied experience. Drawing on Martina's narrative, I then look at religious
conversion as a way of recasting one's experience of hardship and suffering. The
chapter argues that this is done through having a sense of a personal relationship
with Jesus which is created and cultivated through embodied practices such as
prayer, religious healing, and the singing of religious songs which create a sense of
'being in the presence of the Holy Spirit'. This relationship with Jesus is then
maintained through the daily religious practice of converts. The shared relationship with Jesus is then used to create a sense of a collectivity among Life and Light converts, as I describe below. Finally, the chapter describes a specific experience of religious healing and argues that through provision of care, the Life and Light church creates a sense of belonging and inclusion among Roma.

**Life and Light and religion in the Czech Republic**

Roma in former Czechoslovakia have historically been Catholic. Similar to other European countries, former Czechoslovakia was historically predominantly Christian, with a mixture of Protestant and Catholic churches. During the communist years (1948-1989), religious belief was discouraged in both the Czech and Slovak parts of the country and some religious organisations, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses or the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and others, were abolished. In 1949 a special government department was established which was responsible for the control of internal affairs of the churches which were permitted to exist.  

However, despite these restrictions placed by the government on churches and religious practice, religious belief was not necessarily wiped out by communist policies. The policies affected people’s ability to publicly practice religion, but religious belief persisted, although not equally among all social groups. After the fall of the communist bloc in 1989, Czechoslovakia (as well as other countries in the post-socialist bloc - see for example Fosztó 2009) experienced a religious revival. Many of the previously abolished churches were re-established during this period, and new religious organisations, which previously had not existed in the country, were established. There is no data in the Census that breaks down religious belief among different ethnic groups in the Czech Republic or Slovakia. The majority of Roma that I met said that they believed in God, and their religious affiliation ranged

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60 The relevant government directives were: National office for church affairs establishment bill (No. 217/49 Sb.), and the Economic provision of churches and religious organisations bill (218/49 Sb).
from Catholic, to Jehovah’s Witnesses, to New Christian movements (such as the Light and Life), to a small number of converts to Islam, as I noted above.

Some scholars who worked with Roma in Slovakia state that Slovak Roma have sometimes been discouraged from attending Catholic churches which non-Roma Slovaks visited to worship (see Podolinská 2007, 2013). Slovak Roma have thus experienced marginalisation in their religious life, as well as in other aspects of their lives. Pentecostal Christian churches have become popular among Roma in both countries, even though some churches tend to lose numbers over time (see for example Hrustič 2013). This trend towards conversion to Evangelical or Pentecostal Christianity among Roma has been observed across Europe (see for example Gay y Blasco 1999, Thurfjell and Marsh 2013, Thurfjell 2013). As I noted above, the church which I attended with my interlocutors during fieldwork was part of the Life and Light church. The Life and Light church is one of several Pentecostal Christian churches with large numbers of Roma converts. It was established in 1952 in France by a non-Roma pastor called Clément le Cossec with the aim of converting Roma to Pentecostal Christianity. It has since expanded across Europe and it is now mainly a Roma church, led by Roma. According to Thurfjell (2013:41), by the mid-1990s over 500,000 Roma had been baptised by the church and over 4,600 had been trained as pastors. The numbers of current converts are likely to be even higher. Life and Light is now active in more than forty countries (Thurfjell 2013) and has a congregation in several British cities, led by a Czech or Slovak Roma pastor. These congregations are part of a trans-national network that spans across Europe.

I found it difficult to gain information about the structure of the church from my informants. Not long after first Pavel and then Iveta started attending church services, I asked them what the name of the church was. Iveta was not entirely sure, but after checking with Pavel said that it was Živé světlo (‘Living light’ in Czech). Roma who converted to Life and Light tend to call themselves simply
křesťané (Christians). Even after several months of me attending church, it was difficult to engage people in direct discussion about the structure of the church. For instance, when I asked the Pastor about whether there was a system of hierarchy in the structure of the church, he told me that ‘we are all equal, there is only one above us and he is Jesus.’ When I pressed the question, the Pastor admitted that ‘yes, there are pastors, and student pastors, and prophets. But none of us is above the others.’ This is of course not entirely true, as pastors have higher status than regular church members and there are also differences of status among pastors.

It suggests that what the Pastor meant was that in relation to God, or to Jesus, all people are equal according to the doctrine of the Life and Light church. This notion of equality is an important aspect of the Christian narrative as it is used by Roma and specifically by Life and Light. It is part of the project to create a Roma collective identity, articulated in the form of a brotherhood or sisterhood, where křesťané refer to each other as brothers and sisters. It is a form of fictive kinship. A similar thing happened on other occasions when I tried to find out more about the church structure and organisation – people instead started talking to me about Christian teachings, the Bible and Jesus. The information that I have about the structure of the church is, therefore, based on my observations and on information from other authors writing about the church. What was important to my interlocutors was the content of the Christian teachings, their relationship to Jesus, the support and social network that the church created, and a sense of belonging within Roma Christian collectivity.

The Roma pastors from the UK regularly travel to other countries in Europe, to Christian conventions or to Bible study school. The leading pastors from France visit

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61 I refer to the local pastor as ‘Pastor’ throughout the chapter, as this is how he was referred to by my interlocutors. He was not addressed by his name; instead he was addressed as ‘Pastor’. His position as a pastor was thus a central aspect of his social identity. When speaking about this specific person, I use Pastor with a capital P, whereas when talking about others or about the church function I use lower case, as in pastor.
the British congregations and conventions. Life and Light is a Bible-based church and among its central tenets is the notion that Jesus rose from the cross and is alive and that křesťané can speak to Jesus or to God directly through prayer. Focusing on the fact that ‘Jesus rose from the cross’ is a symbolic way of distinguishing the Life and Light church from Catholic teachings. I heard pastors and church members often point out that the cross is empty because ‘Jesus rose from the cross’. The cross without the figure of crucified Jesus, which can be seen in Catholic churches, symbolises the fact that ‘Jesus is alive’. I was told repeatedly by my informants that ‘Jesus suffered on the cross so that he could lift the suffering from others’. The notion of ‘suffering’ being lifted by or through one’s relationship with Jesus (perceived as the embodiment of God) was regularly recounted to me during fieldwork, and I will examine it in more detail below. The Life and Light church also has congregations among English Gypsies and Travellers. During my fieldwork some of the leading pastors from among the English Gypsies sometimes attended the Roma events. The religious movement thus contributes to a new sense of collectivity among European Roma and Gypsies based on a shared experience of exclusion and discrimination, and a shared morality.

The church actively provides social work and evangelisation work among Roma and Gypsy groups across Europe (Thurfjell 2013). For instance, towards the end of my fieldwork, Roma pastors from several English cities organised a collection of clothes and money among the members of their congregations. The donations were then taken by the pastors to several Roma settlements in Slovakia where they distributed the collected clothes and food that was bought with the collected money. This was one of a series of regular trips to the Czech Republic and Slovakia where the pastors, usually accompanied by student pastors and sometimes the pastors’ wives, visit those perceived as suffering and provide them with support through particular care practices.
The ‘care’ that the church provides to both converts and non-converts thus has two forms. First, it is material help in the form of the clothes and food that is distributed. Second, it is also a form of moral or spiritual support because the pastors and their companions tell their stories of conversion and of being ‘saved’. In these narratives of conversion and healing, which often talk about having an embodied sense of being in the presence of the Holy Spirit or of Jesus, the experience of suffering and hardship are related to the suffering of Jesus and to his salvation, in a similar way as it is described in traditional Catholic teaching. According to Life and Light teachings, pain and suffering are ‘lifted’ and become more bearable by being shared with others and with Jesus, similar to other Pentecostal churches (Luhrman 2005). I return to this point in more detail when I discuss Martina’s narrative. As well as providing ‘care’ for poor Roma during evangelisation trips to Slovakia or the Czech Republic, the church provided ‘care’ to congregation members in Leeds. For instance, when Andrea, a Czech Roma woman in her late forties, lost her housing benefit following her husband’s unexpected death, or when Miro had to pay a £700 fine for driving without valid insurance, members of the congregation in Leeds made a collection to help pay for these expenses.

As I describe in Chapter Six, state care, for example in the form of welfare benefits, places Roma in an inferior position towards gadže. Additionally, provision of state care is either being withdrawn or increasingly conditional, or it is premised on the narrative of Roma as an ‘exception’, as an ethnic minority which is associated with social problems. By being treated as an ‘exception’ Roma are excluded from some collectivities and forms of belonging, as I noted in Chapter Six. There is thus another aspect to the practice of evangelisation and social work, or ‘care work’, performed by pastors and converts. It is a project to construct a ‘Romani nation’, and Roma as the ‘chosen people’ who have been persecuted because they are being tested by God. The Life and Light (as well as other Roma churches – see for
example Gay y Blasco 1999) teaches that Roma come from a Jewish tribe who left Sinai, wandered to India and eventually found its way to Europe. This story establishes Roma as related to Jews, another group which have also historically been persecuted. It is used to create the idea of Roma as a ‘stateless nation’ and constructs Roma as a group that has a connection to Jesus, and marks Roma as different from other groups because of this perceived direct connection. Help in times of hardship, such as that described above, would usually be expected from one’s kin network and used to demonstrate and re-affirm a sense of belonging with one another (Drotbohm 2015). The ‘care work’ provided by the church can thus create a sense of being part of a specific Roma and Christian moral collectivity. The distribution of care or welfare in the form of money, food, or clothes by Roma converts to other Roma also serves to shift their position from ‘welfare recipients’ (which they are in relation to the state) to ‘welfare providers’, and to change and subvert their position of inferiority vis-à-vis the state and the gadže, which I discussed in previous chapters.

Conversions and the Christian life

Martina’s story of religious conversion and her experience of life-threatening illness raise important questions about understandings of person and the location of the self. The Life and Light church understands the body and self as different from one another; the body is a temporary container inhabited by an immortal soul. This immortal soul is where the real self is located. Křesťané (converts) often say that in the past, before they converted, they ‘žili ve světě’ (‘lived in the world’ in Czech) or ‘byli ve světě’ (‘were in the world’ in Czech). This ‘living in the world’ refers to being concerned with material wealth and bodily pleasures, and focusing on oneself instead of on the ongoing re-creation of good, or normal, and harmonious social relationships. ‘Living in the world’ therefore means, for instance, indulging in
activities such as drinking alcohol, smoking, and having extra-marital affairs – activities that are likely to cause conflict and friction in social relationships and to be seen as a transgression of moral boundaries, in a similar way as in other Pentecostal groups (see for example Gay y Blasco 1999).

The Life and Light church expects converts (křesťané) to refrain from such practices and in order to gain an official position within the church, such as becoming a student pastor or a member of the church music band, a convert has to ‘live according to the Bible’ and be a ‘správný křesťan’ ('proper Christian' in Czech). This means (among other things) avoiding alcohol, giving up smoking, not engaging in 'improper relationships' and obeying the law. The Pastor told me that křesťané have to obey the law because they represent the church and Roma as a collectivity and that it is important for them to be seen as law-abiding. As Roma have been portrayed by the media and in public discourse as a group that is associated with social problems and with behaviour that transgresses moral boundaries, as I noted in previous chapters, this focus on changing practices among its members is important for the church’s attempt to shift the perception of Roma and to construct Roma as a moral collectivity.

In addition to changing practices which tend to lead to social conflict, the Life and Light church preaches an ideal of forgiveness if a person commits a moral transgression. This ideal of forgiveness is premised on the notion of a benevolent God who forgives transgressions and sins as long as one repents. During discussions about moral transgressions and forgiveness, I often heard the example of Jesus who forgave others. Křesťané strive to forgive any perceived wrongdoing towards themselves in order to feel inner klid (calmness in Czech) and pokoj (peace), instead of focusing on anger or retaliation. In order to repent, a person has to admit that he or she has transgressed moral boundaries. One of the techniques through which this is done is svědectví (witness / testimony); a form of public
confession usually performed in front of the congregation where converts admit their past moral transgressions. Through this narrative of svědectví, the moral transgressions are placed in the past and the convert performs and re-affirms his or her new moral self (see also Thurfjell 2013). I discuss the importance of admitting to one’s transgressions and the notion of inner ‘calmness’ in more detail later, using Martina’s narrative as an example. Svědectví is not used only as a form of public repentance, it can also be used to publicly demonstrate one’s belief in God. For instance following Iveta’s cancer treatment after which the cancer went into remission, the Pastor called Iveta to the front of the congregation during a conference in order to tell her story of being healed. In her svědectví, Iveta said that she knew that she would be healed because she ‘dala to do Božích rukou’ (‘placed it in God’s hands’ in Czech). Narratives of healing are used to create a sense of something out of the ordinary, which is referred to as the ‘Boží moc’ (‘power of God’ in Czech).

Life and Light teachings support established gender norms. Relationships between men and women, and how they should be conducted, was discussed very frequently during church services, as well as during Bible study and prayer meetings. According to Life and Light, only men can become pastors and men are the head of the household. Women on the other hand can be prophets and can have the ability to have spiritual or prophetic dreams. A woman should obey her husband, but a man should respect and listen to his wife. Thus, whilst Life and Light teachings support established gender norms and hierarchies (where men are treated as superior and stronger, and women as inferior and weaker), it also prescribes how these relationships are conducted. This notion of respect that men are expected to show to their wives, together with the fact that Life and Light forbids alcohol consumption and smoking, has resulted in better relationships between spouses in many cases. Iveta told me that she had ‘suffered’ a lot with Pavel before
his conversion because he used to get drunk and often got into fights when drunk, which caused arguments between them. Iveta also told me that on a couple of occasions he only narrowly avoided criminal charges for causing bodily harm. Once he converted and stopped drinking, their relationship improved. Similarly, the Pastor said in his svědectví how he used to commit fraud, drink, smoke and fornicate, and admitted that he caused pain and suffering to his wife with this behaviour. Conversions can thus lead to changes in the relations between genders whilst maintaining the ideology of established gender roles.

Similar situations have been observed among other converts. For example, in her study of the Gitanos (Spanish Gypsies) in Madrid, Gay y Blasco (1999) found that both men and women agreed that the spread of the Gitano Evangelical church improved the situation of Gitano women. Gay y Blasco (1999) argues that this change in the situation of women was the result of the reformulation of how male converts were expected to behave. In the Gitano social world, men have a higher status than women. Following conversion, male converts were expected to give up ‘worldly entertainments’ like gambling, smoking, drinking or ‘going to discos to chat up’ Spanish women (Gay y Blasco 1999:121). Some of these activities are an important aspect in the Gitano definition of masculinity, and the fact that Gitano converts reject them tends to result in a better situation for their wives. Even though Gitano women still had to obey their husbands, converts ‘emphasise the husband’s obligation to honour and respect his wife” (Gay y Blasco 1999:122). This is very similar to what I observed among Roma Life and Light converts. Even though gender roles remained unchanged - women remained responsible for doing the housework and childcare and men had more freedom to go out - the reformulation of masculinity and what behaviour was expected from men resulted in better relationships between spouses and in better situation for women.
'Living in the world' also refers to acquiring and ‘showing off’ material wealth, such as golden jewellery. The ‘showing off’ or focus on material wealth can also lead to the disruption of social relationships, for instance by causing jealousy or envy and conflict. There is a duality of the church’s and converts’ approach to wealth, as I noted above. Material possessions can be a form of showing one’s respectability and status. This is important because the Life and Light pastors and converts in general represent the church and represent Roma as a moral collectivity, as stated above. Yet, as I was told by my Roma informants and as I noted in Chapter Four, money and material possessions should not be treated as an end in themself, rather they are a necessary aspect of social life and provide a way to forge and reaffirm social relationships. Focusing on material possessions and wealth leads to ‘living in the world’. Life and Light church teaches converts not to focus on material possessions and it formulates hardship as being a test from God; it is a test of a person’s faith. Following Iveta’s cancer diagnosis, Pavel said at several prayer meetings that he did not understand why his family had to go through another hardship. He said that he had finally found a job and felt that his family’s situation was improving. Additionally, all his family had converted to Life and Light, and they had all stopped smoking and drinking alcohol and were doing their best to behave according to the church’s teachings. Pavel said that he did not understand why they were faced with yet another misfortune. The Pastor explained that it was ‘the work of the Devil’ who was trying to ‘turn you away from the right path’. The pastor’s explanation was that because Pavel and Iveta were conducting themselves as správní křesťané (proper Christians), the Devil thought that he was losing them and tried to turn them away from God by creating misfortune. This is important in the overall narrative of the Life and Light church, which argues that Roma suffering is a test by God. Suffering and hardship are thus formulated as being an expression of a relationship between Roma and God/Jesus and of Roma being the ‘chosen people’,
in a similar way as Pavel's questioning of his family's misfortune was explained by
the Pastor as a proof of their 'faith'.

My informants contrasted 'living in the world' with the post-conversion experience of
správní křesťané (proper Christians) who have 'welcomed Jesus into their lives'.
However, even converts at times struggled not to become too immersed 'in the
world' and to change their practices and dispositions. For instance, many converts
struggled with giving up smoking and with avoiding negative emotions, such as
jealousy and envy. Some converts dropped out of church, because they found it
difficult to change their practices and dispositions or because of pressure from
family members who had not converted. Many people who dropped out later joined
the church again, but those who were unable to change their behaviour according to
Life and Light expectations were not able to gain official positions and higher status
in the church. Miro, a Czech Roma man, had been member of the church for two
years before Michal joined and converted. Before Michal joined the congregation,
Miro's role was to play the keyboard or a guitar and to lead the singing of hymns.
Because Michal was able to play several instruments, including both the guitar and
the keyboard, the Pastor soon asked him to accompany Miro in leading the music
during service. Despite Miro being a church member for a couple of years, he had
not managed to give up smoking. Additionally, he missed church on several
occasions because of family problems. Michal on the other hand gave up smoking
two months after converting and he also had a good rapport with the Pastor, as had
the rest of Michal's family. About six months after Michal joined the church, the
Pastor asked him to lead the music performance during service instead of Miro.
Following this, Miro stopped going to church for several months, but eventually
returned.
Religious conversions and dealing with suffering

This section is based on the conversation that Martina and I had when I accompanied her to her dialysis session. As well as religion and the concept of God, which are psychological tools and intangible technologies that people use to create meaning out of their experience, the tangible medical technology played a significant role in Martina's life. In the case of dialysis, technology and the dialysis machine act as a kind of regular temporary extension of the patient's body which becomes an intrinsic component of the patient's life. The regular 'connectedness' to the dialysis machine blurs the boundaries between the individual body, the social body and the body politic (Schepers-Hughes and Lock 1987) and it also serves as a visible reminder of one’s mortality. Kleinman (1988) differentiates between illness, disease and sickness. Illness refers to the way a disorder or disability is manifested in and impacts the sick person’s day-to-day life, and how they and their social network respond to it. Disease refers to the way that biomedicine and medical practitioners within biomedicine look at the sick person’s problems and reformulate them ‘only as an alteration in biological structure or functioning’ (Kleinman 1988:5 italics in original). Sickness is the understanding of a disorder in relation to wider economic, political and institutional forces, such as the distribution of poverty or exposure to carcinogens which place some sections of population at a higher risk of certain disorders.

In her narrative, Martina did not relate her problems to wider societal structures nor to her identity as a Roma woman. However, as Taussig (1980:3) notes, neither symptoms of diseases nor the technology used in medical care are 'things-in-themselves'; they are also 'signs of social relations disguised as natural things'. Christianity and its notion of the individual self understands illness as being located within the self or within the body. In some societies however, illness or sickness
tends to be attributed to malevolent social relations (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1990). It is possible to extend this concept of sickness being caused by malevolent social relations towards Roma, who tend to have worse health and a lower life expectancy than majority populations in many European countries (see for example FSG 2009), as noted in previous chapters. The malevolent social relationships in this case are the relationships of inequality and wider structures and processes that create these conditions of inequality, which then cause poverty and limited opportunities for social mobility, which in turn contribute together with other factors to worse health and more hardship among Roma. Religion thus provides a form of resistance which enables converts to work on the self and to re-cast their experiences of hardship or suffering because they are unable to change the societal structures that produce these experiences.

Without the dialysis treatment, Martina’s body would fail to function and eventually cease to exist. During the dialysis her body was ‘remade’ so that it remained a socially acceptable body and she could then re-enter her social world. Biomedicine focuses on the continuing remaking and maintenance of bodies, whilst Life and Light provides converts with techniques of re-making the self through embodied practices. Even though Life and Light understands the self as being separate from the body, as being located within an immortal soul, the practices used in the church focus on engaging the body and its senses. Csordas (2002) uses the concept of the ‘embodied self’ to describe the fact that a person both has a body and is a body (2002). Humans experience their self as being located in their body, but at the same time the body is also experienced as an object. Csordas further states that the concept of the embodied self collapses the distinction between subject and object (2002). According to Csordas (2002:58, italics in original), the body is both the ‘subject of culture’ and the ‘existential ground of culture’. All cultural objects, including selves, are constituted and objectified as part of an ongoing process of
socialisation throughout life (Csordas 2002). The body is therefore always experienced through specific culture, and at the same time the body is a tool with which cultural practices are performed because socialisation is an embodied process. Understandings of the body inform social practices which in turn produce bodies that conform to social norms and expectations. Ideas of how a female or male body should look like vary between social groups, as I noted in Chapter Four. This includes ideas about whether bodies or which parts of bodies should be covered, and ideas related to hair length or facial hair. As well as ideas about what bodies should look like, ideas about how bodies should react to sensory stimuli differ across social groups, which I discuss in more detail below.

The first part of the conversation between myself and Martina is an account of how Martina started to ‘look to God’. In other parts of our conversation, while she talked about other things, her religion, her abusive ex-husband and worries about her daughter were often featured. Following this, I will explore the role that religion, God, and Jesus as the son of God, play in the imagination of possible futures but also in recreating the meaning of the past. Martina used religion to connect the different experiences of her life and to look for meaning. Martina’s narrative is in a way a long svědectví (witness/testimony) which she used to tell me the important events in her life and to put them in relation to each other. Retrospective narrativisation is often used by the chronically ill to order their experience and to give it meaning (Kleinman 1988), in a similar way to how conversion narratives and svědectví work.

Marketa: Were you a believer already in Slovakia or did you become one here?\(^{62}\)

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\(^{62}\) The conversation was conducted and recorded using a combination of Czech and Slovak. It was translated by the author and edited to omit pauses and interruptions and to increase clarity.
Martina: I became a believer when — it came about with the situation when I was in a hospital for a very long time, I had a bacterial infection. And they couldn’t find out where the infection was. And it seemed like I was about to die. During that time I got about a hundred infusions, four types of antibiotic and nothing was working. And they were trying to find out where the inflammation was. Because they could not find where the infection could be hiding, right. So I had an ECG, but through my throat, just like when they are doing an examination of your intestines. And during the ECG, when they inserted the probe and the camera into my throat, they found out that the tube through which I had the dialysis, that it was connected to my heart artery very much and it had been there a long time, in fact six years. So the infection could also be there, but they didn’t know exactly. And because they were giving me antibiotics and it was not working, they were a bit uncertain, and they let me go home. But because they let me go home, they told me that I had to go to the main hospital again, which was sixty kilometres away. So again, I went there with my parents, we already had an appointment and we went there. And the doctor who was in charge there, the main consultant of the dialysis ward, and the doctor, well they told us that it is the end, that I would not continue to have dialysis in Zajačí, \(^{63}\) and that I will stay at home. That they do not know what to do with me and that I could die within the hour. My condition has just worsened so much, that they did not know how long I would last, an hour, maybe the journey home, five days, a week, a month. They did not know how long I would last and that even with the dialysis that I had had, that it is the end of me (že už končím — literally ‘I am finishing’ in Slovak). My parents were shocked. My father went out, he left the room. My mum was begging them,

\(^{63}\) The small town in Slovakia where Martina lived. The name is fictional.
she started crying, that they must have a way, that they mustn't leave me like that. They said that they would think of something. And we went outside. My dad was waiting in front of the hospital, sitting on a bench. And I sat next to him and leaned on him and said 'Dad, until when, tell me until when will I have', and I was crying very much 'I want to live', and he told me 'I don't know, but lean on our Lord, come.'

In Martina’s narrative, her encounter with religious faith is very personal and is connected to her experience of having to confront her mortality. As Martina mentions in the account above, this episode of crisis when her life was in danger happened after she had been on dialysis for six years. Before this part of our conversation, Martina described to me how she had refused to have dialysis for a long time, despite being told by medical practitioners that her condition would deteriorate faster without the dialysis treatment. Eventually, she ended up being told that she would die without dialysis, and still she refused to have dialysis because as she says 'I knew that if I have it, that's it, that's the end. If I agree to have it once, I will have to have it forever.' What Martina meant by saying 'that's the end' was that it would be the end of her life as it was before - going on dialysis treatment would be an irreversible step that would have profound changes to her day-to-day way of being and to her status as an independent person, and the dependence of her continuing embodied existence on medical technology. Martina described how she finally agreed to having dialysis after her daughter asked her ‘And what about me? If you die, what will happen to me?’

When a medical professional recasts a disorder or disability as being located solely in biology, this recasting creates a ‘disease entity’ and at the same time devalues the social aspect of the illness experience and its meanings. Chronic illness is often bound up with a person’s life course; the illness becomes inseparable from the sick person’s life history and social relationships. As I noted in Chapter Five, language is
constitutive, stating a fact (like a medical diagnosis) can change the social reality or status of a person. According to Freidson (1970:223), 'when a physician diagnoses a human's condition as illness, he changes the man's behaviour by diagnosis; a social state is added to the biological state by assigning the meaning of illness to a disease'. When Martina refused to have dialysis treatment, she was implicitly refusing the resulting shift in her social state and her identity. Yet, as her health continued to deteriorate, she was eventually forced to agree to dialysis.

In Martina's narrative, she located her agreement to dialysis within her sense of obligation and care towards her daughter. Martina's illness and dependence on dialysis meant that she became unable to perform some tasks that constituted daily care for her daughter. Even though according to Martina's narrative, she was still able to work part-time for some time after starting dialysis, at the time of our conversation, Martina was physically weak and incapacitated. Her daughter Andrea often had to help with housework. Yet, by agreeing to dialysis, Martina was able to provide 'care' for her daughter by doing some of the housework and to provide the emotional aspect of 'care'; showing that she 'cared about' Andrea by acknowledging her obligations towards her daughter (Alber and Drotbohm 2015).

The start of Martina's regular dialysis treatment also marked a shift in her marriage and her relationship with her husband, and the onset of his violent behaviour. Her illness experience was thus entangled with her social relationships. Despite having to rely on technology in order to stay alive for the previous six years, the episode described above by Martina marks a shift in her relationship to medical technology, because of its possible failure in continuing to keep her alive. The relationship between the technology and Martina's body had become precarious and fraught with uncertainty, as the doctors were not sure if the treatment would continue to work and Martina was again told that her life was in danger. This insecurity and unreliability of medical treatment led to the shift in Martina's relationship with
medical technology and led her to look at alternative possibilities of reconceptualising her position and creating meaning in her experience of illness through religion.

Narratives of conversion tend to be accounts of a sudden embodied experience of being in the presence of God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Many converts describe a sudden feeling of God's presence, as if they were touched by God or spoken to by God. Conversion has been described as a form of rupture from the past and the beginning of a new life (Meyer 1998). However, some anthropologists have contested this view. In his study of Christian Charismatics in Botswana, Werbner (2011:16) argues that ‘the past is so very present that it continues unquestioned, underlying or informing predicaments from generation to generation’. Werbner (2011) states that continuity with the past is one of the fundamental aspects of personhood in the understandings of the new Christian churches that he studied.

A sense of continuity was also important for my interlocutors, despite the frequent contrasting of their ‘new life’ (post-conversion) and their ‘old life’ (before conversion). Connection with the past was created by retelling and reinterpreting of past events in order to fit into the Christian narrative, as I noted above. Martina described to me how God had already been present in her life before her conversion without her realising it. Her parents and her daughter, as well as others in her social network, attended church for several years prior to Martina’s conversion, and God was guiding Martina’s path through them. This recasting of past life experience after conversion has been found in other Roma Pentecostal groups (see Thurfjell 2013) as converts seek new meaning for past actions and experiences. Upon conversion and ‘embracing of Jesus’ or ‘welcoming Jesus into one’s life’, the convert gains a new social identity, and new explanations and meanings are sought from the perspective of this new social identity. Below, Martina describes the first time she experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit.
Martina: My parents had already been going to church for a long time, my daughter Andrea had been with them since she was about five years. I was the only one not going. And my dad told me 'come, and you will see'. So I went with them. They already knew what was going on, because when I was lying in hospital, our Lord had already arranged things. When I was in hospital, one woman from the church came and talked to me about God. And when my sister came with my mum to visit me - when my mum talked to me, my sister prayed slowly. And when my sister talked to me, my mum prayed. And when my father told me 'come', I went there, and it was so... I had already gone before, I did not understand it. When I saw what people were doing there, I could not get my mind around it. I could not understand when my mum told me 'come, you will see, your life will change, and you will be healed'. I could not understand, even though I had gone to many schools, I did not understand what she was saying to me. I said 'that's not real, it's impossible. I will go there and I will not go to dialysis, ok? I will be healthy without going to dialysis?' And she wasn't completely sure how to explain it to me, because when you are on dialysis and somebody tells you 'come to church and you will see, you will be healed, God will help you', you think 'that's not possible, it must be a joke. It is complete rubbish, isn't it? So I will go there, I will be there, and suddenly I will not be ill and I will not need dialysis. That machine is keeping me alive.' I could not get my head round it. So I thought 'how stupid this is'... but when this happened, I went there. When I went before, I did not understand what the pastor was saying. I thought that he was speaking in another language. But this time when I went, and the pastor blessed me, and he asked the whole congregation to pray for me. My parents were with me at the front, and the pastor blessed me, but only for healing and he started praying over me. And that time, I realised everything, 'if this is possible, I will join'.
Despite converts sometimes claiming that they felt the presence of God suddenly and converted after such an experience, as in Martina's case, the converts had been exposed to Christian imagery prior to conversion often through kinship networks. Social reality emerges through the inner worlds of humans, and is populated by 'beings of fiction' (Latour 2010). These invisible entities, or 'beings of fiction', play an essential role in shaping the social reality. Kwon (2008) studied the way the ghosts of those who were forced to migrate, or soldiers who were killed far from their homes and thus far from their kin during the US-Vietnam war and had not received a proper burial, were present and incorporated into the social life in post-war Vietnam. Some ghosts were associated with specific places and some people developed special relationships with a particular ghost. When something unexpected or unusual occurred, it was attributed to the action of the ghosts. The existence of 'invisible persons' such as spirits, ghosts, and other supernatural beings is a general feature of religious beliefs. Religious imagery is populated with such invisible persons who become experienced as real through religious and ritual practice (Noll 1985). Techniques such as meditation and visualisation, what Luhrmann (2005) calls 'attentional training', increase attention to inner stimuli and decrease attention to external stimuli. The effect of this 'attentional training' and of sensory imagery used in prayer and in Life and Light services is that the imagined comes to feel more real and through increased attention to inner stimuli, people attribute larger significance to inner sensations which generates unusual experience (Luhrmann and Margain 2012). Life and Light converts refer to this unusual experience as 'being in God’s presence' or as feeling ‘the touch of the Holy Spirit’.

The ambiguous language used in prayer creates both an awareness of a dangerous presence, and a sense of protection from it (Tomlinson 2004). However, it is not only language and the content of prayer that contribute to this
sense of a dangerous presence, but also the sensory and emotional experience of prayer. As well as prayer, it is also the pastor’s preaching, emotional music and singing, which create certain imagery and contribute to the sense of a ‘presence’ during a religious ceremony. This sense of a ‘presence’ is an embodied experience, it is a bodily response to affect and to external sensory stimuli. Bodies are not ‘things’, rather they are processes and can learn to become affected in specific ways – they need to become sensitised to certain stimuli, and to respond to them in specific socially acceptable and sanctioned ways (Latour 2004). Latour (2004:206) uses the example of the training of ‘noses’ in the history of the perfume industry. This training was done with the use of ‘odour kits’ consisting of ‘distinct pure fragrances’ arranged in a sequence going from sharpest to smallest contrasts (Latour 2004:206). People were trained during a week-long session to distinguish subtle differences in the fragrances and to tell them apart (Latour 2004:207). Latour (2004:207) states that through this training, a person acquired ‘a nose that allowed her to inhabit a (richly differentiated odoriferous) world’. The person’s body was therefore sensitised to have a different sensory experience of the world than before. The church services are rich in sensory stimuli, there is always religious music played and converts are asked to join in, and the pastors read or recite from the Bible and create vivid images through retelling Bible stories. When Martina said that God had been present in her life before she converted, she referred to the fact that she had been exposed to religious imagery even before her conversion and that over time she had learnt to pay attention to the specific stimuli which lead to her sense of feeling ‘the touch’ of God.

The embodied experience of a personal relationship with Jesus is an important part in the religious life of the Life and Light converts. It is this personal relationship with Jesus and the possibility of direct communication with Jesus and with God that is
one of the central aspects of Pentecostal Christianity (see for example Luhrman 2005; Podolinská 2013) and this contributes to the new perception of the self and a new way of being. Martina further described the changes that her relationship with Jesus brought to her life below, where she describes the consequences that her religious conversion and church attendance created in the relationship with her (now) ex-husband.

Martina: And I started going to church and my ex did not like it. He did not like that I was going there. He thought that I was seeing other men; that I was looking for someone. But even though on a Sunday, I often had to call the police, still I went there, I did not care, it was worth it because it was completely different. I knew that when I came home, I would get beaten. But when I was in church, I was happy, I was content, calm. There I felt such goodness. And later I did not mind anymore, that I had to sit at the service and listen. And I paid attention, even though I did not understand many things yet, because I was at the beginning. And then I started going to Bible reading and prayer meetings.

And I could not understand some things and I always stood there and when it was my turn to lead the prayer I said 'not me', because I did not even know how to pray yet. It did not come easy to me yet. But I felt so good. I was content, smiling. And it took me a long time until then one time, after a long time, when it was like my turn, at the group, I thought 'I will try it' and I just had at that time...em...a good period, so I tried it and I said a prayer. And they were happy, and I was content. And we went around again, so I prayed again. And there I just learned to pray, that's where I picked it up because I wanted it so much. Later when I started praying so, then after that I did not have to just go to the group or to the service in church. But I was feeling that calm, I started having that
calmness, the feeling that it is a good thing. But when I had these problems at home and many times when I was sitting on the stairs at night, when he hurt me and stuff. When I was alone and it became quiet, I said 'God, why is it like this? When you say that I am your child, why do you let this on your child, why do you let this happen? Do you not see me?' Many times I reproached him 'when will you do something?' But I did not understand, he was helping me, he was helping me live through all this.

Kleinman (1988:5) argues that how people experience being ill is always negotiated and altered through our relationships. The embodied experience of a sense of 'God's presence' that many křesťané (converts) talk about serves to create a relationship between křesťané (converts) and Jesus, or God. This relationship is then cultivated through personal prayer and through the everyday practice of a Christian life. Like other personal relationships, the relationship with Jesus, as an 'invisible person' who is nonetheless real through his effects on the social world, requires continuous work in order to be successfully maintained. Roma Life and Light converts described to me how they talk to Jesus, or to God, any time of the day when they need to, not only when reading the Bible or when they set time aside to pray. Martina told me about being able to speak to God, and said that

‘...when you really give him everything from your heart, all that you have inside, the feeling, the sadness (ťažobu in Slovak – lit. heaviness), that is completely different than if you confide to a friend. This is different because it is a secret between you and him. And to him you can say everything, completely, he will not laugh at you, he will help you, lift you. This is how it was told to me. And it is like that.’
It was through this personal communication with Jesus or God that Martina sought to restore the sense of calm and of being ‘lifted’ which she experienced during religious services. The presence of Jesus as an ‘invisible person’ thus provided Martina with a technique to deal with distress and suffering even when she was not in the presence of other converts. Her belonging within the larger Christian community and her social relationships with others were channelled through her relationship with Jesus, what she describes as ‘faith’.

**Conference**

In her account, Martina told me about the embodied experience of religion and the importance of this embodied experience and visions in her conversion to Christianity. The embodied and sensory experience created by music and vivid images present during service play an important part in religious healing and in the Life and Light convert's relationship with Jesus and with God. Martina described the first time that she felt the ‘touch of God’:

And later I saw that people got healed. The friend who brought me there, she had cancer. And she just got better and for me it was like ‘what is that?! How is it possible?’ And when she saw my condition, she called me so I went to see her. She started talking to me, how I should face it. She explained a lot of things to me, she prayed for me. And she told me ‘you will go to church and you will pray. You must be like that woman who got healed after twelve years from bleeding.’ And she told me this story. There was a woman who suffered from bleeding for twelve years. And when she saw Jesus, how he heals people, she thought that he was her last hope. That she will start believing in him and he might heal her. But she could not get close to him, so that he could pray over her, because there were too
many people around him. At that moment she thought ‘I will at least touch
the hem of his cloak.’ And she touched the hem of the cloak and Jesus felt
it. And she got healed in that moment, because she believed that she
would be healed. And Jesus felt it and he asked ‘who touched the hem of
my cloak?’ And she admitted it to him. It shows that her faith was big. And
this friend told me ‘when you go to church and you feel inside that
something is happening to you, think about this woman. Grab hold of that
cloak and do not let go. Do not let go until the end’. And with this I went to
the church conference. And there I felt the...as it is called the touch, for the
first time. That ‘ah, something is happening inside me, something is tearing'
I felt as if something was stirring inside me, or tearing. I felt it for the first
time there. I even thought that I was ill. I thought ‘oh, I'm going, I'm going to
faint’, you know. But I was feeling so well. And at that moment I thought
about my friend and how she told me 'And grab hold of it! Don't let go!' And
I did. I did this [makes a grabbing motion] as if I really were holding on to
that coat. And I felt so good. I left the conference with laughter, completely
different, as if I really were healthy. Just smiling. Content. I felt so content.
Never before had I felt it like that day. And since then, I always think like
that, when I feel God's presence. I really feel as if I grabbed hold and I
don't let go. They would have to tear my hand away, I am completely
fighting it, I don't let go. It is always like that. And it is true....it depends on
that, on the faith.

I had observed many times in church how Martina made a motion as if she was
grabbing onto something, while praying or singing hymns with her eyes closed, but I
had not known its meaning until she told me the above story and how she imagines
herself grabbing hold of Jesus’s cloak. I witnessed religious healing several times;
one of the most memorable times was in early summer during my fieldwork at a
two-day Christian conference in Leeds. It stuck in my memory, possibly because it was soon after Iveta’s cancer diagnosis. Martina was also attending this service and took part in the healing ritual. The French Romani pastors visited the conference and they led the service on both days in the French dialect of Romanes, with translation into Slovak by one of the UK-based Roma pastors on Saturday. As is usual, there was music and singing, in which many people joined, and the service was rather animated as the pastor gesticulated and raised or lowered his voice depending on what he was saying, making the service easy to listen to. The atmosphere was quite emotional and I had a happy and content feeling, as I often had at the end of church. At the end of the Saturday service, the members of the congregation who desired healing were invited to the front. The group that attended the service on that day was quite small, which is rather unusual for Life and Light conferences, and the only people who went to the front were Martina with her daughter Andrea, and Iveta. Two of the pastors held their hands out, one above the woman’s head and the other had his hand on her shoulder, praying over each woman as their turn came. The prayer was said aloud, the pastors prayed with their eyes closed in their dialect of Romanes which was to a large extent incomprehensible to me, but I still felt an emotional response to it. The prayer was almost a song, as the pastors’ voices weaved together, each pastor’s prayer different, but both calling to God to heal these women, similar to what had been observed among other Pentecostal groups. Their voices rose in intensity as the prayer went on before becoming quieter as they moved their hands over to the next woman. The women also prayed silently with their eyes closed as the pastors performed the healing ritual. Other people in the congregation joined in the prayer, and the hall was filled with voices. The atmosphere in the hall was very emotional by now, as all the different voices prayed together, each different but as if they were spoken in co-ordination, together with a joint purpose. Some people had their eyes filled with tears.
According to Gould (2009), external stimuli (like the music, religious imagery, and singing in Life and Light religious services) create an affective response which individuals experience as bodily sensation. These bodily sensations become articulated as emotions. Gould (2009:13) states that emotions are involved and shaped by practices of meaning-making. Meaning is therefore created by ascribing emotion to a bodily sensation. Walkerdine (2010) argues that embodied affective relations are central to the production of community. A sense of community is therefore produced through creating collective emotional response to external stimuli. Writing about the Spanish Gitanos, Gay y Blasco (2005) argues that a sense of emotional commonality plays a central role in the production of Roma sociality. I suggest that, similar to the Spanish Gitanos, the Life and Light church creates a sense of shared emotional experience among its converts related to experience of hardship and suffering. This shared emotional experience contributes to the production of a sense of collectivity among Life and Light converts.

Later, when I asked Iveta what she felt like during the healing, she said that she felt 'warmth inside' and that the prayer felt very powerful. Pavel, who was filming the healing on his phone, said that he had a strong feeling of a 'presence' when he was at the front of the hall where the healing was happening. Martina said that she thought she was going to faint and later she told me that even being so close to some of these pastors is a very powerful experience because they are 'very blessed'. Some people are said to be more 'blessed' than others. People who are 'blessed' tend to have the ability to create a sense of a 'presence' during a service or a prayer. It could be described as a perceived ability to channel God's presence. During large meetings and group prayers or healing sessions, the sense of the presence of God is said to be very strong.

When I began attending church with my informants, I was witness to and part of numerous discussions about religious healing. I was shown videos made by church
members showing people being healed by prayer. These videos showed, for instance, pastors praying over people in wheelchairs, and the same people then being lifted and stood on their feet by the pastors. These videos were shown to me as proof of the power of prayer and of ‘Our Lord’, and to make me believe. While I never started believing in God, I recognised the strong emotional impact of these healing practices, especially after witnessing them in person. As I describe above, Martina described to me how, when told by her parents to come to church with them to 'be healed', she did not understand how she could be healed when she was dependent on dialysis. Similarly to her, I did not understand why some people were considered ‘healed’ when they still had medical problems and needed medical care. Like Martina, I thought about 'being healed' in biomedical terms and as focused on the body. When I was sitting next to Martina during her dialysis and as I listened to the story of her conversion, I realised that what she meant by 'being healed' was a shift in the perception of self and of the position of self within the world. Instead of her identity being defined by her illness and suffering, following conversion, Martina's identity and sense of self were based on being a part of a collectivity of Roma Christians, and on the notion of being 'saved' through one's relationship with Jesus.

Medical practitioners consider an individual to be healed or cured if their body has been restored, as much as possible, to the same state of biological balance that it had prior to the onset of a disorder (Csordas 2002). However, medical criteria and knowledge about diseases are positioned within specific discourses based on a scientific and biomedical understanding of body (Conrad and Baker 2010; Latour 1996). Religious healing differs from medical treatment as the goal of religious healing may be to encourage supplicants 'to incorporate religious meaning and inhabit a religiously defined community' (Csordas 2002: 51). According to Csordas, an understanding of healing as a process requires the determination of what is
perceived as an illness that needs to be treated in a particular cultural context, as well as a determination of 'what it means to be a human being, whole and healthy, or distressed and diseased' (Csordas 2002:11). Conversion to Christianity can lead to a change in the understanding of illness. As the diagnosis of illness results in the shift of the social position of the person, so does religious healing.

The experience of healing can lead to a new perspective on one's actions, past or future, and

'to the extent that this new meaning encompasses the person's life experience, healing thus creates for him a new reality or phenomenological world. [...T]he supplicant is healed, not in the sense of being restored to the state in which he existed prior to the onset of illness, but in the sense of being rhetorically "moved" into a state dissimilar from both pre-illness and illness reality' (Csordas 2002:25).

Therefore, 'being healed' in the sense my informants used it, does not mean being cured of a disease as a medical practitioner would define it. Rather, it is the knowledge that you are part of a wider Roma Christian community and the sense of being moved by the Holy Spirit and by 'the touch' of God that creates a new kind of reality, which is described as 'being healed'. According to Latour (2010:29; italics in the original), religion 'does not speak of things, but from things', it works on the listener rather than providing information. Religion therefore creates an emotional shift, a change in the subject's perception of self and the world, which is at the root of religious healing.
Conclusion

This chapter explored the ways in which the Christian narrative of the Life and Light church addresses itself to suffering, in contrast to biomedicine, which is an aspect of state care. Martina’s experience is an example of suffering which was caused by ‘malevolent social relationships’ in the form of domestic violence, but also because of her position as a Slovak Roma woman. Because she was on dialysis, she was incapacitated and unable to perform certain tasks (such as work). The state provided care for her body. Yet, this care was disconnected from other aspects of her life, as the British state restricted her access to welfare benefits. The lack of money that Martina and her family experienced contributed to her experience of suffering and hardship.

As I noted in previous chapters, the state and its bureaucratic processes together with (re)production of specific forms of knowledge push Roma towards ‘a state of exception’. Roma identity is stigmatised, associated with mostly negative stereotypes, and it is becoming harder for Roma to access some forms of state care. The Life and Light church creates a sense of collectivity and belonging among Roma. It does this by attending to both the practical and the emotional aspects of care, the ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’ others (see Alber and Drotbohm 2015) and through creating a sense of having a direct relationship with Jesus. Religious conversions serve to create a new identity and a way of being for the Life and Light converts. Life and Light teachings, with their emphasis on ‘calmness’, ‘peace’ and the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and forgiveness, alter the way křesťané conduct their social relations. The church uses different strategies and practices to do this. It uses the narrative of Roma as a lost tribe from Sinai and thereby establishes a direct link to Jesus. It provides care in the form of material or financial help to Roma (both converts and non-converts) as well as emotional or spiritual
support. Thirdly, it uses embodied techniques to create a sense of collectivity. By cultivating a sense of a direct relationship with Jesus, both as an individual person through prayer and as part of a Roma Christian collectivity through the narrative of Roma being a lost tribe, converts can gain a new sense of identity and become spasený (saved) or uzdravený (healed). Lastly, the church creates a space for Roma to shift their position towards the state and to subvert the position of inferiority vis-à-vis the state, and where they are not treated as an ‘exception’. It constructs Roma as a moral collectivity and therefore provides a way for Roma to live with dignity, to have a ‘normal life’ and to be respectable within the Roma social world in spite of their material circumstances and often in contrast with their interactions with the state and gadže.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

In this thesis I explored the lives of Roma who came to Leeds from the Czech Republic in the hope of escaping racism and discrimination and of being able to live normálně. Roma in Leeds perceive the stigmatisation and financial constraints they experienced in the Czech Republic as hindering their ability to achieve a ‘normal’ life. Living normálně for Roma is linked to having dignity and respectful and acceptable social relationships, as well as a decent standard of living. Roma understand a decent standard of living as not living in poverty, having a house, which is in good condition, and being able to afford good food, new clothes, a car, as well as some luxuries like a family day out. Living normálně was linked to having a lifestyle that Roma understand as average and ‘normal’. My informants wanted jobs, to have an adequate income, a sense of security, and of belonging and continuity. I observed that a central aspect of Roma social life is maintaining their difference from gadže through daily practice and adherence to a specific Roma morality. Roma therefore want to be able to live normálně as Roma.

During my research, I examined social relationships and living conditions through the prism of care and care practices, and I discussed what forms of care Roma expect from individual persons, kin relations and state institutions. Providing care constitutes a way of forging, creating, maintaining, strengthening or weakening social relationships (Alber and Drotbohm 2015). It indicates the recognition of a mutual dependency and obligation, and demonstrates acceptance, inclusion and belonging, both within immediate social units like the household, and within larger collectivities like the state. The absence or withdrawal of care from individuals or social groups can create a sense of exclusion. In this thesis I argued that Roma are pushed towards being an ‘exception’, or ‘bare life’ (Agamben 1998); towards being people without rights. Agamben (1998) argues that the power of modern nation-
states is in their ability to create a legal distinction between who becomes a citizen with political rights and who becomes ‘bare life’ – a human reduced to his or her body and who has no political rights, and thus can be excluded from state-provided care. Throughout this thesis I considered state care as including access to social benefits, health care, and living conditions which facilitate the ability to have a ‘normal’ life. Even though Roma are citizens of the Czech Republic (or Slovakia), and as such have rights to state care in the UK, their ability to access these forms of care is becoming more precarious and uncertain as a result of a combination of bureaucratic processes (both within the UK and across the EU), discourse, social practices and racism, what I referred to as exceptionality.

I explored the dynamic processes which push Roma towards a state of ‘exception’ and how they resist and rebel against this. Popular and official discourse and ‘migrating racialisations’ (Grill 2017) construct and produce Roma as ‘other’ and as people who are excluded from belonging within larger collectivities, and whose rights to state care are continuously questioned through bureaucratic processes and social practice. In order to be incorporated into the state and to continue to have rights to state care, Roma have to either fit into the state’s definition of workers or to engage with a particular understanding of Roma as an ethnic minority which needs to ‘integrate’. However, Roma identity is itself stigmatised: it is a signifier of ‘exceptionality’. The climate of increased visibility of EEA migrants (especially those from the CEE) in the British media in recent years, together with the British government’s austerity measures, and resulting restrictions and limits on social benefits and other forms of state care are again pushing Roma towards being an exception.

In their everyday lives, Roma in Leeds were contesting the negative stereotypes associated with Roma ethnicity. Some of my informants converted to the Life and Light church, a Roma Pentecostal church which has congregations across Europe.
The church constructs Roma as a moral collectivity, by engaging with the narrative of Roma being a lost tribe from Sinai, and thereby having a direct connection to Jesus. Additionally, the church provides forms of care to Roma – both those who have converted and those who have not. Finally, through techniques like prayer and healing, the church creates a shared affective response which produces a sense of commonality among its converts. I argue that conversions to Life and Light provide a way for Roma to create a distance from the negative associations which are attached to Roma ethnicity. In the Life and Light church, Roma gain respect and dignity and are able to receive and provide care. The church creates a place where Roma gain a sense of belonging and where their identity as Roma is cast in a positive light, and in accordance with Roma values and understandings of what it means to be Roma. In this way the church differs from gadže organisations, services and projects aimed at providing care to Roma; these are instead built around values and understandings imposed on Roma by gadže.

This thesis looked at the lives of Czech and Slovak Roma in Leeds at a particular point in time. In the three years since my fieldwork, I have lost touch with some of my Roma interlocutors while others continue to be part of my life. Following one round of radiotherapy treatment, Iveta’s cancer has gone into remission. Iveta and Pavel are still active Life and Light church members. After being a student pastor for two years, Pavel was made a pastor in the summer of 2017. Pavel and Iveta moved back to the Czech Republic shortly after this. After six months in the Czech Republic, they returned to Leeds. Pavel told me that after returning to the Czech Republic, he worked full-time in a local factory, in a job which involved regular nightshifts, and where he earned in a month ‘what I earned [in Leeds] in a week’. In addition to working full-time, he also had to fulfil his duties as a pastor, in order to retain his position in the Life and Light church. Although Pavel and Iveta enjoyed a higher social status vis-à-vis others in their social network the Czech Republic when
they lived in the UK, they were not able to retain this higher social status after they returned to the Czech Republic and their income dropped. They found themselves unable to afford goods that they had been able to buy when they lived in Leeds, and they decided to return in order to have a ‘better’ life. Their older children, Yvonna and Petr (who are now both married) remain in the Czech Republic and have children of their own. Despite having to leave their extended family again, Pavel and Iveta decided to return to Leeds where they would have a higher income and be able to send remittances to their older children, Yvonna and Petr.

Martina received a kidney transplant in January 2017. However, because of the extended time she had been relying on dialysis, her overall health has deteriorated and she continues to have medical problems. She has been hospitalised twice since receiving her transplant. Margita moved away from Leeds to another English city towards the end of my fieldwork and I subsequently lost touch with her. Petra and her family still live in Leeds. Milan’s back problems have not improved and he is still unable to work. Petra recently left her job to have another baby and even though the family has settled in Leeds, they live with uncertainty about their legal status and ability to stay there. I have seen Maria only on a few occasions since the end of fieldwork. She has set up a Roma community organisation and is trying to promote it among Roma and to get more Roma involved. She has taken part in various projects and schemes run by Leeds City Council which aim to promote inclusion and to train ‘community leaders’ among migrant groups.

Following Britain’s vote to leave the EU in June 2016, there have been media reports of a sudden and significant increase in hate crime against East Europeans (BBC 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Even though non-Roma East Europeans tend to use ‘bordering techniques’ in order to differentiate themselves from Roma, as I noted in Chapter Five, Wemyss and Cassidy (2016) found in their study in Kent that in the local anti-immigrant discourse, there was a slippage between different groups of
migrants, who were all put into a single category of ‘Slovak’. Even though there have not been reports of an increase in hate crime against Roma, Roma are included into the category of East Europeans. Roma experience racialisation in the UK on two levels - as East Europeans and as Roma. My informants expressed worries about these attacks on East Europeans because they felt included into the same category, in this context.

These reports and anecdotal evidence of an increase in hate crime have been supported by government statistics. A recent report by the Home Office (2017b) based on police statistics shows that in the period of 2016/17 there was a 27% increase in race hate crime from the previous year.64 There was a spike in hate crime around the time of the referendum, and despite a slight decline in August 2016, the incidence of race hate crime remained at a higher level that it was before the referendum (Home Office 2017b). During the period immediately after the referendum, my research participants expressed worries about being forced to leave the UK and uncertainty about what the future would hold for them. While none of them told me that they had personally experienced violence, I heard rumours about Roma and other CEE migrants in Harehills being subject to verbal abuse and being told to ‘go home’. The referendum result had an impact on the sense of safety and security of Roma in Leeds. When I saw Iveta two weeks after the referendum, she told me that when taking the bus to pick Veronika up from school, she had a look at the other passengers and wondered if they were thinking that she should ‘not be here’. She said that the worry that she could be attacked, verbally or physically, was often on her mind when she was outside and on her own. In the weeks following the referendum result, as school holidays were approaching, which

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64 ‘Offences with a xenophobic element’, like those targeting particular nationalities, were recorded as race hate crime (Home Office 2017b:5). There is no breakdown for specific ethnic groups and therefore no data for hate crime against Roma.
some Roma planned to spend in the Czech Republic, my informants asked me if they would be allowed back into the UK after their holiday.

A report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (2016) published a few months after the referendum predicts Brexit to impact negatively on Roma in the UK because of the loss of EU funds (many projects on Roma inclusion and well-being were funded by the EU, as I noted in Chapter Six). This view has been contested by James and Smith (2017) who argue that the UK’s exit from the EU, and the subsequent loss of EU funds towards Roma inclusion, may not have a significant impact on Roma in the UK because the EU has thus far been unable to meaningfully tackle ‘social harms’ that Roma experience across the EU. The ‘social harms’ that James and Smith (2017) refer to include poor health, inadequate living conditions and lower life expectancy, among others. James and Smith (2017) locate these ‘social harms’ in wider neoliberal structures and rightly point out that it would be more beneficial to look beyond the impact of EU funds and consider a range of factors that contribute to the production of Roma as an ‘exception’ and the ‘inequality’ they experience. As I noted above, EU funds have been used for projects aimed at improving the inclusion and well-being of Roma in the UK, including Leeds, for example through projects like the Roma Women’s Health Champions. These projects tend to be short-term and to attempt to remedy the effects of inequality and exclusion from state care, whereas the wider structures which produce poverty and poor health and social exclusion do not get addressed through these projects. The projects are embedded within the same discourse and processes which contribute to the ongoing reproduction of Roma as ‘other’.

As nobody as yet knows for certain what legal status EU migrants will have in the UK and what impact Brexit will have on the UK economy (together with continued austerity measures and cuts in council budgets and services), we do not know how the UK’s departure from the EU will affect Roma. Further research is needed to
assess the wide range of factors that will shape the lives of Roma in the post-Brexit UK and their ability to achieve a sense of belonging, inclusion and ‘normal’ life. Even though, in the initial weeks that followed the referendum, its result seemed to have created an increased sense of uncertainty for my informants about their ability to stay in the UK, as time passed, the sense of urgency of an upcoming change in life circumstances seems to have decreased. My informants still seem to worry and struggle with the British state’s bureaucratic processes which have become even more exclusionary and conditional than I described above. As an example, the NHS now routinely asks people how long they have lived in the UK when they attend medical appointments, and people have to prove that they have a right to medical treatment. I still sometimes receive messages from my informants asking me about residency rights, benefit regulations, or how to apply for British citizenship. But my informants now seem to be more concerned with their day-to-day lives and making ends meet or being able to get a medical appointment than with the implications of Brexit and the likely change in their legal status in the UK.

Even though Roma come to Leeds in order to have a normal life, to live normálně, they are not able to escape the processes of racialisation and the negative stereotypes associated with Roma ethnicity. Additionally, Roma are entangled in the British state’s attempt to reduce immigration and in the processes which contribute to increased casualization and precarity or work. In this thesis, I showed that Roma are pushed towards being an exception through social practice, through bureaucratic processes, and through discourse production and reproduction. Even though Roma have to push against the processes that force them towards being an exception, these processes have in a way become a part of their normal life, defining them as Roma. In some aspects, Roma in Leeds have been able to achieve a ‘normal’ life; they have a better standard of living and can escape racialisation in some contexts. However, the normality which Roma have is
precarious and can slip away, for example through losing a job, or becoming ill and unable to fulfil the increasingly restrictive conditions that the British state imposes on access to social welfare. The Life and Light church provides a space where Roma can remain Roma, and provide and receive care, but its ability to create conditions for a normal life is limited. Roma still have to deal with the state in many aspects of their lives, and whether Roma are able to live *normálně* or not largely depends on the conditions produced and created by the state and on their stance towards it.
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