

Limbo lives within and beyond states: Roma youth on the margins of Naples

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The paper tells the story of Roma youth (and children) from the urban margins of Naples, who live in 'informal camps'. While it offers insight into the everyday experiences of their 'limbo lives', it looks at how the making of 'Roma children' is connected to the making of the periphery, realized between the school and the camp – understood as a spatio-political technology.

The paper includes experiences of two different contexts, though the situation of Roma from the former Yugoslavia and those from Romania is strongly different from the legal aspect, they are approached by the same type of public interventions. Not only between camps, but already within one camp we can find several different situations. Some of them are de facto stateless or have no proper documents, others do have and struggle every now and then for its renewal. Others have an easier situation because of having a citizenship of an EU country, but still not much hope for a regular, long-term stay. In this paper I am going to offer examples, how the legal and administrative question enters in the life of those who seem to live out-of-order, how do they negotiate. Besides offering examples for a double-faced control on their lives, I will also give examples of their agency in using the legal and administrative frames in a strategic way. I am going to give insight into concrete everyday situations from education, health, housing and economic strategies and shed light on the interconnectedness of these issues. All this is contextualized within the complex city of Naples and its peripheries, while pointing out the discrepancies between the different levels of governance, and showing how this 'void' on one hand keeps lives in a limbo, on the other hand can become an opportunity for acting and shaping one's life. Under state though I do not necessarily understand Italy, even those with the less contact to their 'country of origin' have to deal with that state in some way in their everyday life. Therefore in many cases, my examples are about how they negotiate their life not with one but between two or more different (and in time changing) states.

The questions raised in this paper are fruit of a research that has been realized since 2011 as a PhD research. It focuses on the narratives and strategies of Roma children and young people who live on the urban margins of Naples (Italy) and Pécs (Hungary) and tries to understand the effect of Roma policies on them. It looks not only at the experiences of Roma students but the narratives and practices of different local actors: including teachers, educators of afterschool activities, families and students. The way local actors respond to, resist to, redesign or adapt to policies in contexts considered as peripheries, reveals how the image of Roma student relates to the complex interplay between the making of Roma and the making of the periphery and how policy discourses can be captured in these processes. The research is an engaged ethnography with the aim of creating spaces of collaboration throughout the research process with different local actors. The paper's findings were informed also by a research on economic strategies.

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