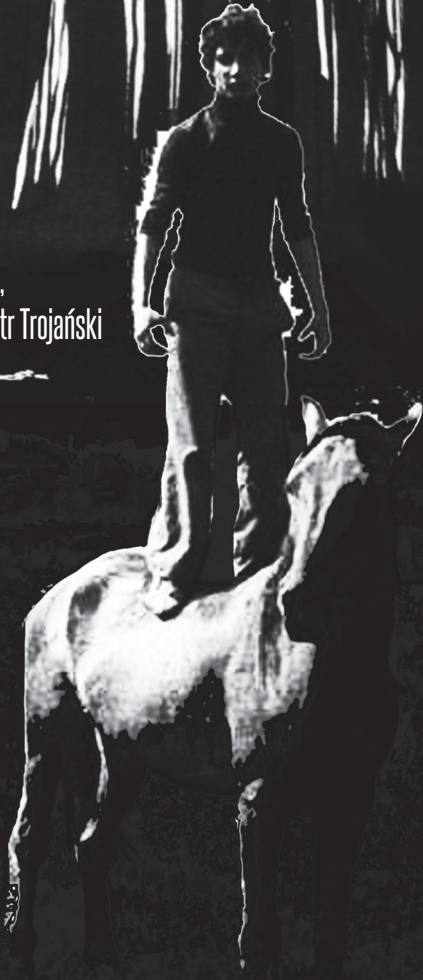


EDUCATION FOR REMEMBRANCE OF THE ROMA GENOCIDE

Scholarship, Commemoration and the Role of Youth

EDITED BY

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Introduction

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Why are we compiling this book?

On August the 2nd of 2014, ternYpe International Roma Youth Network gathered over 1,000 young Roma and non-Roma from 25 countries to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the Roma Holocaust. The event – Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative “Dikh he na bister” (*Look and don’t forget*)¹ – was the biggest commemorative event of the Roma Holocaust in history. Never before had so many people gathered in one place to reflect on collectively shared history and discuss its importance for Roma people today.

In the framework of this event, in partnership with the Pedagogical University of Cracow, an international expert conference on “Education for Remembrance of the Roma Genocide”² was organized. The event brought together over 70 experts, scholars, representatives of public institutions and intergovernmental organizations (The European Commission, The United Nations, The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, The Council of Europe, The European Parliament), as well as Roma and non-Roma youth organizations and activists. The conference aimed at

¹ <http://2august.eu/> (access: 14/09/2015).

² The agenda from the conference can be found in the Annex section of this book.

providing a space for interaction and exchange of practices and knowledge regarding the Roma Genocide commemoration and education. The conference, through its thematic sessions, focused on three intersecting fields: (i) scholarship, (ii) commemoration and recognition, and (iii) Holocaust education. Throughout the event, the youth – as scholars, educators, multipliers and activists – were at the heart of the discussions, recognizing the strength and potential of youth agency.

The book you have in your hands is a result of this exchange. However, rather than a report from the conference, this volume aims at reflecting on current developments regarding the Roma Holocaust remembrance and provides basis for further discussion. We acknowledge the intersecting fields of scholarship, institutional engagement and youth movements, which reinforce each other, and collectively contribute to the Roma Genocide education. Our aim is to stimulate further discussion across different fields of engagement and disciplines, and among the variety of actors involved in the Roma Holocaust commemoration and education.

The “forgotten Holocaust” remembered – role of scholarship, commemoration and Roma mobilization

For years, the horrors experienced by Roma people during World War II (from now on WWII) were referred to as the “forgotten Holocaust”. Indeed, for decades it was. In the years after the war, little attention has been paid to the fate of the Roma under the Nazi rule by scholars or governments. There was not a single Romani witness during the Nuremberg trials and Romani victims were mentioned only marginally. It was not until 1962 that the crimes against Roma were explicitly mentioned, proven and judged during the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Since the 60’s, Roma and Sinti organizations have begun to fight for official recognition of the Roma Genocide and, over time, this plight became an essential aim of Romani ethnic mobilization across Europe. The role of German Sinti and Roma organizations was key in mobilizing

public attention through actions such as demonstrations in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1979 or the famous hunger strike in 1980 at Dachau.

The Roma Genocide has also become a recurrent theme of World Romani Congresses, especially those in 1981 in Gottingen (Germany) and 1990 in Serock (Poland). Despite multiple demands on behalf of Romani organizations, for years they remained largely fruitless. The Roma Genocide was denied recognition based on the conviction that the Roma were not targeted by the Nazis based on racial grounds but due to their alleged “antisocial” and criminal nature. It was not until 1982 that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt³ acknowledged that Roma as a people were targeted for complete extermination by the Nazis. Despite this official recognition by the German authorities, the Roma Genocide continued to remain largely unknown.

In recent years, however, the plight for Roma Holocaust recognition and remembrance has entered a new stage. Rather than a “forgotten Holocaust”, *Samudaripen/Porrajmos*⁴ gradually becomes a better-known and widely accepted historical fact. Undeniably, the topic of the Roma Holocaust is gaining an unprecedented momentum. A number of interdependent and parallel

³ “The Nazi dictatorship inflicted a grave injustice on the Sinti and Roma. They were persecuted for reasons of race. These crimes constituted an act of genocide.” Helmut Schmidt, Federal Chancellor of Germany (17 March 1982).

⁴ In an attempt to construct a Romani parallel to the Hebrew term *Shoah*, Roma and non-Roma scholars have proposed *Romanes* terms to refer to the Roma Genocide. Ian Hancock proposed the term *Porrajmos* („devouring“ or „destruction“), now increasingly accepted. However, in a number of Romani dialects this word originates from the term „rape“ and for this reason is still regarded as controversial. The term *Samudaripen* („mass killing“), introduced by Marcel Courthiade, is also used commonly with regards to the Roma Genocide. There are also other terms, such as *Kali Traš* („Black fear“) or *Berša bibahtale* („unhappy years“), which are less known and less commonly used. Ian Hancock, *On the interpretation of a word: Porrajmos as Holocaust* (RADOC). Retrieved August 17, 2015 from: http://www.radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=art_e_holocaust_interpretation&lang=en&articles=true

developments contributed to this process in three different spheres of social practice and discourse: scholarship, commemoration practices and Roma mobilization.

Firstly, scholarship on the Roma Genocide has played an essential role. In the years right after the war, few scholars were inclined to inquire into the fate of the Roma during WWII⁵. However, as the Romani plight for recognition of the Roma Genocide increased, so did the interest of scholars in researching this chapter of European history. Documenting the Holocaust of the Roma became an essential tool for supporting Romani claims: it brought academic evidence and gave legitimacy to the Romani struggle for historical justice. In recent years, one can note a visible augment of academic literature on the Roma Holocaust⁶, and increasing percentage of it is written by scholars of Romani background. Although there has been an undeniable progress in terms of historical knowledge of the Roma Genocide, there are still multiple blind spots and numerous questions remain problematic, or even controversial. Consensus is yet to be reached regarding the number of Romani victims, the genesis of Romani persecutions, or the terminology used to refer to these events. Furthermore, expanding historical knowledge on the Roma Holocaust seldom translates into greater awareness of the Roma Genocide – *Porrajmos* is still rarely taught at schools and history books mention the Roma only sporadically, if at all.

In an attempt to tackle the general lack of knowledge about the Roma Holocaust, especially among the younger generation,

⁵ One of the first academic articles on the Roma Genocide was published in 1949 by Dora Yates (*Hitler and the Gypsies. The Fate of Europe's Oldest Arynas*, Commentary, American Jewish Association). Until mid-70's when the first monography of the fate of Roma during WWII was published (Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, London: Chatto-Heinmann for Sussex University Press, 1972), there was only but a handful of academic texts dealing with the Roma Genocide.

⁶ Sławomir Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów. Pamięć zagłady a tożsamość Romów* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2012), p. 138.

a number of toolkits, websites, books and handbooks have been published in the last few years. New research on the Roma Holocaust increasingly engages with the communities, gathering personal testimonies of the survivors, their relatives and neighbours in order to save them from oblivion. Initiatives undertaken by scholars (for example the book on Roma Genocide in Hungary written by two Romani scholars Agnes Daroczi and Janos Barsony⁷), nongovernmental organizations (Yahad-in Unum and Roma Dignity) and governmental institutions (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance – sponsored Multi-Year Work Plan project on Killing Sites) increasingly contribute to identifying and mapping out killing sites and mass graves where Romani victims have perished. Some of these new developments are presented and discussed in this book.

Secondly, Roma Holocaust commemoration practices, especially those hosted or promoted by governmental institutions, proliferated across Europe in the past years⁸. Commemorative plaques can be found in various concentration camps where the Roma were imprisoned or in various locations where the Roma have been murdered; the State Museum in Auschwitz-Birkenau in cooperation with Roma organizations has opened a permanent exhibition devoted to the suffering of the Roma during the Nazi time (located in the Block 13) in 1997. Memorials in memory of Romani Victims have been erected in diverse locations, most notably in 2012 erected in front of the Bundestag, in Berlin, Germany. Today, Romani victims are remembered during the International Day of Memory of Victims of the Holocaust, celebrated on January 27th, from Spain to Poland. Romani speakers have also been

⁷ Agnes Daroczi & Janos Barsony, *Kali Trash – Fekete félelem, Pharrajimos – Szétvágatás, Samudaripen – Legyilkolás* [Kali Trash : Pharrajimos - Samudaripen - The fate of Roma during the Holocaust in Hungary II] (Budapest: Romani Intituto, 2015).

⁸ CAHROM (2013)¹⁵, *Overview On The Recognition Of The Genocide Of Roma And Sinti (Pharrajimos / Samudaripen) During World War II And On Related Remembrance Days In Member States Of The Council Of Europe.*

invited twice for the UN Holocaust Remembrance ceremonies (Ethel Brooks in 2013 and Andrzej Mirga in 2010) although the fact that they are not included every year has raised controversies and numerous complaints on behalf of Romani victims and organizations⁹. The 2nd of August, established this year as a Roma Holocaust Memorial Day by the European Parliament¹⁰, is also commemorated internationally; local commemorative events are also taking place in different locations. Two national Parliaments (in Poland, 2011 and in Croatia, 2014) have recognised the 2nd of August as the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day; other states will hopefully follow suit¹¹. As the Roma Holocaust gains visibility, other sites of Roma genocides and persecutions are commemorated in the same spirit of seeking historical justice – for example in Srebrenica¹² (Bosnia, 1995) or the *Gran Redada*¹³ (Spain, of 1749). Although there has been an undeniable progress and a growing commitment of public authorities to commemorate Romani

⁹ A coalition of Roma organizations and networks started a petition to Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-Moon, to include Romani speakers in the Official Commemoration of the Holocaust: <https://www.change.org/p/mr-ban-ki-moon-take-immediate-action-to-include-romani-speakers-in-the-official-commemoration-of-the-holocaust-at-the-un> (access: 15/08/2015).

¹⁰ European Parliament News, *MEPs urge end to Roma discrimination and recognition of Roma Genocide Day* (15/04/2015). Retrieved July 27, 2015 from: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150414IPR41851/html/MEPs-urge-end-to-Roma-discrimination-and-recognition-of-Roma-Genocide-Day>.

¹¹ Recently, Spanish socialist party (PSOE) has presented a motion before the Spanish Parliament to recognize the 2nd of August as an official Memorial Day of the Roma Genocide. Europapress, *PSOE Institucionalizar el 2 de Agosto como fecha conmemorativa del holocausto gitano* (15/10/2015). Retrieved October 19, 2015 from: <http://www.europapress.es/sociedad/noticia-psoe-institucionalizar-agosto-fecha-conmemorativa-holocausto-gitano-20151017115536.html>.

¹² ternYpe, 2014 *Srebrenica*. Retrieved August 16, 2015 from: <http://2august.eu/events/2014-srebrenica/>.

¹³ FAGIC, *Jornada de la conmemoración de la “Gran Redada”*. Retrieved July 17, 2015 from: <http://www.fagic.org/es/comunicacion/noticias/615-2015-07-17-07-40-51>.

Victims, there are still numerous places which have not received a dignified treatment, for example the Lety concentration camp site, which today is occupied by a pig farm (see the article by Miroslav Brož in this volume). Despite undeniable progress, as 2013 CAHROM report¹⁴ on the overview of recognition of the Roma Genocide in member states of the Council of Europe shows, much still remains to be accomplished; although the Holocaust is recognized throughout Europe, seldom does the Holocaust education and commemoration practice include the Roma explicitly.

Finally, the gradual recognition of the Romani Holocaust is a result of decades of Romani struggle for “a worthy place among the victims”¹⁵. After all, history is a constitutive element of collective identity, important to understand who we are and where we come from as a people. Events of the past, however, undergo a process of interpretation which infuses specific moments in history with meaning and particular significance, reinforcing understanding of collective belonging and shared fate of people. In the process of remembering the past, traumatic moments in which our very existence becomes endangered by experiences of death play a key role¹⁶. The plight for recognition of the Roma Genocide has been a driving force for Romani activism ever since post-war times. It guided efforts to ensure historic justice and led action to introduce Roma narrative into dominant narrative of the Holocaust, making it part of the official and institutionalized memory of WWII. This struggle goes beyond simple declarative recognition; rather, it should be understood as a process of conscious construction of a collectively remembered past. A collectively shared history also becomes a resource for Roma ethnic mobilization: narratives

¹⁴ CAHROM (2013)¹⁵, *Overview On The Recognition Of The Genocide Of Roma And Sinti...*

¹⁵ Andrzej Mirga, „For a worthy place among the Victims. The Holocaust and Extermination of Roma during World War II”, in: Joanna Ambrosewicz-Jacobs and Leszek Hońdo (eds.), *Why should we teach about the Holocaust?* (Cracow: The Jagiellonian University, Institute of European Studies, 2005)

¹⁶ Sławomir Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów...*, p. 21.

of collective memory support mobilization struggles and give foundation to a movement identity. After all, “social movements – sustained collective challenges to political and cultural authority – rely on memory to provide the legitimacy and identity that comes from continuity with the past”¹⁷.

For the Roma youth of present generation too, the Roma Genocide is becoming an important touchstone of their identity as well as a powerful mobilizing tool. “Dikh he na bister” is a good example of this. This initiative, organized since 2010, constructs a powerful historical narrative, by not only commemorating past events but also, and most importantly, linking it to present times and mobilizing the youth to action. Remembrance of the past becomes a pretext for a critical debate about existence of collective identities shaped by historical traumatic events, as well as collective goals and interests in the present and foreseeable future. For many young Roma, “Dikh he na bister” has become a moment of “awakening”¹⁸, reinforcing a deeper understanding of self and collective ethnic identity, and becoming a strong mobilizing force for civic and political action. Roma youth activists also re-frame historical events by infusing them with a new meaning, as in the case of the “Romani Resistance” (see the article by Pierre Chopinaud in this book). Powerful narratives of the Roma Holocaust acquire an empowering potential and gradually permeate the local level. Remembrance of the fate of the Roma during WWII opens up questions about local histories of Roma communities during different periods and mobilizes youth activists to explore their past, as in the case of Spain (anti-Roma Pragmatics, Spanish Civil War and *Franquismo* period) or former Yugoslavia.

The Romani youth uses a variety of tools in their Holocaust-related activism as a pretext for a deeper discussion regarding

¹⁷ Timothy Kubal and Rene Becerre, „Social Movement and Collective Memory”, *Sociology Compass*, Vol 8. Issue 6 (June 2014) pp. 865–875.

¹⁸ Federico M. Rossi, “Youth Political Participation: Is This the End of Generational Cleavage?” *International Sociology* 24 (4) (July 2009): pp. 467–497.

collective identity, common history and the situation of Roma communities today. This activism gradually permeates into other fields, in which the theme of the Roma Genocide becomes a source of inspiration, for example in film (most notably, the work of Romea Foundation but also grassroots initiatives like the documentary movie “Samudaripen. El Holocausto Gitano Olvidado”¹⁹ of *Veus Gitanes* in Spain), visual arts (for example the Holocaust-inspired exhibition *Zalikerdo Drom*²⁰, or the Warsaw mural-painting of Krzysztof Gil, which inspired the cover of this book), theatre and music (for example, the hip-hop song by Purse & T-MOE “Ihr seht was passiert”). In this, Romani youth often transgresses ethnic boundaries and constructs alliances with other youth movements, most notably with Jewish and Armenian youth, reflecting together on the shared experiences of historical persecution, experienced genocides and present-day discrimination²¹.

What is in the book?

The book we present here is not a typical academic volume neither in its content, selection of authors, nor its format. The volume is conceived as interdisciplinary, cross-institutional and inter-generational. The heterogeneity of voices included in this volume reflects richness of perspectives, experiences and points of view. We invited to contribute to this book Roma and non-Roma scholars of various disciplines, senior and youth Roma activists, organizations and institutions, and, most importantly, Roma Holocaust survivors. The articles included in this book have diverse formats – scholarly articles, manifests, personal

¹⁹ <https://goteo.org/project/holocausto-gitano?lang=es> (access: 17/10/2015)

²⁰ OWZPAP, *Zalikerdo Drom/ Przerwana Podróż* (12/09/2014). Retrieved October 15, 2015 from: <http://www.owzpap.pl/start/29-archiwum/262-zalikerdo-drom.html>.

²¹ Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, „Roma civil society, non-Roma involvement and modern Roma youth activism“, in: *New Roma activism in the New Europe*, Sam Beck and Ana Ivasic (eds.) (Berghahn Books: *forthcoming*).

testimonies, speeches and an interview. Our aim is to provide an inclusive space which uplifts non-academic knowledge to ranks of equal importance with academic discourse. Many of those, beyond providing unique perspectives, can be treated as primary sources for further research.

The sections of the book correspond to the three trends described above, which happened to meet and interact in the context of “Dikh he na bister”.

The first section of the book reflects on academic viewpoints and new research regarding Holocaust education. It is introduced by Carla Andrés and Anna Martínez Millán’s critical review of the conference. From this piece, readers who have not been present at the venue will be able to get a view of how the event elapsed, provided by two attending academics and volunteers. Their informed views tie with the academic perspectives that follow.

Sławomir Kaprański in his article explains the long period of silence regarding the Roma Genocide by analysing various factors that have caused it. He then characterises the process of regaining memory and shows how the experience of persecution and fear has been changed into empowerment of the Roma people. In the subsequent chapter, Mikhail Tyaglyy seeks to explore how the fate of the Roma who perished during the German and Romanian occupation is being remembered in contemporary Ukraine. He discusses this question from the perspectives of culture and politics of memory. Andrzej Mirga looks at the history of the Roma Holocaust recognition and commemoration through an inter-generational lens. He analyses the differences of approaches with regards to memory and history of the Roma Genocide of the three generations of Roma activists since the end of WWII. In her piece, Ethel Brooks looks at the changing role of remembrance for Romani communities, emphasizing the present time as a crucial breaking point: the last moment where we are able to engage in dialogue with those who lived and survived the Holocaust. She elaborates on the importance of testimonies, stories, and acts of resistance, which are yet to be given the place they

deserve on WWII archives, our collective memory, and remain disconnected from present realities. Finally, Andrej Umansky and Costel Nastasie share some findings from a unique documentation project conducted in Eastern Europe by Yahad-In Unum and Roma Dignity organizations. Their project is at the forefront of fieldwork on under-researched events during WWII, including digital mapping and recording of life-stories that continue telling us about the magnitude of extermination technologies beyond the concentration camps.

The second section of the book deals with “commemoration as practice” and aims at reviewing various strategies and tools used to commemorate the Roma Holocaust. This practice is not restricted to commemorative events explicitly, but rather looks at how the Roma Holocaust is being remembered, and what tools can be used to teach and disseminate knowledge on this historical event. Karen Polak introduces us to how workshops on the Roma Holocaust education have taken place in different contexts and with different audiences. Her work provides valuable lessons and references for readers who wish to explore pedagogical practices. From here on, the pieces focus on concrete cases: Marcin Szewczyk provides a concise but powerful description of how a publication for children can tackle such crucial topics; Miroslav Brož reminds us of the open wound of the Lety concentration camp in the Czech Republic, to this day a pig farm; and finally Adam Bartosz gives us hope through an account of the self-organized commemoration in the Polish town of Szczurów, which has its own history of recognition and commemoration of experiences during WWII. Pierre Chopinaud concludes with a poignant voice from Paris, the place where the Romani Resistance movement has raised the question of how to link past and present experiences shared by Roma people.

The third section of the book is dedicated to the youth perspectives. We recognize the potential of youth agency and their immense role in advancing with the Roma Holocaust recognition. The Roma and non-Roma youth organizations and activists, and

ternYpe specifically, have played a key role in promoting the Roma Holocaust internationally and have become multipliers locally. We invited Roma youth to share their experiences, their thoughts and their feelings regarding the Roma Holocaust and the “Dikh he na bister” experience and to show us what role they see for themselves in this process.

Karolina Mirga and Jonathan Mack introduce this final section with a description of the road that ternYpe has traversed since its first members came together in 2010. To conclude the book the reader will find four testimonials of young Romani thinkers from different European countries (Bulgaria, Spain, Romania/France, Serbia/Canada) who took active part in the event’s organization. Their experiences are intertwined with their own messages about the importance of such opportunities in the future.

What has come out of this exercise?

As it is evident above, the conference itself was a gamble for cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional and cross-generational dialogue. The multiplicity of both participants and presenters allowed for a constant exchange of views in between sectors that are not necessarily characterized for working together. It made evident the need to cross the boundaries of policy making, academic work and grass-roots mobilization towards collective action. It also made evident the intertwined interests, and objectives that convened all of the sectors involved; as well as how lived experiences go beyond the boundaries previously imposed to these disciplines and movements.

Another realization is the evidence of the need to multiply efforts through different types of educational practices. The articles show a variety of techniques and approaches that span from direct intensive face-to-face workshops, to virtual education; from academic articles and research, to publications focused on children and their families; from official and ritual commemorations of past events, to actions that also concern present-day developments. Formal and non-formal education came together

during this event, with unexpected and many times exciting results. Techniques used by one or the other allowed for the deep involvement of many of the participants.

We have made the decision to frame the volume between two testimonies, the voices of two Romani Holocaust survivors, Zoni Weisz (preface) and József Forgács (epilogue) for very concrete reasons. Narrative and orality have been central to Romani social life and movements, especially in such a context that archival knowledge has been so fragmented and in lieu of recovery. The conference assumed the need of a space where “intangibles/nuances that are best transmitted and understood when shared experiences, epistemologies and the relationship to both are evident”²². The construction of knowledge about the Roma Holocaust would need to be made from within the experiences of the survivors themselves in perhaps the last moment in which their embodied knowledge is present with us.

As said before, it is only these spaces that have allowed for their own life-story to inform dominant views on education and research on the Roma Holocaust. As a lesson from indigenous methodologies in other contexts, “The knowledge framework will be one that is holistic and integrated, and this will further the view of research and research training and its impact on peoples and cultures.”²³ The important presence of non-Roma and Roma thinkers, intellectuals, scholars, practitioners, among many others, granted a unique chance for the construction of new possibilities of collaboration and new routes for thought and action. That this event took place in Cracow, and later allowed the participants to go back to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and death camp, has also an added value. As Ethel Brooks reminds us in her previous writings:

²² Christopher Dunbar, “Critical Race Theory and Indigenous Methodologies”, in: N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008). p. 90.

²³ Ibidem, p.92.

Reclaiming the camp reminds us – that we are still relegated to camps for refugees, and internment camps for migrants, while at the same time acting as a challenge to those facilitating the expulsion across Europe, in Kosovo, Italy, Serbia, France, Germany, the UK and beyond. This reclamation of the camp would also relocate a collective memory and a recognition of collective suffering, genocide, and ethnic cleansing to which we have been subjected throughout history.²⁴

The present volume could not have been completed without the financial contribution of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Commission. We are extremely grateful for the generosity of these institutions and organizations. The conference needed the selfless efforts of a very large number of volunteers and coordinators who, without expecting anything in return, made the event a great space for exchange, dialogue and debate that resulted. We also thank the authors, who generously contributed to the volume and dedicated their time to produce the polished pieces that are without a doubt a first step towards a more engaged scholarship of the Roma Holocaust. We hope that these resources and efforts will encourage many more instances for reclaiming the camp.

²⁴ Ethel Brooks., "Reclaiming: The Camp and the Avant-Garde", in: D. Baker & M. Hlavajova (eds.), *We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: BAK, 2013).