Roma in Europe
The Politics of Collective Identity Formation
Ioana Bunescu, Malmö University, Sweden

‘The book offers a much needed link between careful ethnography of local Roma communities and a study of the European Roma political movement in its transnational context. Ioana Bunescu skilfully presents the complex plurality of contemporary Roma identities as a multidimensional, negotiated process of political resistance and cultural hybridization. An inspiring voice in the ongoing debates on Roma and on identity.’
Slawomir Kapralski, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland and Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, Austria

‘This is an important work on the topical issue of collective identity construction among Roma in Europe. Valuable empirical insights are provided through an innovative multi-sited methodological approach involving extensive fieldwork. The author’s interviews with Roma Kings render a unique contribution to the extant literature.’
Bo Petersson, Malmö University, Sweden

This path-breaking book explains the processes through which the heterogeneous population of Roma in Europe constitutes itself into a transnational collective identity through the practices and discourses of everyday life, as well as through identity politics. It illustrates how the collective identity of the Roma in Europe is constituted simultaneously in the local, national, and European contexts by drawing attention to the mismatches and tensions between these levels, as well as to the opportunities for achieving this political aim.

Bunescu demonstrates that the differences and stereotypes between the Roma and the non-Roma, as well as those among different groups of Roma, fulfil a politically creative function for the constitution of a unified transnational collective identity of the Roma in Europe. The book is unique – comprising chapters ranging from local ethnographic accounts of inter-ethnic relations of rural Roma in a Transylvanian village, to interviews with international Roma political activists and with controversial Roma kings in two extensive chapters on their role of bridging the local and the higher levels of identity politics, as well as to interpretative accounts of the politics of space in private dwellings, through visual depictions of a diversity of Roma living spaces, and in public venues, such as at international Roma festivals.

Contents: Introduction; The Roma people; The Roma in a multiethnic locality in Transylvania; EU accession conditionality as an opportunity context for Roma political representation in Europe; The EU enlargement and the political representation of Roma in Romania; The international Roma political activists and their role in the crystallization of Roma collective identity; The Roma kings between international, state-national and local legitimization. The case of Romanian Roma kings; The international Roma festival in Costesti/Romania; Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.

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