



Doctorate in Cultural  
and Global Criminology

Universiteit Utrecht



# I've followed chameleons - Welfare surveillance and responsabilisation of Eastern European Roma in the UK

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## Research question

*How Central European Roma Migrants evade or contest social entitlement selection methods while anticipating in local welfare surveillance practices in London?*

### Context:

EU enlargement 2007

Roma migration after 2004

Roma Decade, National Roma Frameworks

Ethnic tensions in Central Europe

Economic Crisis



Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the member states.

Council Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 of 14 June 1971 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons, self-employed persons, and to members of their families moving within the Community.

Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004.

# Research Methods



- **Multi-sited & Multilocal Ethnographic fieldwork**
- **Virtual ethnography**
- **Institutional Ethnography**
- Participant observation
- Semi-structured interviews
- Social media networks
- Case study analyses
- Shadowing
- Advocacy work - Roma Support Group



# Theoretical concepts

Late modern 'risk-society' & securitization

Ontological insecurities

Multicultural societies, 'othering' & 'social bulimia'

Hysterical media-representations & 'culture of fear'

- **Critical Surveillance studies** (David Lyon, Clive Norris and Gary Armstrong)

- Migration and the liquid surveillance state (Bauman)

Transnational bureaucratic field - technocratic governing

- Financial Surveillance – Thomas Allmer

- Welfare surveillance McCahill&Finn 2014

- Social Sorting: accessibility, sanctioning, preconditions



## Objective surveillance

A form of information gathering and administrative organization of modernity.

“The term surveillance is not used in the narrow sense of ‘spying’ on people but, more broadly, to refer to the gathering of information about and **the supervision of subject populations** in organizations.” (Dandeker 1990, vii)



## **E-governance - Transnational bureaucratic field**

The application of information and communication technology (ICT) for delivering government services, exchange of information communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-customer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government framework (Saugata and Masud, 2007).



## Late modern surveillance...

- **'Social sorting'** (Lyon 2003) as Geopolitical tool
- 'Surveillant assemblages' (Haggerty & Ericson 2000)
- *'The "drive of contemporary surveillance" is to classify and record data, in order better to "plan, predict & prevent"(...)'* (Lyon in Hale et al. 2013: 441)





## Ban-opticon - Didier Bigo

The exceptionalism of power (rules of emergency and their tendency to become permanent), by the way it excludes certain groups in the name of their *future potential behaviour* (profiling) and by the way it normalizes the non-excluded through its production of *normative imperatives*, the most important of which is free movement.

It depends no longer on immobilizing bodies under the analytic gaze of the watcher but on profiles that signify differences, on exceptionalism with respect to norms and on the rapidity with which one “evacuates.” The dispositif of this new surveillance takes another form, recalling technologies of information technology and virtual reality. This dispositif appears like a virtual montage (morphing) of all the positions of individuals in the process of flux. *From an initial image (the immigrant) to a final image (terrorist, drug-runner), all the steps of transformation are reconstituted virtually.* In this respect, this dispositif channels flows instead of dissecting bodies (2006).



## Welfare surveillance

While neoliberal policy changes to social assistance have been well documented by welfare scholars (Cossman and Fudge 2002; Little and Marks 2006; Evans and Wekerle 1997; Coulter 2009), the surveillance technologies behind them have received less scrutiny.

### *Surveillance tools used to police benefit recipients:*

the Consolidated Verification Procedure (CVP);

Maintenance Enforcement with Computer Assistance (MECA)

Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT)

JSA Eligibility Criteria, Eligibility Review Officers (EROs)

Audit of Recipients

Welfare Fraud Hotlines

DWP

# Benefit thieves, our technology is tracking you.



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Fraud investigators monitor suspected benefit thieves, by cross-checking data, it's only a matter of time before we catch you.

**NO IFS, NO BUTS.** Benefit fraud is a crime, you could face a criminal record.

[www.gov.uk/benefit-thieves](http://www.gov.uk/benefit-thieves)



DWP

# She stole British benefits abroad.

And she thought she'd never be caught.




If you suspect someone of wrongly claiming British benefits whilst abroad call in confidence on **900 85 444 0**

**TARGETING BENEFIT THIEVES**  
[www.dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves-again](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves-again)

DWP

# We're closing in

with hundreds of benefit thieves being reported



If you suspect someone of benefit fraud in your area, contact your local council in confidence:

[www.gov.uk/benefit-fraud](http://www.gov.uk/benefit-fraud)

**TARGETING BENEFIT THIEVES**  
[www.gov.uk/benefit-thieves](http://www.gov.uk/benefit-thieves)

# WEL UN FARE

DON'T LET BENEFIT FRAUD MAKE YOU MAD

Benefit fraud is a crime  
Call Crimestoppers now on:  
**0800 555 111**





## Outsourcing and targets for sanction referrals

"If staff are chasing targets, they will themselves target the easiest [claimants], for example people with learning disabilities, or people with English as a second language. It's the easiest way to meet those targets under pressure."

(He said he had seen people threatened with the sack for not meeting targets.)

"If you are a good adviser, you would actually expect to sanction less people, as you will convince them of the importance of meeting the conditions to get their jobseeker's allowance [JSA]."

# Welfare restrictions

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Housing benefit cuts

Cut of Free legal aid

'Bedroom tax' / 'Benefit cap'

Limitation of JSA for 6 month

Extended min residency term till entitled

Online registration (internet literacy, language skills)

Higher sanctions at JSA

Universal credits

Suspension of payments





ach  
biach.com  
wordpress.com







# A glitch in the Matrix

## Roma clients in the UK benefit system



You take the **Blue Pill**,  
The story Ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe.  
You take the **Red Pill**,  
You stay in Wonderland and I show You how deep the rabbit hole goes







## **Coping strategies- response to bureaucratic measures**

Waiting, Hiding, Invisibility

Physical absence

Commodification of information

Commodification of personal data

Fraud - Tax credit, PIP, Free school meals, Housing benefits,

Subletting practices

Avoiding updates

Exploitation of other migrants

Combinations



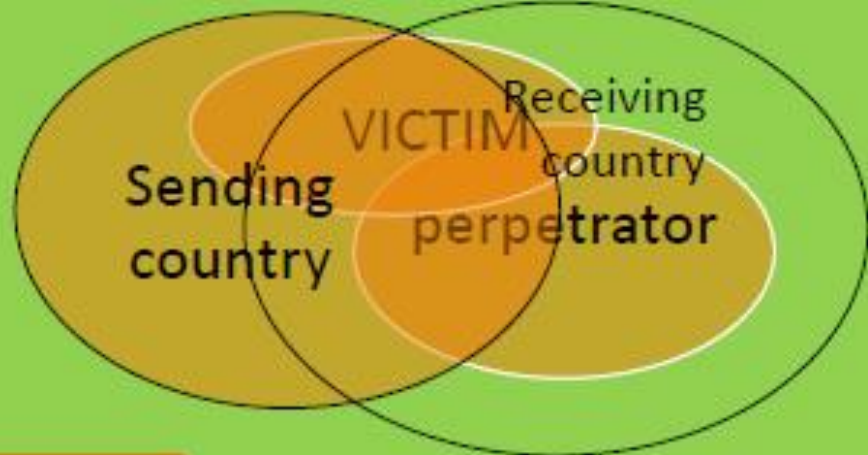






## Chameleon mimicry?

The chameleon effect refers to non-conscious mimicry of the postures, mannerisms, facial expressions, and other behaviours of one's interaction partners, such that one's behaviour passively and unintentionally changes to match that of others in one's current social environment. The authors suggest that the mechanism involved is the perception-behaviour link, the recently documented finding (e.g., J. A. Bargh, M. Chen, & L. Burrows, 1996) that the mere perception of another's behaviour automatically increases the likelihood of engaging in that behaviour oneself.



New aspects

- Victims awareness of risks and legislative limitation
- Differentiation of physical and bureaucratic "fake" migration
- Parallel applications in different countries
- Reconceptualization of interplay in victim - perpetrator roles

ID Fraud Process



Migrant workers who commit benefit fraud

Migrants who recruited others in home country

Migrants who buy ID documents from their network

Participants who are buying information to apply ID Fraud

Participants going to the UK to participate in Fraud

Participants selling their documents for foreign social benefits



## Deflecting ethnic stigma by embracing individual accomplishments

‘boundary blurring aims to overcome ethnicity as a principle of categorization and social organization’ (Wimmer 2008: 989).

Apart from blaming other Roma subgroups, the other key tactic frequently employed by our participants to deal with Roma migrants’ negative reputation was to **refocus attention on their individual skills and work ethic, qualities** which enabled them to establish successful careers or ‘fit in’ despite an overall negative collective image of Roma abroad.



## **Transfer or redefinition of ethnic stigma, 'educational accounts'**

Strategies of dissociation and replicating stigmatisation

Being reflected in attempts to dissociate themselves from the stigmatised by blaming other Roma subgroups or nationalities (Romanian Roma).

Ethnic boundaries are thus redrawn, but their importance is not diminished; to the contrary, their Romungro or Vlach response to stigmatisation moves and hardens the ethnic boundary, increasing ethnicity's everyday relevance in the process.

## Response of authorities:



- more control questions, personal inf.
- more surveillance questions
- no mediators accepted
- no face to face communication
- online and phone interaction
- transnational control
- safeguarding
- controlling households
- delaying processes (not sending forms, claiming original documents)



## Conclusion

**Academics, activists and NGOs has a central role in the ethnic framing of welfare dependency resulting extra monitoring practices of host countries.**

**In addition, by manipulating social services Roma migrants also modify, evade or negotiate surveillance practices. These strategies reaffirm existing desolidarising welfarist selection aspects of existing exclusionary practices targeting unattractive migrant groups in the UK welfare system.**





# Test Question

What is your **current housing situation?**

Please name **all members in your household** by first and last name:

.....  
.....  
.....

Please take notice of the following:

- If the **last names** of all your household member are **not the same**, you might be perceived by the system as a **fraud** & might not get your allowance
- If the number of household members is **too high**, the system might try everything to disqualify you for allowance

# Suggestion

“we must also remain attentive to the immediate normative context, as well as the variety and complexities of human interaction and interpretation (examining the marginalizing gaze that the performance is intended to divert, or the localized definition of the situation and situational frames that the stigmatized individual seeks to grasp)” (Woolford 2011: 588).