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Revisiting the EU's social exclusion discourse: Residential segregation, Greek Roma and the participatory governance lock in

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we discuss the controversy over the EU's social policy goals and the vibrant debate about the means through which they are promoted. In particular we explore the "citizenship rights" and the "participatory governance" pillars of the EU's "social exclusion" approach. The paper examines the Roma population in Greece; a *de facto* minority experiencing multidimensional, material and discursive exclusion that has recently attracted the attention of the EU's social policy makers. We interrogate the Greek city of Komotini's attempts to administer an integrated intervention aimed at ameliorating the disadvantaged state of the city's Roma community. The EU's interpretation of "social exclusion", it is argued, examines the ways in which citizenship rights are exercised and brings to the surface longstanding social exclusion problems. The EU's mode of anti-exclusion intervention, however, based on participatory governance schemes, is primarily concerned with improving the effectiveness of policy delivery. In the case of minorities, it overlooks discrimination as the root cause of exclusion. In the absence of provisions mitigating power asymmetries among participants, underprivileged groups are often left with no alternative but to scale up political pressure against governing institutions or risk being ignored.

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1. Introduction

The spatial dimension of social exclusion is primarily noticeable in residential segregation processes, a key venue for prejudice and discrimination (Sibley, 1995). "Excluded" inner-city neighborhoods are associated in the literature with constrained job opportunities, marginal participation in the fields of education and politics and differential access to urban amenities and social support services (Bolt et al., 2010; Musterd, 2005; Harrison et al., 2005). At EU level, concerted attempts to understand and address socio-spatial deprivation have been made since the early 1990s. Exclusionary processes are conceptualized in the EU "in terms of the denial – or non-realisation – of citizenship rights" (EC, 1992a: 20–21). In dealing with the spatial dimensions of exclusion, the EU's predominant *modus operandi* promotes integrated urban interventions that build on participatory governance[1] initiatives

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[1] "Governance" is an umbrella term that portrays the shift in the nature and role of governing institutions from hierarchies and control to networks and regulation. "Participation," in turn, takes into account the processes in which formalized government structures reach out to "civil society" actors and private sector interests, initiating an interaction that (potentially) allows these actors and interests a degree of influence over policy making (Newman, 2004).

(EC, 2006). EU mobilization exerts a significant degree of influence on national policy responses (Mangen, 2004; Phillips, 2010). In this paper, we discuss the EU's social exclusion paradigm in the area of ethnic residential segregation, concentrating on the Roma. Our examination focuses on the Greek city of Komotini.

In recent years, EU organisations have provided an increasing amount of information about the poor conditions of life and violations of the fundamental rights of a substantial proportion of Roma (FRA, 2013). Discriminatory practices against this ethnic group have been recorded in all member states, triggering a Roma-focused EU social policy response (EC, 2011). Greece is no exception to this discriminatory reality, yet it provides a particularly challenging policy case (FRA, 2012). A legacy of arbitrary citizenship practices exercised in the country tests the efficacy of the EU's rights-based approach to exclusion (Tsitselikis, 2006). Also, forms of anti-Roma prejudice verging on "institutional racism" question the capacity of Roma communities in Greece to represent their interests in power-laden participatory governance settings. The EU's perspective on socio-spatial exclusion is therefore strained in the case of Greece.

Komotini is a city with an ethnically diverse population: Muslim (viz., Turkish and Roma) communities enjoy a distinct set of minority linguistic, educational and religious rights. In the early 2000s, the underprivileged state of the city's Roma led to a local

intervention attempt that centered on addressing residential segregation. The anti-exclusion policies implemented in Komotini were co-financed by the national authorities and the EU and adhered to the EU's method of "participatory" socio-spatial intervention. This initiative was explored in detail. Research involved a series of semi-structured interviews with key local policy-making authorities and leading community members (2008–2012). Also, "polyphonic" open-ended group interviews were conducted in the community's settlement, exploring the perceptions of Roma of the intervention scheme (Fray and Fontana, 1991: 178). As suggested by our research findings, the EU's conceptualization of "social exclusion" is focused on the *de facto* rights enjoyed by a particular population in a specific area. It interrogates and presents in official periodic reports the social reality that defines access to citizenship rights and thereby brings to the surface longstanding problems of social exclusion (Smith, 1995). The governance mode of anti-exclusion intervention, however, as devised by the EU, falls short of promoting the interests of disadvantaged communities.

In the initial phases of Komotini's programme, power asymmetries among actors confined the participatory role of the Roma to a consultative one, curtailing their capacity to articulate their views. Instead of abandoning the programme, however, the community distanced itself temporarily from the respective processes, regrouped and claimed an effective participatory role. The community's reaction informs the controversy in the deliberative literature concerning the response of disadvantaged groups' to participatory processes that fail to engage them as "core partners" (Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Taylor, 2007; Davies, 2007). In decidedly non-ideal participatory circumstances, we argue, activism directed towards counterbalancing participatory power asymmetries can assert the influence of underprivileged groups in affairs that matter to them. As decisions in participatory structures cannot be reached in the absence of key stakeholders, the governance requirement for intersubjective agreement may offer the necessary room for maneuver, enabling the exertion of such political pressure.

The paper is organized in three parts. In the first part, we discuss the process through which "social inclusion" was defined as a policy goal at EU level, underscoring the controversy over policy traits and the methods of promoting inclusion through participatory governance. Subsequently, we look at Greece; the divisive conceptualization of citizenship exercised in that country challenges the rights-based approach to exclusion adopted by the EU. In this frame, we outline the multiple and overlapping exclusions experienced by the Roma communities in Greece. The capacity of the EU's approach to address the Roma's disadvantaged state is explored in the third section of the paper with respect to the city of Komotini.

2. The EU conceptualization of social exclusion

The varied views espoused by member states with respect to "social need" in the 1990s deterred the formation of social policy objectives at the level of the EU (EC, 1992b). However, by propounding "…the right to social and housing assistance" (EC, 2000: 16 – Article 34), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) re-opened the debate on EU social policy actions (Hantrais, 2007). The reference to the Charter in the Lisbon Treaty (2007) and the ensuing creation of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2007) are strong indications that the concept of "rights beyond the workplace" will be actively pursued in the EU in the years ahead (EC, 2007; Sabel and Zeitlin, 2007: 36). A further sign of the open-ended nature of EU social policy comes from the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (EP, 2000). The OMC is a governance platform aiming to steer member states' social policy

actions. In the Nice European Council (2000), member states agreed to define common aims in the fight against social exclusion and to develop common indicators to measure progress and compare good practices (Adnett and Hardy, 2005). In parallel, they decided to present biannually at the EU level detailed National Action Plans against social exclusion and joint reports on social inclusion, along with regular monitoring, joint evaluation and peer review (European Council, 2000). The "Social Protection Committee", made up of representatives from the Commission and the member states, co-ordinates the respective processes (O.J., 2001: 18).

As the OMC approach does not include sanctions for unsuccessful performance, change is expected to occur through exposure to comments and criticism (Trubek and Trubek, 2005). Regarding policy implementation, according to the EU's notion of "subsidiarity" the national authorities are exclusively responsible for carrying out anti-exclusion plans. In the case of programmes co-financed by the EU, however, policy implementation has to comply with the commonly reached intervention principles agreed upon by the member states (O.J., 2012). The OMC process, based on member state-specific strategies and their discursive diffusion, has gradually shaped the EU's social exclusion agenda.

According to the European Commission, social exclusion refers to individuals who are "…prevented from participating fully *[in society]* by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination" (EC, 2004: 10). "Social inclusion" is viewed as a process aiming at ensuring that disadvantaged individuals "…gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life, *[…and]* in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights" (EC, 2004: 10). The EU's social exclusion discourse, therefore, propounds a normative citizenship type—one that explores an individual's status *vis-a-vis* a political entity. Emphasis, however, is also placed on "socio-cultural" forms of citizenship, focusing on societal "participation," the underdeveloped state of which is associated with inequalities in opportunities and prospects (Ghose, 2005; Murie and Musterd, 2004). The emphasis on "participation" in decision-making processes draws from the contemporary EU narrative on "European governance," encouraging a shift from the linear and centralized policy-making model toward a less hierarchical approach "…based on feedback, networks and involvement *["of people and organizations"]* from policy-creation to implementation at all levels." EU policies, it has been argued, "…can no longer be effective unless they are prepared, implemented and enforced in a more inclusive way" (EC, 2001: 10). The aforementioned definitions of "exclusion" and "participatory governance" feed into a vibrant debate over the policy effects of the EU's response to social need. Two major viewpoints are recognized in the literature.

2.1. "Social exclusion": A neoliberal policy shift

In approaching the EU mobilization on social exclusion, a number of authors have commented on the stigma attached to the EU's discourse around the "socially excluded" (Davies, 2005). The policy focus on particular population groups, it is stressed, diverts attention from increases in socio-economic disparities, the underlying cause of social exclusion. Moreover, the representation of the welfare state in the "social exclusion" reasoning as in need of reform (see Deacon, 2002), may justify retrenchment and curtail the available means with which to tackle disparities (Levitas, 2005). From this perspective, the emphasis placed on "social inclusion" policies of reintegrating the long-term unemployed into the labor market serves as evidence of the neoliberal nature of EU intervention (Fletcher, 2002). The search for "security" in the marketplace forced upon individuals in need is, according to authors who are skeptical

of the "social exclusion" policy turn, incapable of addressing the material and relational dimensions of deprivation (Sunley et al., 2005). These authors are also critical of participatory governance schemes in EU social policies, especially when disadvantaged communities are engaged in the process. The central role of the state (or private sector actors) in defining the terms and goals of community involvement is seen, in this line of thought, as entailing a fundamentally uneven interaction in terms of know-how and influence, enabling manipulative orchestrations (Swyngedouw, 2000; Sorensen and Sagaris, 2010). A distinct standpoint in this literature, in fact, draws from Bourdieusian analysis to argue that independent and underprivileged community organizations should distance themselves from calls for participatory governance and act separately and "coercively", exercising direct pressure on governing institutions (Kohn, 2000; Medearis, 2004). In unequal power settings, "…structures designed to be inclusive and empowering will tend to reproduce the inequalities they seek to overcome" (Davies, 2007). Not all who acknowledge the risk of stigmatization or the critical role of power asymmetries during participation, however, view antagonism as an appropriate response.

2.2. Prospects for social policy reform associated with "exclusion"

A second group of authors recognize in "social exclusion" a degree of conceptual dynamism, especially when compared with the vital yet relatively "static" approach to social problems examined under the rubric of "poverty" (May, 2005). Additionally, adherents of this perspective underscore the merits of the EU process that defined social exclusion policy goals (Daly, 2006). As argued, the sheer diversity of participants in EU social exclusion fora – ranging from member states to interest groups and organizations – facilitates an open-ended dialogue on the challenges to be tackled, opening up prospects for broad reform of European welfare states (Zeitlin, 2005). In this light, the focus of the EU social exclusion approach to the concept of "citizenship" is understood to serve as a common ground for dialogue capable of directing attention to issues of socio-economic and political discrimination (Atkinson, 2000). The EU support of community engagement in participatory governance initiatives is also endorsed in this line of thinking.

Community involvement is seen by pro-participation scholars as a process having the capacity to bring local preferences and priorities into view, provide unmediated local knowledge and expertise, facilitate the realization of a jointly reached decision and enhance, in the medium term, the influence exerted by disadvantaged groups in local affairs (Conroy, 2011). As a prerequisite, however, power asymmetries must be scrutinized, acknowledged and addressed at the earliest possible stage in any participatory governance scheme. The availability or absence of financial assistance and organizational support, for instance, is stressed in this literature as a factor capable of conditioning – i.e., enabling or arresting – the mode of engagement of disadvantaged groups in participatory governance processes (Innes and Booher, 2010). At subsequent stages, a series of proposals by proponents of the "participation" thesis aim to mitigate the impacts of uneven power relations during deliberation. Examples include, among others, the right of less influential groups to veto majority voting decisions (Skelcher, 2005), the presence of participation by proxy provisions (Hanna, 2000) and the option to appoint external facilitators overseeing the participatory process (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004).

In light of this debate, the extent to which the EU's framework on social exclusion triggers relevant responses at national and local level is now explored in the case of Greece. The section starts by commenting on the contentious and generally divisive conceptualization of "citizenship" granted and exercised in the country. Subsequently, attention shifts to the country's Roma communities. The

underprivileged state of the Greek Roma, it is argued, reflects rights infringement and discriminatory practices that perpetuate exclusionary processes.

3. Ethnic minorities and Roma communities in Greece

A *jus sanguinis* perspective of a homogenous nation was delineated in the citizenship law drafted in Greece soon after independence (1830). Associating membership in the state with membership in the nation, however, has persisted as a principle of nationality law ever since[2] (CoE, 2004). The national authorities have consistently refused to recognize the presence of ethnic minorities in the country, despite claims by particular communities (vis., Macedonians, Turks) to a distinct ethnic identity (CoE, 2009). The Muslims in Thrace is the only religiously defined community the presence and the rights of which are recognized by Greek minority law (Tsitselikis, 2004). The non-ratification in Parliament of the Council of Europe's "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" (1997), which had already been signed by the government, suggests the high degree to which biased and socially constructed perceptions of "otherness" inform institutionally consolidated exclusions in Greece (CoE, 2013). The Roma population in Greece, a mosaic of diverse communities in terms of their degree of societal integration, is a *de facto* minority[3] group. The socio-discursive construction of Roma "otherness" has been based on stereotypes devaluing the cultural particularity of their communities, whether nomadic or sedentary. In both cases, persistent segregation served *a posteriori* as justification for stigmatization (Lydaki, 1998; Dafermakis, 1999; Riga and Daiminakou, 2002; Daskalaki, 2005).

3.1. Greek Roma

The reluctance of the Greek state to recognize the presence of ethnic or linguistic minorities within its jurisdiction is reflected in official censuses, which do not record the ethnic origin or the spoken language of the population being surveyed. Consequently, there is no accurate demographic information on the number of Roma living in the country. International organization reports provide varying estimates – ranging from 100,000 to 350,000 people – out of a total Greek population of approximately 11 million (UN, 2009; EC, 2010). This picture is further muddied by the recent arrival in the country of a non-negligible community of immigrant Roma from Albania. Population mobility and statistical uncertainties aside, the majority of Roma communities in Greece have a centuries-long presence in the area, preceding the establishment of the modern Greek state (1830) (MRGI, 2005). Nonetheless, throughout their history, Greek Roma have often been treated as "outsiders".

Regarding citizenship, Greek Roma make up two distinct groups. The first corresponds to a relatively small community of approximately 20,000 Muslim Roma who live in the northeastern region of Thrace. Their civil and social rights are regulated by the Lausanne Treaty (1923), which exempted Muslim (e.g., Turkish,

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[2] Despite recent adjustments and rationalizations in 2010, citizen naturalization procedures have continued to feature a range of partial and subjective criteria that confer a special status to Greek diaspora communities (GGN, 2010).

[3] Following the Council of Europe's approach, a minority is understood as "…a group of persons in a State who: a. reside on the territory of that State and are citizens thereof, b. maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that State, c. display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, d. are sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that State or of a region of that State, e. are motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their traditions, their religion or their language" (EC, 2002: 173–4).

Roma, Pomak) communities in Thrace from the inter-war wave of mandatory population exchanges between Greece and Turkey. This exception is reflected in the citizenship code. Relevant populations are recognized as "Greek citizens of non-Greek descent," enjoying particular linguistic, religious and educational rights.[4] Muslim minority rights in Greece are exercised solely in the region of Thrace and access to these rights is defined by residency in the area (Christopoulos and Tsitselikis, 2003).

The second category of Roma population was labeled by the authorities as "aliens of Gypsy descent", remaining effectively "stateless" until the early 1950s. Naturalization processes started in 1955, when the country's Citizenship Code was amended (GGN, 1955). Most Roma, however, were granted citizenship in the post-1970s period, following the fall of the military dictatorship (1974). Belated recognition of basic rights for socio-political participation suggests a high degree of anti-Roma prejudice in Greece. Granting citizenship rights did not alter this negative social predisposition. A recent survey of the Greek Roma population, for instance, registered the harsh living standards and the limited prospects for change that the respective communities face. According to the report, of the total 125,000 Greek Roma, 25.6 percent, live in substandard housing and a further 22 percent squat illegally in settlements described as "shanty towns." Unemployment stands at 61.7 percent, with Roma women appearing to be completely absent from formal paid employment. With regard to education, almost half (41.2 percent) of Greek Roma are illiterate and only 17 percent of minors of compulsory schooling age are enrolled in schools (FSG, 2009). Gender differences in education are also apparent. The net enrollment ratio by gender in secondary education is 1 girl to 16 boys (M.I.A., 2012).

In accounting for these conditions, a number of studies direct attention to key socio-governmental discriminatory practices that have shaped and prolonged poverty and exclusion. Examples are rife. Since 1983, a ministerial decree has required that the organized encampment of itinerant Roma must be "...outside inhabited areas and in [sic] good distance from the approved urban plan or the last contiguous houses" (GGN, 1983: 2079). Enforcement of this decree has taken the form of forced evictions of Roma settlers via procedures that are euphemistically called "cleaning operations," accompanied by the demolition of their homes and the wholesale destruction of their belongings (GHM, 2003). In cases where Roma settlement rights are not disputed, the literature underscores the consistent refusal of local authorities to register Roma as being locally resident, effectively depriving them of access to a number of social and economic rights, including education (NCHR, 2001). In parallel, the use of excessive force by the police is highlighted, manifest in numerous incidents of mistreatment of Roma while in police custody and arbitrary raids in Roma neighborhoods (UN, 2004; NCHR, 2009). These findings suggest the presence of intentional and malignant forms of discrimination, verging on "institutional racism" (Phillips, 2011). The fact that such practices are well documented brings into question the efficacy of the EU's approach to the protection of minorities facing exclusion. The following section discusses the course of actions that led to the development of Roma-centered policies at the EU level, commenting on the capacity of the OMC approach to bring to light long-standing social exclusion problems.

3.2. The EU's social policy and the Roma

Minority rights protection is an expressed EU priority.[5] The Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR), for example, states that "...the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity" (EC, 2000 – Article 22). Such provisions, however, are not legally binding on member states. Nevertheless, the EU's Open Method of Coordination initiated a process of "rights-watch" at member state level, placing emphasis on registering discriminatory concerns in official, periodic reports (EC, 2005).

The reports that originated from this process have revealed the high degree of intolerance experienced by the Roma communities in the EU, manifest in residential segregation, labor market discrimination and life expectancy that is 10 years shorter than that of the average EU citizen. Intense gender-based disparities suggest the particular disadvantaged state of Roma women[6] (FRA, 2013). Moreover, the difficulties faced by the Roma in taking advantage of national and European social policy funds has been noted and underscored (Brown et al., 2012). In light of these findings, the EU took "joined responsibility" with its member states in an attempt to ameliorate the situation. The twin-track approach seeks to strike a fine policy balance. It acknowledges the merits of European intervention on Roma issues and it attempts, simultaneously, to avoid a declaratory "Europeanization" of the problem (Vermeersch, 2013). The EU, in other words, perceives implicitly the Roma to be a European minority and acts as a change promoter at member state level. It prioritizes intervention – namely, in the areas of "education," "employment," "healthcare" and "housing" (EC, 2011) – encouraging member states to respond to the needs of the Roma with explicit measures.

Operationally, the EU policy framework on the Roma is based on an enhanced data collection regime involving the Fundamental Rights Agency and the national statistical authorities. Consequently, member state reports inform a comprehensive position paper on the state of the Roma in the EU that is presented annually by the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (EC, 2008). A "Roma Task Force" has been set up by the Commission (2010) that facilitates member states' access to relevant EU funds. Roma community "participation" in national and local level policies is a stated priority of the EU, whereas the "European Platform for Roma Inclusion" seeks such engagement at a European level (EC, 2010). In parallel, the European Social Fund supports the transnational networking of public authorities and civil sector actors in an effort to improve the effectiveness of EU policies centering on the Roma (see EURoma, 2013). The impact of this mobilization on the Greek policy framework for the Roma was considerable.

3.3. EU influences in Greece

In Greece, Open Method of Coordination processes elevated the issue of minority discrimination in the national policy agenda. National Action Plans for the Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups have been produced biannually since 2001, detailing the current status of social exclusion and setting the goals to be achieved to tackle it (Ferrera et al., 2002; M.E.S.S., 2008). Responding to policy commitments stated in the Action Plans, new legislation was introduced by the national authorities (2005), aiming specifically to address racial, ethnic, religious, disability and sexual orientation discrimination (GGN, 2005). Regarding the Roma population in particular, the Action Plans underscored and substantiated the underprivileged state of Roma communities in Greece, prompting

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[4] A total of 174 primary and two secondary minority schools, for example, operate in the region, funded by the state. Study programmes in these schools are taught in both Greek and Turkish. Moreover, a total of 0.5% of student places in Greek universities are reserved for Muslim minority members. In terms of religious rights, two Islamic theological seminaries operate in Thrace, also funded by the state (Askouni, 2006).

[5] As suggested by two Directives on equal treatment (2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC), the EU encourages a coherent approach to the social integration of ethnic minority groups.

[6] Overall, in the EU only 1 in 5 Roma women are reported to be in paid employment, as opposed to 1 in 2 of the respective male population (FRA, 2013).

a policy response. Greek Roma were recognized by the national authorities as a "socially vulnerable group" and an "Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Roma" (IAP) was introduced in 2002. The IAP was run by a special-purpose inter-ministerial committee that evaluated project proposals and monitored their implementation. It operated at both national and local levels, promoting two categories of measures: a) physical infrastructure, oriented toward the provision of housing and public facilities in Roma neighborhoods; and, b) services, focusing on vocational training, education, health, culture and sports (EP, 2011). The IAP was expected to last for six years (2002–2008) with a budget of 308.6 million euros, funded by the EU and the national authorities in the framework of the third (2000–2006) and the fourth (2007–2013) programming periods of the Structural Funds. As part of the National Action Plan presented in the OMC platform, it followed the corresponding EU social policy narrative and participatory guidelines. It was drafted with the cooperation of national Roma associations; it envisaged the participation of local Roma communities in all project phases and it aimed to support "...the promotion of social justice and the social integration of Greek Roma" (IAP, 2001: 16). This is the extent to which the EU's social policy approach influences the implementation of anti-exclusion plans at member state level. It provides the broad intervention principles and allows, subsequently, the national authorities to accommodate and run the initiatives in their administrative and policy-making structures. The effectiveness with which the IAP addressed the disadvantaged state of the Roma population of Komotini, a city in the northeastern region of Thrace, is explored next. The particularity of this initiative rests in its spatially integrated character, centering on relocating the city's Roma to a new territory. The next section starts by portraying the high degree of residential segregation and the inadequate living conditions of the community. Subsequently, the obstacles to Roma engagement in the intervention scheme are discussed, shaped and conditioned as they were by the absence of any specific provisions in the programme supporting their participatory role. In the final part we explore the community's active response to this governance setting, drawing from the deliberative literature debate on the role of underprivileged communities in power-laden participatory structures.

4. The Roma community in Komotini

Komotini, a city of approximately 50,000 inhabitants is the main urban center in the Rodopi prefecture; one of the least developed areas in Greece. Economic difficulties aside, the city is a mosaic of ethnic backgrounds with a strong presence of a Muslim minority of primarily Turkish and Roma extraction comprising 27 percent of the local population (URBAN, 2004). According to municipal reports and related policy documents, the Roma population in Komotini is primarily found in two settlements. The first, the so-called "Hephestos" community, has a population of 2200 and is located in the northeastern part of the peri-urban area. The second settlement, the "Alán-Kogiou" community, numbers approximately 900 inhabitants and is situated within the urban agglomeration, neighboring the city center (see Map 1). It was the dire housing conditions in the Alán-Kogiou settlement that originally attracted the attention of policy makers (Komotini Municipality, 2001, 2005).

The 277 families that comprise the community reside in 169 homes, a ratio reflecting the overcrowded living conditions and grim financial state of its inhabitants. A total of 90 percent of the corresponding dwellings are makeshift constructions assembled from a variety of inappropriate building materials, such as plywood, corrugated metal and sheets of plastic, lacking any form of property rights. Urban infrastructure provisions are virtually non-existent. With the exception of one paved road that splits the settlement into two, all other streets are unpaved. The lack of a sewage system is addressed by the construction of substandard sanitation tanks, creating public health issues. Water supplies are provided solely by three public taps; all are located by the paved road, in areas where laundry is also being performed. Electricity is primarily provided by private, unauthorized and, hence, hazardous connections to nearby electrical grid pylons. The Alán-Kogiou settlement, therefore, is an informal quarter of the city described in municipal reports as a "slum area," a controversial term criticized in the literature for confusing the physical problem of poor quality housing with the characteristics of the people living there (Gilbert, 2007). The multidimensional nature of exclusion is reflected in the community's alarming socio-economic indicators. Unemployment affects 75 percent of the local workforce and

a: Alán-Kogiou

b: Anachoma
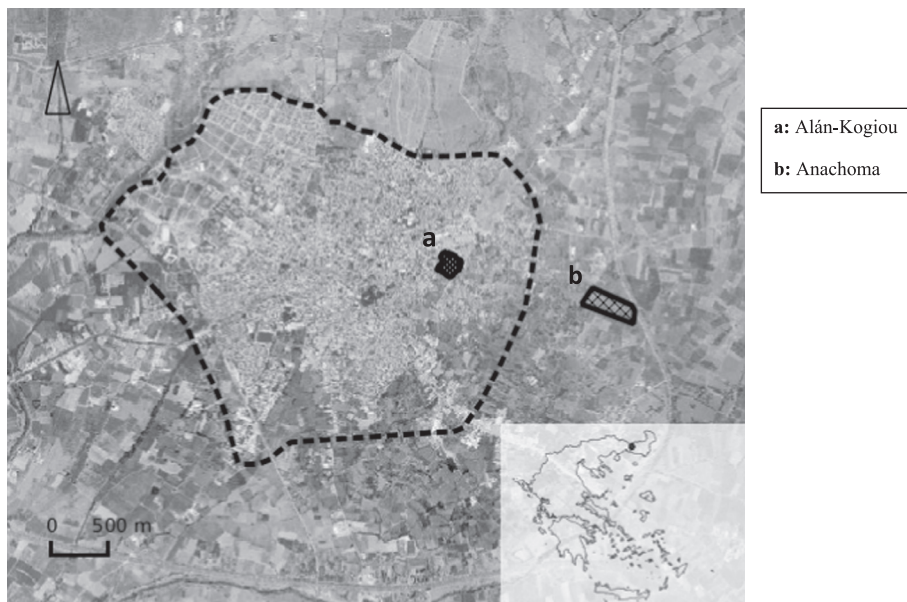
Map 1. The city of Komotini.

women are absent from the formal labor market. As a result, a total of 80 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line. Illiteracy rates are particularly high, even among the young, with only one in five children completing primary school. Problems are also recorded in the domestic sphere—according to estimates, two in every three women are victims of domestic abuse (MOU, 2012: 61–69). In light of these factors, an intervention attempt for the area in question was decided on in 2001 as part of the national Integrated Action Plan for Greek Roma.

4.1. The relocation scheme

The Alán-Kogiou IAP centered on transferring the community to a new location; an ambitious resettlement endeavor expected to be completed within 6 years (2002–2008), with a budget of approximately 20 million euros. The new grounds were to be found and planned from scratch, actively engaging the community in the process. Upon completion of the appropriate physical infrastructure works and the construction of public buildings and spaces, the community would settle in prefabricated temporary homes provided by the Ministry of Planning. Subsequently, to obtain full rights to the property, each family would have the option to apply and participate in a low-interest home construction financing scheme (Komotini Municipality, 2001).

The area's social infrastructure facilities and services were intended to take into account the community's particular needs. Emphasis was placed on a series of measures focusing on enhanced health service provision, literacy education, educational support and sports engagement opportunities, all backed up by a team of social workers (Goutsioti, 2008 and 2009). Moreover, regarding work prospects and labor market access, the program aimed to establish vocational training and business start-up support structures, a process resting on the identification of individual capabilities and preferences (Komotini Municipality, 2001). Therefore, the Roma community in question, a group socio-spatially differentiated from "mainstream" society, was called to participate in a concerted "social inclusion" effort. As the projects were co-financed by the EU, community engagement in all phases of the programme was an indispensable funding condition. Community participation alone suggests the appreciable reorientation of local policy priorities along the lines of socially inclusive goals. The normative and one-dimensional approach to participation that was adopted, however, fell short of grasping the variety and diversity of local interests and the density and complexity of local power structures. Power asymmetries in the participatory structures, in particular, were manifest from early on in the programme.

4.2. The initial stages of the program

In Komotini, the local authorities were the first to become aware of the presence of funding opportunities aimed at ameliorating the socio-economic circumstances of Roma communities. In this light, the municipality assigned a team of researchers to collect socio-economic data, defining "Alán-Kogiou" as the principal target area. It was only after the broad plan of action had been set down, however, that the community was invited by the municipality for a meeting. "Alán-Kogiou" was represented in the municipality by members of the settlement's "cultural center", established in 1996. As the chair of this organization stated, the municipality put relocation forward as the only available option. Alternative solutions, such as the redevelopment of the current site, were not mentioned (Mifit, 2010). Instead, a number of different areas, one within city limits and the rest on the outskirts, were proposed as viable settlement alternatives for the community to consider and from which to choose. As residents commented, however, the community has been living uninterruptedly in

Alán-Kogiou for a long period of time; a *fait accompli* relevant to the real property rights they had established in the area.

> "Originally, 13 families came here, in 1921 from Bulgaria and in 1923 from Turkey, settling by the river that was then crossing the city. They sold their belongings and bought a piece of land of 1700 m². The families got bigger and more people came over from other parts" (Dimitra, 2010).

The land in Alán-Kogiou, therefore, had been continuously and exclusively occupied by the community for more than twenty years. Moreover, the lawful owners of the settlement's occupied parts had not claimed their land during this time. According to the respective legal provisions, residents could assert a claim for adverse possession. This information, however, was not disclosed or explored further by the municipality. Neither was legal support suggested to the community to pursue these lines of inquiry. Consequently, the community considered the redevelopment of the Alán-Kogiou site with a degree of hesitation. The cultural center chairman's observation characteristically represented such hesitation:

> "I knew we could claim our rights linked to this area *[Alán-Kogiou]*. We could take them to court, but most of us are illiterate. They *[the municipality]* don't tell us much. I brought it up as an option in our public meetings but we decided against it" (Mifit, 2010).

From the outset, then, resource imbalance between the community and the local authority framed the participatory exercise. The community was not informed about the full range of policy choices and alternatives prior to the meetings. Access to such sources is regarded in the literature as enabling participants' synergy in information development (Taylor, 2007). For Fung (2005), in such decidedly non-ideal participatory circumstances, decisions are not reached according to the exchange of reasons and arguments, thereby arresting the possibility of deliberation. Instead of a dialogue, which suggests a two-way process, information was provided in an attempt to guide and form the opinion of the underprivileged stakeholder. In this manner, according to Hanna (2000), participation runs the risk of becoming a reinforcing exercise for predetermined decisions. Communicative inequality advances particular understandings at the expense of others, shaping argumentation. The community, however, decided to continue its engagement in the process because there was no other option evident.

4.3. Organized opposition against resettlement

Following a series of visits to sites deemed by the municipality as "appropriate" for relocation, the community held a meeting in Alán-Kogiou to register its preferences via majority voting. Two sites were selected by the community for relocation, the first preference being the one within the city limits. As soon as this decision was made known, local property owners mobilized against it, lobbying the local and national authorities (Fanfani, 2004). Thereafter, the suitability of the area was belatedly and inexplicably rejected by the municipality, postponing the program's commencement. The second site proposed by the community was accepted by the local authorities as adequate to meet the relocation plan requirements. Once again, however, local property owners had a different opinion.

The new location, known as "Anachoma", was situated outside the eastern limits of the city (see Map 1). A small Roma community of approximately 50 people already lived there, some of whom had recently moved into the area from the Alán-Kogiou settlement, utilizing a limited scheme of home ownership loans. To prepare the

ground for relocation, the municipality aimed to take over non-Roma property rights and to expand and adjust the city's town plan accordingly (Antoniadou, 2010). Landholders, however, directly lobbied the Ministry of Agriculture in an attempt to alter land-uses and revoke expropriations. The designation of the site as a "Prime Productive Value Location" by the Ministry of Agriculture blocked the materialization of all development plans not related to agriculture, stopping any development (Komotini Municipality, 2003). According to the community, landholders' objections were not related to the estimated value of the land that was to be expropriated.

> "They just didn't want us there. No one wants us close enough. Even the municipality. They found us this place which is outside the city. They had found us other places before that, but local residents didn't want us there. Landowners in this area weren't different. They collected 600 signatures and put lawyers to change land-uses so that we couldn't move in. 'Are you throwing us out to bring them in?', they would ask" (Mifit, 2010).

Faced with landholders' organized opposition and the reluctance of the municipality to become involved in the land-use dispute, the community acknowledged the absence of reciprocal willingness to engage in the resettlement effort. A consensual solution, marked by a dialogical process in which partners reflect on their beliefs and preferences to consider what policies they are willing to endorse (Bevir, 2006: 430), seemed infeasible. In response, the community attempted to change attitudes by expanding the circle of Roma participants involved in the dispute, thereby scaling up political pressure.

4.4. The Roma community stakes a claim

The "Rodopi Prefecture Roma Association" (ROM) (2002) was established when an impasse in negotiations was imminent. It brought together all Roma communities in the prefecture, aiming to put more resources into use and to press local authorities to stay committed to the relocation goal (Chronos, 2002). The turn of events, however, forced the Association to engage in action without delay. The bustle that accompanied relocation stirred real estate interests pursuing development opportunities in the city center. Real estate owners encroached by the community's settlement appeared in Alán-Kogiou and informed residents of imminent development-related interventions. A new road cutting right through the settlement was to be built and inhabitants were to be evicted from their homes prior to the realization of the relocation plan (Nikolaou, 2010). What was suddenly at stake was the right of the community to remain in the area in which it was residing. One by one, the reasons that kept the community engaged in participation were exhausted, a turn of events that created widespread disillusionment.

> "It seems that the whole thing was triggered because the area we live in [Alán-Kogiou] is within the city's "town plan," highly prized and readily available for development" (Alexiou, 2010).

Similar to a variety of examples noted in the literature, the rhetoric of Roma engagement in the programme far outpaced the reality of partnership on the ground (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2004; Somerville, 2005). The EU's regulations that stipulated the community's participation did not feature any further measures to support this involvement. As a result, the participatory space created locally for the community was shaped by power relations that both surrounded and affected it (Cornwall, 2004: 34). In this light, the community resorted to non-communicative forms of power, claiming its place as the key stake- and place-holder (Bailey, 2010). Their aim was to force the local authorities to support relocation by

exposing their lack of commitment to follow through on decisions reached earlier. Furthermore, they sought to increase the cost of any alternative relocation proposals by demonstrating their own adherence to the originally approved plan. The Association organized a wide-ranging and dynamic campaign, culminating in a series of interviews in local media and the staging of a protest rally against the city's local authorities. Local newspapers vividly described the event:

> "Many local residents, carrying the Greek flag, marched yesterday to the municipality to protest against the eviction prospect. 'We are Greeks', they were shouting" (Martidou, 2004). "'Enough is enough!' Alán-Kogiou residents declared yesterday" (Paratiritis, 2004). "We want to live like everyone else, we want homes" (Eleuthero Vima, 2004).

In the course of events, the mayor acknowledged that there was a strong interest by landowners and real estate developers to prepare the Alán-Kogiou site for commercial use (Kotsakis, 2008). He provided assurances, however, that this would not take place before the community had been relocated to the new settlement (Fanfani, 2004). The Association also sought influence at a national government level. In a trip to the city (2004), the Minister of Internal Affairs accepted an invitation to visit the settlement, where he committed to re-examine the relocation process. Soon after, the relocation scheme was re-classified by the Ministry as a program of "high developmental significance." Under this status, the land-use change in "Anachoma" brought about by landholders' objections to Roma resettlement in the area, could no longer obstruct the relocation plan (Komotini Municipality, 2004). The Association's initiative signaled a shift in the community's mode of local political interaction. According to Alán-Kogiou's residents, mainstream political party candidates approached the settlement in pre-election periods, "…promising solutions, to forget as soon as they would get our votes" (Paratiritis, 2004). As part of the broader Roma union, however, the capacity of the Alán-Kogiou community to negotiate and create leverage for its cause was significantly enhanced. The Association, a representative of the prefecture's Roma population, possessed the necessary resources and political weight to influence developments in the area. Despite the fruitful turn of events, the landholders at the destination site did not abandon their efforts and took the case to the Prefecture's "Court of First Instance."

4.5. The court rules for the Roma

From the beginning of the resettlement process until the court ruled on the case (2010), the community was caught between eviction pressure by the developers at the site in which its members were currently residing and landholders' objections at the site to which the community was expected to go to. During this time, the Association moved forward steadily. Preparing for the court case, it disputed the original municipal demographic data, achieving a new enumeration of the Roma population. As a result, the number of beneficiaries increased by a total of 22 families, triggering a corresponding increase in the number of houses that were to be constructed (Komotini Municipality, 2005). More characteristically, aiming to secure enhanced presence in the local political scene, the Association initiated cooperation with five other Roma associations in the region of Thrace, thus establishing the "Federation of the Greek Roma in Thrace and Diaspora" (2007) (Martidou, 2007). The court's declaratory judgment was therefore delivered to a community well-prepared for the next phase.

The court affirmed the right of the municipality to property expropriation in Anachoma, recognizing the social and developmental significance of the Roma community relocation enterprise. Moreover, considering the revised population data, it increased the

financial compensation sum to cover the expansion of the expro-priated territory. The compensation process was completed suc-cessfully by the date set by the court (the 11th of November 2011) and the deprived parties were paid the full value of the prop-erty taken (GGN, 2011). Consequently, there is, at present, a terri-tory on the city's outskirts awaiting development for the community's relocation. The area has been formally demarcated in the city's new town plan (2012) as the place where the Roma community will resettle (GGN, 2012). This outcome differs from the original community goal of resettlement within the limits of the town plan. It is viewed positively by the community, however, because it offers a tangible prospect of improved accommodation. The following section revisits the community's experience in the first IAP, commenting on the relevance of the EU's social exclusion approach to the particularity of local circumstance.

5. Discussion: The "rights" discourse and "exclusion"

The recent focus on the social exclusion problems faced by the Roma in Greece is the result of enhanced mobilization at the EU level. The "Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of the Greek Roma" (2001) was shaped in the OMC platform and it was financially supported by the EU. The local programme explored in this paper was part of this initiative and followed the EU's social policy narrative. It aimed at engaging the Roma community in Komotini in a governance scheme centering on tackling residential segregation. The difficulties that this endeavor entailed, however, were underestimated by the policy-makers. Socio-spatial segrega-tion reflects discriminatory processes that do not fade away in the wake of a participatory call. In Komotini, concerted social-political pressure effectively denied the Roma their right to improved hous-ing within the inner city (Galster, 2007). The community compro-mised its goals when it agreed to relocate to a peri-urban area. To safeguard this decision against a new round of challenges, it had to transform its previously hesitant and unassertive traits of engage-ment in the program. The catalyst to change was the gradual understanding that, according to the EU's participatory modus ope-randi, any municipal decision or change of plans presupposed the community's seal of approval (Alexiou, 2010). The governance requirement for intersubjective agreement, therefore, provided a "political opportunity structure" motivating the Roma to claim their right to housing (Caniglia and Carmin, 2005). The local authority officer in charge of the program acknowledged this:

> "We [the local authority] knew from the start that without their [the Roma] consent, nothing could go on" (Kosmidou, 2010). "The community is the programme. Funds won't be released unless they sign" (Anavrozidis, 2009).

During the programming period, the "citizenship" concept that guided intervention directed attention to local discriminatory practices. Motivated by relevant processes at the EU and the national level, the municipal authorities of Komotini explored and registered the disadvantaged state of the local Roma popula-tion (Atkinson and Davoudi, 2000; Docherty et al., 2001).

The community's struggle for recognition was initially expressed by reference to their Greek identity, defying their being perceived as "others." The establishment of the Roma Federation in the subsequent years (2007) was an act of self-assertion; it was accompanied by the introduction of the Roma flag which was to be delivered to each Roma association in the region. As the Feder-ation's chairman stated:

> "We are making this clear. Our flag is not a national symbol. It is a cultural one, used by Roma in all European countries. We are now revealing the Roma flag, so that all people in Greece recog-nize it. We're Greeks, but we're Roma Greeks" (Martidou, 2007).

Influenced by the "rights" discourse, the dynamics of identity formation were socially negotiated and reshaped by the commu-nity in an attempt to mobilize cultural sources and defend against existing relationships marked by power and stigmatization (Gotovos, 2002). In the process, the community's Muslim minority status was overshadowed by the more topical and EU-supported "Roma" identity reference. The capacity for the EU's social exclu-sion approach to unveil the plurality of local interests, thereby trig-gering a change in local relations, is acknowledged. However, the limitations of addressing exclusion via participatory governance are also noted.

6. Conclusions

Community participation is approached in the EU's social policy as having the necessary qualities to singlehandedly transform dis-advantaged groups into integrated society members (EC, 1998 – annex: 7). In this narrative, communities are treated as "self-evident and unproblematic social categories," reflecting a homogenous perspective that overlooks intra-community differ-ences and power positionalities (Hickey and Mohan, 2004: 17; Bevir, 2006). In parallel, as the Roma experience in Komotini sug-gests, the EU's participatory approach pays insufficient attention to situational difficulties and power-related imbalances that define partner relations. Uneven interaction between partners renders the participatory role of the less advantaged groups as largely symbolic, providing legitimacy to a policy that affects them but that has not been influenced by them. In the case of minorities facing prejudice and intolerance, foreclosed interactions distract attention from addressing discrimination as the main grounds of exclusion.

These conceptual and pragmatic limitations of the EU's partici-patory governance paradigm inform an intense debate in the liter-ature. As discussed, controversy focuses on the role of disadvantaged groups in participatory platforms, weighing the benefits accruing from an imperfect engagement against argu-ments in favour of an "exit action strategy" and dissociation (Gaventa, 2004; Davies, 2007). In Komotini, pervasive disregard for partner inequalities in status and resources exhausted all com-municative means of Roma engagement in the programme. The community was left with no alternative but to scale up political pressure against governing institutions or risk being ignored. Instead of directing their actions away from the programme, how-ever, the Roma demonstrated the problems they faced and claimed influence over the structures that were created to address them. By intensifying political pressure, they effectively moved their issue into the public discourse, reconfiguring their role as a key deliber-ative player.

The Komotini initiative was one of 96 similar projects operating simultaneously in the country as part of the first Greek Roma IAP (2002–2008). An overall evaluation of this initiative had not been made available by the time of this writing. Existing information, which is scattered and scarce, suggests that the majority of the pro-jects will continue their operations in a new programming phase (2012–2020), currently being prepared in Greece (MLSS, 2011; Ombudsman for the Roma, 2011). This mobilization at national level is supported by the EU. The Commission has invited member states to produce an integrated strategy that focuses on the Roma for the period up to 2020 (EC, 2011). Concurrently, member states and managing authorities were called by the EU to facilitate under-privileged partners' engagement in anti-exclusion governance schemes through a variety of means, including courses of training and financial assistance (EC, 2012). Such developments confirm the continuation of participatory governance schemes in EU funded anti-exclusion minority policies. The processes set in motion are expected to attract the attention of scholars, particularly in view

of the new EU attempts aiming to narrow the gap between participatory rhetoric and real practice. As noted in this paper, however, when the problems an underprivileged community wishes to address are already framed to its disadvantage, a set of guidelines will not suffice to open up policy space. Instead, customary alliances and existing norms and practices will have to be disturbed by the community first, for the community's problems to be visible to all. The Roma community in Komotini used participation as an opportunity to claim this power.

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List of Interviewees

Alexiou, G., 06/12/2010. Secretary of the "Federation of the Greek Roma in Thrace and Diaspora".

Anavrozidis, G., 22/01/2009. Member of the Municipal Council of Komotini. Chair of the Municipal "Planning and Development Committee".

Antoniadou, F., 03/12/2010. Municipality of Komotini, surveying engineer, responsible for the "Anachoma" settlement blueprint.

Dimitra, 06/12/2010. Alán-Kogiou resident and coffee shop owner.

Goutsioti, E., 17/12/2008, 23/01/2009. Social worker, Social and Medical Centre of Komotini Municipality.

Kosmidou, Z., 15/12/2010. Head of Komotini's Municipality "Technical Department".

Kotsakis, D., 16/12/2008. Mayor of Komotini.

Mifit, A., 15/12/2010. Chairman of the "Alán-Kogiou Cultural Centre" and of the "Federation of the Greek Roma in Thrace and Diaspora".

Nikolaou, V., 03/12/2010, 06/12/2010, 13/12/2010. Member of the "Federation of the Greek Roma in Thrace and Diaspora".