**Edited by
Alfredo Alietti, Martin Olivera and Veronica Riniolo**

Virtual Citizenship?

Roma communities, Inclusion Policies, Participation and ICT Tools

McGraw Hill Education

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This is the final report of the project "Promoting digital literacy of Roma people toward their active citizenship" funded by the European Commission under the EU LLP Grundtvig Programme.

The project aims at analysing and exchanging good practices on the activation of one of the most excluded minorities in Europe, i.e. Roma people, and the role of ICT in this process. The project aims at increasing awareness regarding some of the most important challenges Europe is facing nowadays, such as the social exclusion of Roma people that hinders social cohesion, the digital divide among European citizens, and the lack of awareness of the rights and duties which European citizens are entitled to.

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Veronica Riniolo holds a Ph.D. in Sociology & Research Methods from the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano. Since 2008 she has collaborated with the Ismu Foundation and the Regional Observatory for Integration and Multiethnicity (ORIM). She has been involved in a quantity of research and projects on Roma and migrants' integration processes and policies both at the national and European level. Among her publications, she is co-author of the articles *Active participation of Roma. An experience of participatory planning toward labour integration* (2012) and *A Participatory Governance Model Towards the Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities. An Action Research Experience in Italy* (2015).

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Introduction

by *Alfredo Alietti and Veronica Riniolo*

1. In dealing with the present-day situation of the Roma issue, in its different so-cial, economic, political and cultural implications, a complex and difficult work of analysis is needed. In fact, in the last decade, substantial attention has been dedicated to the living conditions of the so-called "largest minority in Europe". A great quantity of reports, analyses and research carried out by an equally large number of public and private, transnational and national entities have clearly doc-umented the dimensions that characterize the institutional and corporative dis-crimination of Roma and their exclusion in the European context (see Chapter 1).

The notable amount of socio-economic data, political evaluations and moni-tored racist and xenophobic activity that has been collected, often from a compar-ative perspective, constitutes a unique corpus in the broader debate concerning ethnic minorities and immigrant populations. The specific choice of dealing with the "Roma problem" as a different topic may be explained by various reasons. The Roma communities have always called to mind images of disorder and threat, on account of their presumably nomadic style of life, on the borderline between legality and illegality, contrary to the rules and regulations of the gagè society.[1] An absolute and distant otherness, for which a "special treatment" is necessary, that does not conform to normal practices of integration and citizenship. A similar differentiation in policy has contributed, in real and symbolic terms, to maintain-ing isolation and to keeping at a distance. This has worsened the chances of emerging from poverty and from the circuits of exclusion in which the more dis-advantaged groups of Roma find themselves. The eastwards expansion of the EU has proved another determining factor, not only for the strong presence of Roma citizens in this area, but also because of the deprivation and discrimination that they experience.

The principles of equality and of anti-discrimination, inasmuch as they are basic principles of the new EU, have consequently found in this figure a decisive and problematic crux.[2] From this arises the need to quantify, analyse and under-stand the reasons for the diffuse hostility towards Roma and for their vulnerabil-ity. This is essential in order to launch and sustain policies that will prove increas-ingly effective in fighting phenomena of this kind, even though the almost exclu-

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[1] The term *gagè* is used by Romanes speakers to indicate non-Roma people.
[2] The Treaty of Lisbon is emblematic in this sense.

sive focus on the dynamics of marginalisation risks homogenising "in the negative" the existing variety of situations and conditions.

The promulgation of the National Roma Integration Strategies by the European Commission in April 2011 is the final step in a long series of interventions, recommendations, and projects put into being over the years and addressed at old and new member countries with the purpose of bringing about a radical transformation in the policies adopted. Nevertheless, the outcome of this integrated plan of intervention does not seem, up to now, to have triggered off a virtuous circle in the different national contexts.

There is a feeling, therefore, that the incontrovertible and intense efforts undertaken have not managed to effectively promote equal opportunities. In the course of time, certain objectives have undoubtedly been achieved, but they still seem limited if compared to the more general objectives regarding access to full and inclusive citizenship. It is difficult to translate the formal adhesion of member countries to the directives of the EU into governance practices at the national and, above all, at the local level, where mechanisms of discrimination and segregation are the most widespread .

Furthermore, in contrast with this positive framework, there has been an increase in episodes of intolerance and of hate speeches on the part of political parties and of extreme-right national movements in a large number of old and new EU members. The hostility against Roma is becoming a powerful instrument for political legitimization and for electoral consensus that has not found adequate restraints yet. On this ambivalent configuration of facts a crucial role is played by the Roma ability for mobilisation and their recognition, both formal and substantial, as key interlocutors in choices involving political integration. In this case too, there has been significant progress in the representation of the rights of the Roma communities through the creation, or the strengthening, of organizations and associations both at the European and at the single state levels.

EU policy itself sets, as unavoidable condition, the participation of associations and of Roma populations in the programming and implementation of interventions. In effect, it may be noted that this participation is only symbolic, a mere consultation that does not produce the desired effects, except in rare cases. Moreover, it must be further added that socio-economic conditions, territorial dispersion, aversion on the part of local political systems, and persistent discrimination are some of the factors that reduce the possibility of mobilization and participation of the most needy Roma groups.

2. On the basis of these critical elements, the project Promoting digital literacy of Roma people toward their active citizenship has been realized, within the GRUNDTVIG Learning Partnerships programme and with the purpose of analys-

ing the role of ICT as an instrument of emancipation and participation within the Roma communities.[3]

The debate on ICT has assumed an important value in defining the structure of the socio-economic and socio-cultural inequalities. Specifically, the classical concept of digital divide highlights clearly the disparity among different social groups with regard to their capacity of access to the Net and to their skill in its use (Di Maggio, Hargittai, 2001). The social categories that are already marginalized in society undergo, in this way, a surplus of disadvantage that amplifies the process of exclusion in a society of information technology. This critical situation is certainly a reality that must be taken into account in the analysis. Nevertheless it is equally true that access, in its double sense of connection and navigation, seems obsolete for technological devices such as smartphones, and there are various and relatively cheap modalities of connection. In this sense, not surprisingly different surveys have demonstrated that in the more advanced countries people with a low income and with less education remain connected and spend a lot of time on the Net (Maram, Ruggeri, 2013). The problem, rather, is about the definition of the "second digital divide", which refers to the "divide among information "have's" and "have-not's", resulting from the ways in which people use the Internet" (Ragnedda, Muschert 2013: 10). In other words, even in the case of equal access to ICT the information gap among different social groups increases in favour of the more advantaged ones on account of their more effective use of the digital information capital (Seong-Jae, 2010).

In this perspective we may collocate the reasoning on the existence of a "democratic divide", i.e. the differences occurring among those who use abundant digital resources to become involved, mobilized and participant in public life (Norris, 2001). The "democratic divide" situates itself in a discursive horizon of digital participation and/or democracy which once again privileges subjects with greater educational and motivational resources.

These two dimensions, closely interrelated, entail further reflection on the use of ICT and of the social networks so as to generate virtual abilities capable of collective action, above all among ethnic minorities and migrants. In relation to the fact that ICT and its implications are instruments that are becoming more and more decisive for participation in the socio-political arena, the digital divide has become an unavoidable public policy (Maram, Ruggeri, 2013).

In the last few years the EU has promoted many initiatives in the sphere of digital literacy, but as the European Commission has highlighted, much remains to be done, in particular with regard to disadvantaged groups. Indeed disadvantaged groups face many problems and difficulties in accessing ICT and are unable to take full advantage of digital society on account of their economic, social and political marginalization (European Commission Staff Working Document, 2008). This is the case of Roma communities, in particular when they find them-

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[3] The team of the project was composed by the Fondazione ISMU (Italy), coordinator of the project, the Associazione UPRE Roma (Italy), the Helsińska Fundacja Czlowieka (Poland), and the Association Rues et Cités (France).

selves in contexts of poverty and socio-spatial segregation. Consequently, it becomes important to understand how and how much such instruments are used in order to address the question of their social exclusion, to foster their awareness of the rights and duties they possess as citizens and to promote their active participation.

A recent European research on the use of online communication instruments among immigrants has evidenced their diffusion and the various functions they perform (Borkert, Cingolani and Premazzi, 2009; see also chapter 3).

On the one hand, in the majority of cases these instruments foster the connection with networks of friends and relatives in the country of origin, creating a sort of virtual homeland; on the other, in some cases, they can become instruments for the maintenance and, at the same time, the creation of new hybrid identities.

Finally, sometimes ICT becomes an area of mobilization and resistance at the local level, to fight discrimination and disadvantages (Borkert, Cingolani and Premazzi, 2009: 9).

As far as Roma are concerned, it may be observed that the distinction between those who are and those who are not in the condition of migrants modifies their use of ICT and of the social networks. In the first case, the same mechanism of connection with the land of origin is brought about, in an exchange based mainly on affective and community-based parameters. In the second case, the range of the forms of usage are amplified, as are the wider social circles they are in contact with. The case studies discuss in the following chapters confirm the articulation and the different use of ICT among Roma communities (see Section 2.).

The way is still long for reaching an ICT's use related to public participation in term of "voice", according to classical dichotomy of Hirshman, but the digital new generation of Roma and the increased presence of websites dedicated to Romani culture heritage, political activities, social life and memory of Nazi genocide represent an important fact here and now. In this sense, our reflections are an introductory step in the understanding of this fundamental issue for extending discussion and research.

3. The structure of the book follows the *fil rouge* emerging from the discussions carried out in the course of seminars and meetings among the various national work groups. The first section briefly presents the living conditions of the Roma populations and the policies adopted by both the European institutions and the national bodies in the countries included in the project, i.e. France, Italy and Poland.

The chapter by Alfredo Alietti introduces, through a critical re-reading of the abundant bibliography available, the elements characterizing the widespread negative representations and the socio-spatial segregation of the Roma communities in Europe, and the principal policies put in place by the EU to favour the integration processes. The emerging picture is marked by a persistent institutional and social discrimination which weakens the potentially positive effects of the initiatives and policies undertaken. The growing awareness of the need to act for an effective inclusion thus appears connected to a transnational dimension that produces limited operative results at the local level. Finally, the chapter highlights how

the re-iterated call for participation of Roma groups stated in official EU documents still remains a principle, and not a reality that would contribute to catch up with the mainstream society and foster occasions of inclusion.

The second chapter, as anticipated, discusses the French, Italian and Polish cases. Martin Olivera, in his analysis of France, evidences the great variety of Roma populations present and their categorization, still valid at the administrative level, as "Gens de Voyage", which however do not corresponds to the various realities characterized by local anchorages. Public policies regarding this constructed minority are based on the logic of exclusion that hinders access to elementary citizen rights. The recent arrival of the so-called "Roma migrants" in France from the new member countries of the EU, Romania and Bulgaria, has triggered off a moral panic in public opinion which has legitimated a policy of evacuation of the illegal camps and of expulsion from French territory as from 2010 under the Sarkozy government. Through questionable administrative procedures, and in open contradiction with the free circulation of EU citizens, the procedure of turning away and evacuating undesirable Roma groups has been implemented.

Veronica Riniolo presents the Italian case from which there emerges how, despite persistent socio-economic exclusion and discrimination of Roma communities in Italy, the situation is continually evolving. On the one hand a part of civil society (both Roma and gagè) and of public institutions is struggling to defend the basic human rights of this non-recognized discriminated minority; on the other hand, in the Italian political system and society there is a strong sense of xenophobia, anti-Tziganism and discrimination with an increasing spread of xenophobic attitudes in metropolitan suburbs, caused by the fear of having to share the same urban space with "the other", as embodied by the Roma. The conclusive remarks highlight the impact of the National Strategy for improving the situation of the Roma communities living in Italy.

The Polish case analyzed by Agnieszka Mikulska-Jolles puts into evidence how, in spite of a situation of marginalization of part of the Roma community, in the last decade there has been a progressive improvement in the conditions of inclusion, as also a change in the reciprocal attitudes of Roma and the majority group. This is due to the implementation of European and national programmes specifically addressed towards the Roma communities. Furthermore, in this period, progress has occurred in the area of active citizenship with the creation of numerous pro-Roma organizations and associations. Nevertheless, this significant associative presence is not always enough to represent the different Roma groups, often excluded from decisions due to the conflicts in access to resources and funding.

The second section focuses on the role of ICTs among the Roma populations through the analysis of some important case studies. The opening chapter by Benjamin Loveluck introduces key theoretical features on the impact of ICTs and of the social networks with regard to internal relationships within the Roma community and external relationships with society at large.

The chapter by Daniele Viktor Leggio presents significant ethnographical research on the experience of Radio Romani Mahala, an online radio created by two

Roma musicians from Mitrovica, Kosovo. In the course of this investigation on the radio chat conversations , some considerations emerge that evidence how the users employ this communicative space to present the fact "of being a Mitrovica Roma", and this is made explicit through the assertion of an identity, which is at the same time tied to the diaspora and to a cosmopolitan dimension. In fact, the linguistic features used during the online conversations shift from Romani to the language of the country where the speakers live, thus documenting a double straining towards their own origins and the cultural elements of the mainstream population they are in contact with.

The contribution of Alexandra Clavé-Mercier is the outcome of field research carried out among the Roma communities coming from Bulgaria and resident in France. The study demonstrates how ICTs are a great determining factor, not only in recreating a transnational and relational everyday life with friends and relatives, but also in bringing about a sort of re-organization of the family and of gender roles. In this sense, the use of ICTs (e.g. Skype) allows some young Roma women to avoid the bonds and restrictions of their families of origin, though maintaining a continual and constant contact with them. Furthermore, ICTs take on a decisive role in liberating a limited living space and in opening up a virtual space within which an unedited and positive subjectivity can be created.

The subsequent study by Adriana Panait Giurea and Clémence Lormier investigates the use of ICTs in three Roma settlements in the French context putting into evidence, in particular, the virtual relationship existing with the local administrative system. This relationship, in certain respects fundamental for Roma families, poses a series of difficulties starting from inadequate or non-existent linguistic and digital competences. Moreover, it points out that the possibility of web access to administrative services (schools, city councils, healthcare) is tied to the domicile, which for Roma groups often corresponds to places of acceptance for which the authorities are unwilling to guarantee the use of the web.

The final chapter by Marta Szczepanik presents a study on the contents of web sites, Facebook profiles, online journals and blogs created by Polish Roma. The results show how these digital instruments are aimed first of all at diffusing Roma culture among non-Roma through various initiatives, in particular through the promotion of traditional music. Another important aspect is the commemoration of the Roma genocide carried out by the Nazis during the Second World War. As a consequence, the web and the Internet become "virtual places" that are important both for the identity of the Roma minority and for their dialogue with the Polish society as a whole.

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Section 1

Citizenship rights and social conditions of Roma in Europe and in three European countries: France, Italy and Poland

1

Ugly, dirty and bad: representations, living conditions of Roma and policies in Europe

by *Alfredo Alietti*

1.1.   Introduction

Paraphrasing the title of a well-known Italian film of the '70s, the tzigane communities are portrayed, in most cases, as *ugly, dirty and bad*.[1]

These negative characteristics, usually attributed to the Roma,[2] are the result of a long and articulated historical process involving the construction of a *nomad* otherness on which a continuous policy of persecution, segregation and exclusion, culminating in the Nazi genocide, has been based.[3] The recurrent image of their cultural distance from the rules of human society, of the impossibility of their assimilation, pervades, with few differences, the hegemonic public discourse system in contemporary European societies.

In this sense, we can affirm that the construction of Roma culture is subordinated to the dominant Western concept of *civilization*, whereby the idea of a "civilizing offensive" or "civilizing project" has been established (Powell, 2010).

The civilizing project is grounded on the perception that "they are undeserving and responsible (at least in part) for their own marginal position within society"

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[1]The film was directed in 1976 by Ettore Scola, who won the best director award at the Cannes Film Festival in the same year. The film tells the story of a family living in a "shanty town" in the suburbs of Rome, a situation similar to that which is still experienced today by a part of the Rome community.

[2] In the EU, the term *Roma* is used as an umbrella-term including groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as the Sinti, the Camminanti, the Kalé, the "Gens du voyage", etc. whether sedentary or not (Council of Europe, 2012). So, we use consciously the term Roma as "a short-hand designation for a range of diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious, socially, politically and economically marginal groups across Europe" (Tremlett, McGarry, 2013: 7-8).

[3] *Porrajamos* is the term by which the nazi genocide of Roma is defined.

and by the idea that Roma culture, which is family and group-oriented, is contrary to "the emancipatory processes of individualization and integration" (Powell, 2011: 472-473). The dominant authorities' discourse and action operate in the track of a de-humanizing logic, so that what is established is a governing device grounded on the "state of exception" suspending the regime of human rights and citizenship (Alietti, 2011). Therefore, the "Roma exception" is universally seen as somehow "different" from the rest of society (Agarin, 2014), needing a "special treatment" in order to control and normalize it (Vitale, 2009). This representation has legitimized in the past, and is still legitimizing in the present, exclusive politics and policies of discrimination. In line with Axel Honneth's analysis , we can affirm that there are "specific forms of humiliation against Roma, which damage the normative self-understanding of one person", and exclude, "in a structural way, the subject from the possession of given rights in the sphere of society" (Honneth, 1993: 21).

Roma's representations portray Roma not just as different people, who multiculturalist policies should be able to accommodate, but as "agents of disorder" or as bearers of an unspecified threat to national identity (Stewart, 2012).

From this critical perspective, Roma represent the "quintessential outsiders of the European imagination" (Fonseca, 1997, cited in Schneeweis, 2014) and the best example of a mix of discrimination in everyday and institutional practices.

In order to speak of the Roma communities and of their vulnerable conditions, it is necessary to take into account different analyses, discourses and public agencies and civil society's actors. In the last twenty years, extensive research has been carried out on this issue, and various reports from different sources (universities, NGOs, transnational advocacy agencies) have shown how these populations are the most excluded and discriminated minority in Europe. In line with this reality and urgency, a variety of policies and projects have been set up recently for their inclusion and for fighting discrimination at the European, national and local levels through the involvement of large numbers of European and international organizations (the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, UNDP), Roma and pro Roma NGOs. The results of these positive efforts do not seem to have improved substantially the situation of the majority of Roma people who live in disadvantaged conditions (European Commission, 2013). On the contrary, the anti-Gypsyism rhetoric and the processes of exclusion seem to have further strengthened. If, on the one hand, the Roma have never been so high up in the political agenda of the European Union and of the member states, focusing on the particular problems confronting Roma, on the other hand, animosity and violence against Roma have never been so prevalent (MacGarry, 2013).

The term *anti-Gypsyism*, like other terms such as *Romaphobia* or *anti-Tziganism*, has only recently been adopted at the international level for identifying a specific form of racism and a different type of racist ideology against Roma

people (Nicolae, 2006; Guet, 2008).[4] In many cases, racist attacks and hate speeches are two sides of the same coin and reproduce strong mechanisms of discrimination.

As Vermeersch has pointed out, the tendency "to single out the Roma as European priority and a special European concern has also, rather paradoxically, opened up new opportunities for nationalist politicians to plead against new national measures to help Roma" (Vermeersch, 2012: 1197). In addition, attention needs to be paid to discourses concerning victimization promoted by NGOs and civil society organizations, because there is a risk of objectifying and homogenizing all Roma experiences and needs, so strengthening xenophobic representations (Sneeweisch, 2014; Timmer, 2010).

It is not easy, in Norbert Elias' term, to move around the "figuration" of these different and interdependent institutions, directives, policies and spaces for intervention. The different national contexts, in terms of their historical roots and institutional and socio-political frameworks present specific peculiarities that cannot be forced into one single model of analysis relating to integration strategies. In the following pages, we shall try to summarize the basic points of this complexity, focalizing both on the more significant aspects of the extensive discussions and literature regarding widespread discrimination, and on the evaluation of policies implemented at European and national levels. We shall also analyse the role of Roma associations in the dynamics of participation in European strategies for improving the living conditions of Roma communities.

1.2. Discrimination and the process of exclusion in Europe

Today, this "troubling" presence constitutes the greatest minority in Europe with a number varying between 10-15 million people, characterized by different languages, traditions, legal status, socio-economic conditions and degrees of inclusion. To reliably estimate the Rome population and their real social and economic situation is difficult for many reasons; mostly because of the fear of declaring oneself as a member of a stigmatized group, and because of a general problem of administrative definition concerning who is a Rom or not (Ivanov, 2012; Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012; Messing, 2014).

The document drafted by the Council of Europe estimates a minimum, maximum and average number of Roma groups divided by Europe, the European Union and the Council of Europe, As it can be seen from table 1, the average estimate for

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[4] The recent document of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2008) refers to *anti-Gypsyism* as a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among other things, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization and the most blatant kind of discrimination. For a important discussion on Anti-Gypsysm in Europe see Stewart (2014) and Agarin (2014)

Europe is 11 256 000, equal to 1.36% of the total population, while the average for the European Union is 5 907 800 (equal to 1.18% of the total population).

The countries with a greater amount of Roma people are mainly located in Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Serbia and Macedonia), while they represent less of 1% of the population in the rest of Europe.

Table 1. Estimated Roma population in some European countries

Country	Total population World Bank 2010	Official (self-declared) number	Census (year)	Minimum estimate	Maximum estimate	Average estimate	Average estimate % of total population
Romania	21.442.012	619.007	2011	1.200.000	2.500.000	1.850.000	8,63%
Bulgaria	7.543.325	325.343	2011	700.000	800.000	750.000	9,94%
Hungary	10.008.703	190.046	2001	500.000	1.000.000	750.000	7,49%
Spain	46.081.574	No data	---	500.000	1.000.000	750.000	1,63%
Serbia	7.292.574	108.193	2002	400.000	800.000	600.000	8,23%
Slovakia	5.433.456	89.920	2001	380.000	600.000	490.000	9,02%
France	64.876.618	No data	---	300.000	500.000	400.000	0,62%
Ukraine	45.870.700	47.917	2001	120.000	400.000	260.000	0,57%
UK	62.218.761	No data	---	150.000	300.000	225.000	0,36%
Czechoslovakia	10.525.090	11.718	2001	150.000	250.000	200.000	1,90%
Macedonia"	2.060.563	53.879	2002	134.000	260.000	197.000	9,56%
Greece	11.319.048	No data	---	50.000	300.000	175.000	1,55%
Italy	60.483.521	No data	---	120.000	180.000	150.000	0,25%
Albania	3.204.284	1.261	2001	80.000	150.000	115.000	3,59%
Moldova	3.562.062	12.271	2004	14.200	200.000	107.100	3,01%
Germany	81.702.329	No data		70.000	140.000	105.000	0,13%
Bosnia	3.760.149	8.864	1991	40.000	76.000	58.000	1,54%
Portugal	10.642.841	No data	---	34.000	70.000	52.000	0,49%
Sweden	9.379.116	No data	---	35.000	65.000	50.000	0,53%
Netherlands	16.612.213	No data	---	32.000	48.000	40.000	0,24%
Ireland	4.481.430	22.435	2006	32.000	43.000	37.500	0,84%
Kosovo	1.815.000	45.745	1991	25.000	50.000	37.500	2,07%
Austria	8.384.745	6.273	2001	20.000	50.000	35.000	0,42%
Croatia	4.424.161	9.463	2001	30.000	40.000	35.000	0,79%
Poland	38.187.488	12.731	2002	15.000	50.000	32.500	0,09%
Montenegro	631.490	8.305	2011	15.000	25.000	20.000	3,17%

Source: www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/Source/documents/stats.xls.

Some authors note that there are important discrepancies between official census data and estimates provided by NGOs supporting the Roma communities or different independent organizations (Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012; McDonald C., Negrin K, 2010). Undoubtedly, we need specific and accurate statistics on the socio-demographic status in each European state to understand the real needs and priorities of the Roma communities so as to improve and increase the effectiveness of local interventions. In this sense a report of the "No data – No progress" Open Society related to the countries participating in the European inclusion projects shows the lack of available data or, the fragmented results when they are available (McDonald and Negrin K., 2012). Moreover, it highlights that few national governments draw data and information from international agencies, academic and NGOs sources to monitor their compliance to the European inclusion commitment.

In general terms, we agree with the evaluation of Ivanov: instead of counting Roma, it would be useful to apply a "territorial focus" in order to identify "where the excluded populations are, what specific patterns of exclusion they face" ,and to improve "the lives of those people and including the excluded without stigmatizing all Roma as being deprived or excluded" (Ivanov, 2012, p. 4; see also Ivanov, A., Kling, J. & Kagin, J. 2012).

If the problem of evaluating the real number of the Romani population and their socio-economic status conditions is crucial for the effectiveness of integration policies, it is even more important to contrast the widespread processes and institutional practices of indirect, or direct, discrimination: "left unchecked and unchallenged, anti-Roma prejudice threatens to derail progress to the extent that it presents a fundamental threat to the entire Framework for National Roma Integration" (Rorke, 2012: 10).

In this way any initiative and intervention to challenge resistance, sustained at a local level by deep-rooted and strengthened intolerance, appears decisive. The extensive surveys on xenophobia and discrimination against ethnic minorities and migrants highlight the widespread prejudice against the roma in European public opinion regardless of socio-economic status and political tendencies. For instance, the data collected by the Eurobarometer survey in 2008 show how "the average European is comfortable with diversity, a notable difference is when it comes to having a Roma neighbour" (Eurobarometer, 2008: 10). A more recent survey highlights how 45% of respondents affirm that "efforts to integrate the Roma are seen as less effective than general efforts to fight discrimination" and "three out of four Europeans believe the Roma are at risk of discrimination" (Eurobarometer, 2012: 111).

The survey realized by the PEW on the attitudes towards migration and minorities in seven European countries shows how negative attitudes toward Roma are common, and in particular Italy and France, where policies toward Roma communities have generated remarkable controversy in recent years, are the countries with the highest value, respectively 85% and 66% of the national sample (PEW,

2014: 30).[5] The analysis highlights how adverse attitudes are also extensively present among left-wing interviewees, traditionally more open-minded with regard to multiethnic society. Other specific national surveys revealed the strong prejudice in non-Roma public opinion.

The research realized in Central Europe by the Open Society points out that "non-Roma respondents consistently expressed negative views of the Roma overall, describing the Roma as dishonest, aggressive, un-hygienic, lacking work ethic, unemployed, poorly educated, and prone to criminality" (Open Society Institute, 2005). In the national *Shadow Reports* published by European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Roma and Traveller populations are recognised as highly discriminated in large parts of Eastern and Western Europe, although the size and composition of this differ across EU member states (ECRI, 2014).

From the Roma's point of view, the feelings and experience of racism or discrimination are pervasive in everyday life. The findings of the 'European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey' show how "81% of Roma who indicated they were victims of assault, threat or serious harassment in the previous 12 months considered that their victimization was racially motivated" (EU-Midis, 2012). Another point emerging from different surveys is the fact that Roma lack awareness of their rights and of complaints mechanisms. A lot of research and reports monitoring discrimination events confirm a widespread intolerance against Roma. In different European countries a large number of physical and verbal attacks from far-right movements, and an increase of hate speeches directed against Roma from important political leaders, above all in Central and Eastern Europe, have been recorded (AEDH, 2012; ERRC, 2011; 2012).

Anti-Gypsyism has become a strong instrument for political consensus at national and local levels in line with a "government of fear" and an imagery of threat within neoliberal regimes and in line with an economic crisis reducing welfare resources. In many European countries, mainstream politicians have increasingly used the rhetoric of dangerousness in relation to the Roma presence, promoting an extensive policy of forced evictions and segregation in violation of international laws (McGarry, 2011; ERRC, 2011; Vitale, 2015). In 2008, the Italian right-wing government declared a "Nomad emergency" and, in several regions, it gave the authorities special powers to tackle the "Roma crisis" (ERRC, 2009; Brown, Dyer and Scullion, 2012; Nolan, 2012).[6]

In most cases, local authorities adopted procedures of expulsion of Roma people with criminal records and forced evictions of irregular camps. In July 2010, the French government announced plans to evict Roma from "illegal settlements" and to expel Roma from other EU states (ERRC, 2011; Legros and Vitale, 2011). The French authorities have continued to evict and to expel Romanian and Bul-

[5] For an important analysis of xenophobic attitudes in Italy, see Arrigoni, Vitale (2009).
[6] In a case brought by the ERRC, Italy's highest court last year ruled the "state of emergency" to be illegal.

garian nationals of Roma origin throughout 2011, 2012 and the first quarter of 2013 under the government led by François Hollande (Carrera, 2013).

The "vocabulary of emergency" has become the basis for the political actors' action strengthening aversive attitudes toward Roma communities and their difference from the rest of society. Some scholars highlight how there is an increase of "reasonable Anti-Gypsyism" in the European public opinion (Van Baar, 2012) and how stressing the difference and "otherness" of the Roma acts as a catalyst because the economically and socially unsettled Europeans need Anti-Gypsyism as a background for a common feeling of unity (Stewart, 2012). Due to widespread stigmatization and discrimination, the socio-economic conditions of the more vulnerable Roma groups are becoming difficult, and the chances of inclusion are being reduced. The progressive disappearance of traditional jobs in the globalization era and the progressive sedentarization have deeply changed the strategy of economic survival (EURoma Report, 2010). Moreover, the recent economic crisis and the relative cuts in the social and welfare expenditure have added further stress to the precarious situations of many Roma communities (Bartlett, Benini and Gordon, 2012). Extensive surveys and empiric analyses clearly evidence the extreme social vulnerability of Roma as compared to non-Roma with regard to life-expectancy, unemployment levels, access to social healthcare services, degree of literacy and quality of life.

The report on the situation of Roma in eleven EU member states based on surveys realized by the Fundamental Rights Agency compared with the World Bank/EC/UNPD analysis confirms a critical framework for Roma living conditions across Europe (FRA, 2012). According to the data collected, between 70 % and 90 % of the Roma surveyed live in conditions of severe material deprivation.

With regard to the twin pillars of integration, namely, labour and housing, the studies show serious interrelated problems of exclusion and discrimination.

In most member states the number of Roma saying they are unemployed is at least double the number of non-Roma, and in some contexts, such as Italy and the Czech Republic, up to 4-5 times higher (FRA, 2012: 17). The European Roma Rights Centre has used the metaphor of the 'glass box' to represent the exclusion of many Roma "from gainful employment, the block from having access to well-remunerated work, isolation at the workplace, and segregation into work arrangements dealing solely with Roma issues" (ERRC; 2007: 11).

Following this full-scale analysis, and specifically in Eastern and Central Europe, "there are real barriers, that reduce employability of Roma resulting from supply-side factors and deficiencies in unemployed Roma such as the low level or absence of educational qualifications because many have work-based skills that are no longer relevant in a modern labour market, and also because many Roma live in detached settlements with limited access to jobs" (ERRC, 2007). However, these reasons are not enough to explain the situation, because the various forms of direct and indirect discrimination hampering access to employment are often overlooked and not sufficiently taken into account (ECCR, 2007: 16-17). Unemployment, especially when it is long term and spatially concentrated, is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to reverse. In this perspective, the analysis shows

that "the problem is multi-layered and inter-generational and it is impossible to separate the effects of current and past discriminatory behaviour from what are often seen as autonomous factors, such as educational attainment, birth rates, living conditions, health, and location". (ECCR, 2007). In addition, there is an obvious problem concerning women, whose specific difficulties are widely unaddressed by policies and who face various forms of discrimination: in fact, they are discriminated as women, as members of the Roma community, and as women within their community with its own discriminatory patriarchy traditions and practices (European Parliament, 2008: VI). The ghettoization in deprived areas of towns, or in specific "nomad camps" and the poor housing conditions of Roma are the main issues in most parts of Europe (ERRC, 2010; Philips, 2010). In many cases the Roma settlements, especially in rural areas, are characterized by a lack of access to basic utilities such as drinking water, electricity, sanitation services and they show overcrowded conditions as compared to national averages. In some contexts such as Bulgaria and Romania 45%-65% of the dwellings have no sewage, and 65%-75% have no drinking water nor inside toilets (UNDP, 2012; Bartlett, Benini and Gordon, 2012). In Italy the experience of "nomad camps" in metropolitan areas (Milan, Rome, Turin) provides a good example of the strong segregation of Roma communities and of the deterioration of their living conditions (Sigona, 2005).

It is important to emphasize that the policy of the nomad camp, pursued by the local government, has failed for many reasons: the overheads of the camps are high,[7] despite critical housing conditions and insufficient improvement of the socio-economic situation; in addition, a lot of Roma families have been concentrated in these segregated spaces, creating a real ghetto and making integration policies difficult to implement; sometimes, these camps are inhabited by families with different cultural backgrounds triggering conflicts and worsening isolation and marginalization.

In other cases, illegal, or informal, settlements have determined real "shanty towns", or favelas, exposed to continuous and brutal evictions by police, without prior consultation, or alternative accommodation (Amnesty International, 2010). The neighbourhoods and legal settlements where the Roma live become "no go zones", stigmatized places which increase social distance and the fault of not interacting, or the will of not integrating, with mainstream society.

While local administrators seek a possible housing solution for the Roma families, by creating micro-areas for small groups, or by providing access to social housing, the reaction of "gage" neighbours is often violent and sustained by "entrepreneurs of racism". The access to social housing is normally problematic and, in general, there are strong discriminations in the housing market, for rentable housing or property (FRA, 2009).

Concerning the access to social and health services, some studies highlight that it is usually of low level and below normal standard. This deficiency is linked, in

[7] In 2013 the administration of Rome spent 23 million euros for nomad camps management (Associazione 21 luglio, 2014).

part, to the lack of income available, especially in countries where access is with fees. In some cases, there is the inability to tackle these organizational contexts (Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012). Another key challenge for anti-discrimination action is the persistence of segregation of Roma children in special schools or classes (European Commission, 2014). The research carried out by the FRA on education shows a significant rate of school segregation in some countries, among which Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece (FRA, 2014). The level of school dropout is higher than for non-Roma students, and there are "few systemic measures encouraging the participation of Roma young-sters in further education or helping Roma students to reintegrate in the education system after they have dropped out" (European Commission, 2014: 4). The deficit in educational skills, as reported below, is a crucial variable for entering the labour market and for improving socio-economic marginalization, especially for the new generation.
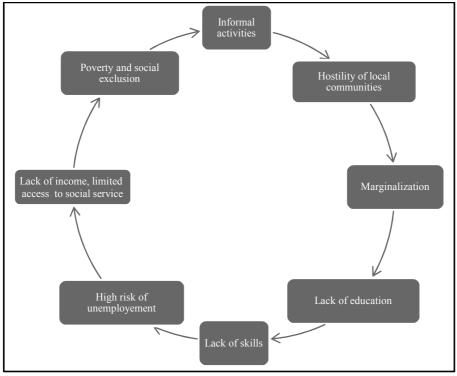
Figure 1. The vicious circle of Roma marginalization

(*source:* CoE, 2011)

From this synthetic picture of the living conditions of Roma, characterized by poverty, discrimination and socio-spatial segregation, we can affirm, paraphrasing Charles Booth, that there is an "arithmetic of disease" limiting and reducing job

and education opportunities, interaction with health and social services, involve-
ment in public life and active citizenship.

The interconnection among these structural variables, added to the neoliberal
socio-economic order in the European context, creates a vicious circle, entrapping
the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Roma communities within paths of exclu-
sion and marginality (see Figure 1).

Evaluating this combination of problems, it seems rather difficult to prefigure
any necessary and profound change for an important part of the European Roma
populations living on the margins of society. Nevertheless, as we shall analyse in
the next paragraph, in the last few years European institutions have launched and
promoted specific initiatives, policies, networks of organizations and NGOs, as
well as transnational programmes, and they have also allocated financial re-
sources to reach the goal of Roma inclusion. To describe this impasse, some
scholars have used the metaphor of the Sisyphus myth, a sort of tangled knot re-
producing mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination (Tremlett, McGarry, Aga-
rin 2014).

1.3 The emergence of the Roma issue at the European level: some problematic aspects

In the previous discussion, we highlighted the growing attention to the Roma is-
sue, as documented by the work of various transnational advocacy organizations,
international agencies and institutions, such as the European Parliament, the Eu-
ropean Commission, the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the World Bank,
and the OCSE. Several reports, assessments, directives and inter-governmental
conferences have been promoted to improve knowledge of and policies regarding
the array of Roma minorities.

In this context, during the last ten years have been invested substantial finan-
cial and human resources to facilitate Romani inclusion and participation on a par
with the majority, to open up new avenues for policymaking at both national and
European levels, and to establish platforms for exchanging experiences of good
practice on the issue of integration (see Table 2).

Table 2. Main documents and events at the European level 2004-2013

2004	▪ European Roma and Travellers Forum established
2005	▪ "Decade of Roma" inclusion established
2007	▪ European Agency for fundamental Rights (FRA) established ▪ European Parliament Resolution on European Strategy on the Roma
2008	▪ First European Roma summit (Brussel, 16th September) ▪ European Commission Staff Working Document of 2 July 2008 on Community instruments and policies for Roma inclusion
2009	▪ European Platform for Roma inclusion established setting out the 10 common basic principles for Roma inclusion ▪ Council Conclusion for Roma of 28 May on the inclusion of Roma ▪ European Parliament resolution on the social situation of the Rom

		and their improved access to the labour market in the EU
2010	▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪	European Commission Staff working Document on the Roma in Europe, the implementation of European Union Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion, Progress Report Second EU Roma summit, Cordoba April Council Conclusion on promoting Roma inclusion Third EU Platform for Roma inclusion in Brussels, June Fourth EU Platform for Roma inclusion in Brussels, December
2011	▪ ▪ ▪ ▪	EU framework for national Roma integration strategies for 2020 Council for European Union Conclusions and European Commission Communication European Parliament resolution on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion Fifth EU Platform for Roma Inclusion, November Sixth EU Platform for Roma Inclusion, April
2012	▪ ▪	European Commission Communication on National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework (May) Special meeting of the EU Platform for Roma Inclusion, March Brussels
2013	▪ ▪ ▪	Eighth EU Platform for Roma Inclusion June Brussels European Commission Communication on Steps forward in implementing the National Roma Integration Strategy Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States European Parliament Resolution on the progress made in the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm.

In this perspective, it is important to note the emergence of several Roma NGOs and informal bodies, promoting the rights of Roma people and fighting against discrimination across the EU member states such as the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) or the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC). Moreover, these NGOs together with transnational advocacy have created the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC), an informal network at the EU level for sustaining and monitoring the effects of the efforts undertaken.[8]

The existence of a European network must also be indicated: formed in 2007 on the initiative of the Spanish government, it is called the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma) and it has the purpose of promoting both the exchange of information, experiences and strategies and the employment of structural funds, as an instrument available to the member States so as to plan and implement policies aimed at strengthening social

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[8] The ERPC is composed by Amnesty International, the European Network Against Racism, the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network, the European Roma Information Office, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, the Open Society Institute, the Minority Rights Group International, the Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities, and the Roma Education Fund.

cohesion and at reducing inequalities within the European Union (EURoma Report, 2010: 26).

Other important resources are the European Academic Network on Romani Studies and the Ad hoc committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) with the aim of analysing the inclusion and anti-Gypsyism policies adopted in the member states and promoting Roma culture.

All these public and civil society agencies evidence a reframing of the Rom question under the pressure of the entry into the EU of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Vermeersch, 2012). The extension of the Union in order to include these countries with a significant presence of Rom has accelerated the setting up of a European governance strategy, in part motivated by the concern to prevent uncontrolled immigration towards the older member states by the new citizens of the Union.[9] This concern is also due to the effects of the neo-liberal policies adopted by the new members that have drastically reduced public revenues and access to the work market by Rom families, increasing their exclusion and poverty (Sigona, 2011). As a result, the domino effect of these procedures has obliged the European Union's institutions to undertake a course of action at various operational levels so as to foster inclusive and antidiscrimination policies in favour of Rom minorities.

However, it should be recalled that the debate on and the awareness of precarious living conditions and widespread discrimination in Europe are not new (Vermeersch, 2012).

For example, since March 1998 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has promoted policy recommendation No 3 "On Combating Racism and Intolerance against Roma/Gypsies", on the basis that "Roma/Gypsies suffer throughout Europe from persisting prejudices, are victims of a racism, which is deeply-rooted in society, are the target of sometimes violent demonstrations of racism and intolerance and that their fundamental rights are regularly violated or threatened" (ECRI 1998: 4). This document recommends that the Governments of the member states should act to implement specific antidiscrimination measures in favour of Roma people and to promote an active role and participation of Roma communities and organizations "in the decision-making process, through national, regional and local consultative mechanisms, with priority placed on the idea of partnership on an equal footing" (ECRI, 1998: 5).

Other significant instruments to that effect have been implemented, such as the Racial Equality Directive 2000/43/EC prohibiting racial discrimination in different fields of everyday life (employment, education, healthcare, access to public and private services), or the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, established in 2000, linked to the Treaty of Lisbon, which has become an integral part of EU legislation (Veermersh, 2012). During the process of application for membership by Central and Eastern European states, the directive for minority protection and anti-discrimination has been decisive, with particular regard to Roma.

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[9] As Sigona (2012) stresses through the process of enlargement the Roma population passed from two to six millions.

From the numerous disclosures and reports on the situation of rights in some of the new member countries, there is clearly a mismatch between the adherence to principles of equality and anti-discrimination underlying the norms in force in the EU and the actual application in local contexts. As shown above, the EU's promotion of, and support for, a better treatment of Roma has left these countries with a tenuous mix of policies, practices and norms supporting both inclusion and exclusion (Ram, 2014). Furthermore, observing the behaviour of the national governments of the older member states, promoters of these severe principles and rules of admission, it is impossible to perceive coherence in the inclusion policies , given that these same principles have been constantly violated, as particularly evidenced by France and Italy (Sigona, 2011).

In essence, there is a sort of "schizophrenia" between international and European laws, with standards and commitments to eliminate racial discrimination on the one hand, and the national policies concerning Roma on the other (Cahn, Guild, 2008).

From this critical standpoint, we shall present and discuss synthetically some aspects of these transnational programmes implemented in the member states, highlighting specific problems in terms of improving Roma's status and integration, on the basis of different reports published by the NGOs, European agencies and international organizations.

The first important multilateral project, Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, was initiated during a regional conference organized in Budapest in 2003, Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future. The Prime Ministers of the eight participating nations[10] signed the Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in February 2005. This initiative brings together governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society and, specifically, the Roma, with the purpose of improving the well-being of this population. The Decade placed particular emphasis on the areas identified as the most critical, already indicated above, such as education, employment, health, and housing, and it contained the provision that governments should also take into account other central questions such as poverty, discrimination and gender issues. There were also several International partner organizations, among which the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Development Program, the European Roma and Traveller Forum, the High Commission of the United Nations for Human Rights and Unicef.[11]

Since 2008 initiatives for Roma inclusion have formed part of the wider range of work of the European Commission engaged in the promotion of equality. The motivations for this policy reframing are ascribable not only, as already recalled

[10] The countries participating in the initiative are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Spain (Italy has not adhered)and each of them has developed, at the national level, an action plan. A thirteenth country, Slovenia, participates as an observer.
[11] The Decade of Roma inclusion launched in 2005 the implementation of the Dosta!, a campaign promoted by the Council of Europe for contrasting anti-Gypsyism and raising awareness of the discrimination suffered by Roma.

above, to the enlargement of the EU, but also to the Lisbon objectives, set in 2000, aiming at a drastic reduction of poverty within 2010 and, finally, to the ratification of the European Council Directive *Race and Ethnicity* (EURoma Report, 2010: 19; Vermeersch, 2012).

In this respect, at the first European summit on the roma, held in Brussels on 16 September 2008, the European institutions, the governments of the EU member states and the civil society established the principle of a shared responsibility regarding the solving of problems related to the roma populations, and identified operative criteria for overcoming the situations of marginalization. In consequence of this meeting, in Prague in April 2009, the *European Platform for Roma inclusion* was set up, aiming at exchanging positive practices and experiences to stimulate cooperation among the various governments, institutions and actors involved, thus creating effectives synergies. Within this initiative, the *Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion* were formulated; they are ten principles, not binding from the legal point of view, aiming at directing towards outcomes of success public policies and projects destined for the roma community. These principles are important above all because they imply commitments regarding the "involvement of local authorities, civil society and the active participation of the Roma in decision making and policy design".[12]

In April 2011 these experiences and their assessment contributed to the drafting, by the EU, of the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* (NRIS) requiring all member states to prepare or revise their specific national strategies by the end of 2011 (EC, 2011).

Starting with the premise asserting that "in spite of some progress achieved both in the Member States and at EU level over the past years, little has changed in the day-to-day situation of most of the Roma", the document identifies a series of guide-lines to be followed in the planning of integration strategies for reducing the gap existing with the rest of population concerning access to education, employment, healthcare and housing.

The ambitious features of the NRIS highlight a combined approach in order to:

"set achievable national goals for Roma integration, identify where relevant those disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated neighbourhoods, where communities are most deprived, using already available socio-economic and territorial indicators, allocate a sufficient funding from national budgets, which will be complemented, where appropriate, by international and EU funding, include strong monitoring methods to evaluate the impact of Roma integration actions and a review mechanism for the adaptation of the strategy and be designed, implemented and monitored in close cooperation and continuous dialogue with Roma civil society, regional and local authorities" (EC, 2011: 8-9).

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[12] The principles are: (1) Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies; (2) Explicit but not exclusive targeting; (3) Inter-cultural approach; (4) Aiming for the mainstream; (5) Awareness of the gender dimension; (6) Transfer of evidence-based policies; (7) Use of Community instruments; (8) Involvement of regional and local authorities; (9) Involvement of civil society; and (10) Active participation of the Roma.

In line with past initiatives, what is recommended is the pursuit of the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion and the Platform pattern for an operative involvement of Roma stakeholders and for an exchange of good practices. In this sense, the Decade forum and initiatives are important for exchanging institutional and governance skills promoted in the countries involved.

Another important focus is the reminder to strengthen financial tools such as the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as well as the capacity of institutions in paying an active role in the implementation of strategy. The creation of National Roma Contact Points, as the body in charge of the implementation of the NRIS, is a crucial element in addressing these problems and in increasing the integration of public agencies at different levels of intervention, including the NGOs and Roma people.

This is a decisive step in the mainstream logic promoted at European level for sustaining a shared inclusive policy for Roma within an extended frame of egalitarian and cohesive goals common to all European societies. Nevertheless, further reports on the monitoring of the formulation and implementation of these main transnational programmes evidence some critical aspects, in particular the difficulties involved in achieving a real change in the living conditions of Roma people. Despite a progressive path, political awareness and the presence of Roma organizations in the design and implementation of policies, the stigmatization and isolation of Roma increase.

Above we discussed the situation in old and new member states characterized by growing anti-Gypsyism, socio-spatial segregation and the deterioration of socio-economic status in a period of neoliberalism and international crisis.

In lamenting the lack of progress since the European Commission announced national Roma integration strategies, the European Parliament has recently noted that "poverty and social exclusion among many Roma have reached a critical level" (European Parliament, 2013).

This does not mean to deny the considerable progress achieved in the implementation of the policies to reduce the vulnerability of roma populations and, above all, the continual contribution of the institutional actors involved in sustaining the achievement of the predetermined objectives. Nonetheless, as we shall see, evaluation reports by the European organisms and the advocacy organizations evidence critical elements with respect to the mass of legal instruments, financial resources and projects brought into play (European Commission, 2010; 2012).

In the light of the rich and varied picture of documents and initiatives delineated up to this point, it is worth reminding once again the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: why wouldn't the existing instruments seem to have any effect on the real living conditions of the roma present in Europe, whose econom-ic situation is generally worse than that of the majority and often than that of other minorities and of migrants?

What is evident is the weakness of the governance of Roma issues at European level and the lack of ability both to grapple with the main factors of discrimination, and to have a real impact on change. Largely, this weakness may be ex-

plained with the strategy of governance and coordination among the different European, national and local levels of action: "the reality shows us that when speaking about Roma integration in Europe we are far from translating commitments from European level to the local level" (Gergely, 2014: 52).

Vermeersch wrote similarly, after a critical analysis of the EU initiative concerning the fact that EU institutions have to make sure that initiatives are ultimately translated into effective policy changes at home, at the domestic and, particularly, at the local level (Veermeerch, 2012: 1209). Empirical research has shown that both in old and new EU members, problems with local policy implementation persist, and there are currently no strong and effective answers to the practice of local policy-makers of portraying Roma citizens systematically as a burden on the local economy, rather than as a group deserving economic support as equal citizens (Vermeersh, 2013: 345).

In December 2010, the European Commission's Roma Task Force (RTF) announced its first findings, highlighting that EU member states do not yet properly use EU funds for the purpose of an effective social and economic integration of Roma. The RTF found weaknesses in the development of appropriate strategies as well as of specific measures, to address the problems faced by Roma, including implementation problems at the national level due to a lack of know-how and administrative ability to employ EU funds. The report also enucleated problems in providing national co-financing, as well as a lack of involvement on the part of civil society and Roma communities themselves (FRA, 2012).

It is clear that any top-down, government-sponsored initiative for improving the situation of the Roma is destined to meet resistance at the local level because of deep-rooted and widespread intolerance. Indeed, this is precisely what is occurring today in Europe. Persistent discrimination at the local level is inhibiting the effective implementation of national and supranational policies aimed at improving the roma's lives (Rosenfield, 2011).

As Van Baar affirms, the background of European Governance of the Roma issue that has been developed relies on "a neo-liberal trend for governing social and minority-related affairs through processes of decentralization, the outsourcing of public services to private stakeholders and the correlated mobilization of civil society agencies" (Van Baar, 2012: 1290).

This policy pattern does not always reach the goals expected in terms of authentic change in marginal conditions; on the contrary, it can reproduce the mechanism of exclusion. The predominant role of NGOs, or third sector organizations, as main actors in the management of Roma can be an aspect limiting the claims of Roma people. For instance, within an adverse context there may come about an option of "minimalism" in the action of the NGOs, reducing contents and moments of protest, reproducing the logic of a differential treatment (Vitale, 2009). Moreover, in some cases, the action of the NGOs develops an "emergency con-

text", such as the management of segregated nomad camps and, under political pressure, prevents it from promoting sustainable projects for integration.[13]

A recent *Progress Report* on the implementation of the instruments and poli-cies for the inclusion of roma in Europe by the European Commission affirms, in its conclusions: "in 2008 and in 2009 there has been significant progress with ref-erence to the inclusion of Roma at the European level. The question has become a central one in the political agendas of the European institutions and those of the member states (...) It cannot be ignored that the developments in 2008 and 2009 have not yet significantly changed the actual situation and conditions of life of the roma community" (EU, 2010: 32-33).

A 2012 study produced by the European Roma Policy Coalition, under the ro-tating chairmanship of the ENAR, revealed that many of the national strategies were deeply flawed, reflecting a complete lack of political will to support Roma inclusion. The study criticised the lack of attention paid by governments to the National Roma Integration Strategies, both in their design and implementation, as was obvious from the lack of specific targets, evaluation and monitoring mecha-nisms, budget setting, or assignment of responsible authorities/contacts. The Eu-ropean Commission also assessed the National Roma Integration Strategies in May 2012 and concluded that insufficient progress had been made (European Roma Policy Coalition, 2012).

In particular, the recent report on the implementation of the EU framework for the NRSI affirms that "although positive steps have been taken in most member states to address the situation of roma in education, employment, health housing as well as non-discrimination, further and more consolidated efforts are still need-ed to change the situation of Roma in Europe" (EC, 2014: 3).

In synthesis, from the observations so far presented we can list a series of problems which have emerged in spite of the initiatives proposed:[14]
- -first of all, the economic crisis has contributed to exacerbate the condi-tions of exclusion from the labour market, making the roma, in some Euro-pean countries, the scapegoats for emerging economic and social prob-lems; access to the labour market, as it has been repeated more than once, constitutes one of the key conditions for improving the conditions of the roma and for increasing the possibility of interaction with the wider sphere of society;
- -the political will to confront in a unified manner and with far-sighted and integrated policies the problems identified. Although from this point of view various steps forward have been taken, there is still room for public action, even if limited by the political consensus of xenophobic political parties;
- -in order to be effective, and precisely in the light of the multidimension-ality of the problems, interventions must build up solid mechanisms of

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[13] For instance, in the Italian case the nomad camps management alone uses up all the financial resources available.
[14] This summary is based on the analysis of Riniolo (2010).

coordination and a strong partnership among all the actors engaged in the procedure. Concerning this aspect, significant progress has been made through the networks between NGOs and European platforms, important instruments at the basis of national strategies;

- -the need for a commitment not only by the highest institutions at the European level, but also by government organisms at the regional and local levels. In effect, the documents and initiatives of the European Union organisms , in order to be effective, need to be applied by the local and regional authorities, which, however, do not always possess an adequate knowledge of the existing instruments nor the capacity to subsequently carry out, at the local level, intervention strategies. Nevertheless the roma question has become central to the European policy agenda and there are several instruments available. Therefore, a fundamental change is being carried out, even in the modes of action undertaken by entities called upon to provide an answer and to act in line and coordination with European priorities and policies;

- -the lack of precise data on the socio-economic situation and the demographic development of the roma communities is an additional serious obstacle for the realisation of policies. The importance of the collection and availability of comparable and reliable data has already been evidenced in principle n. 6 of the *Common Basic Principles.* The question of the collection of data on the ethnic minorities is however a delicate one, above all when this operation may be interpreted as the premise for control policies . It is achievable, for example, through the use of instruments for the recognition of the environment, such as observers who respect the rules for the protection of data and for the defence of human rights, without using methods that violate human dignity.

The way to achieve a change in the integrated strategy for Roma inclusion depends not only on its conception and on the instruments used, but also on the institutional capacities and the legal and policy frameworks within which the policies are implemented.

Therefore, in the absence of a progressive change in the direction of open-mindness in public and institutional agencies at the national or local levels, it seems hard to modify the status quo and to promote a real inclusion of Roma's "voice". The exclusionary environment in all the member states at the political and societal levels produces "small inclusive measures" not sufficient for the pursuit of alternative pathways. To fight racism and discrimination and to combine this with the implementation of inclusion policies in line with the commitment of European members necessitates sustainable projects for a long-term period and, as Vermershees notes, "a growing need to invest in the new paces for citizens' participation which may serve for connecting marginalized and disadvantaged communities with mainstream society or mainstream political decision-making institutional and processes" (Veermersch, 2012: 355).

1.4   Participation of Roma NGOs and Roma communities: in search of citizenship

A fundamental principle discernible in advanced policies at the European level is the activation of direct participation of the Roma communities and of the associations linked with them. This programmatic intent is in line with an idea of public and social policies directed towards an expansion of the actors and stakeholders involved, in the wave of a governance action aimed at defining the intervention strategies. In fact, the models for citizen participation in deliberative arenas con-stitute an essential premise in European programmes in order to face the changes in the layout of welfare in a neo-liberal age (Alietti, 2014). The results of this in-clusive perspective are not always satisfactory, especially when more vulnerable groups are called upon to participate, since the effects on the mechanisms of socio-economic exclusion are weak.

As far as the Roma are concerned, as indicated in the above paragraph, the different platforms on which policy criteria and the launching of national strategies have been based, have made this a necessary step in increasing the effectiveness of initiatives and interventions.

In 2010 the EC affirmed, through a document entitled "The social and economic integration of Roma", that the active participation of both civil society groups and Romani individuals constituted a basic principle, transforming the role of the Roma community from mere recipients of external help to actual shapers of their own policies (EC; 2010, Agarin, 2104: 745). Moreover, the EC's "First Step" encourages national policymakers to assume a greater role in Roma integration, suggesting a move away from group-based protection, and calling upon "Romani civil society to assume greater responsibility for public policy implementation" (Agarin, 2014: 743). In a document published by the World Bank on effective social inclusion policies toward Roma there is the objective of "strengthening social capital and community development", by facilitating Roma participation in the public sphere and in civil society initiatives (World Bank, 2005).

As previously recalled, the active participation of the Roma community is one of the ten points of the *Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion* and one of the guide-lines in the planning of the national strategies of the member countries.

The objective of a progressive empowerment of marginalized and discriminated subjects through their direct participation may be collocated on a rhetorical more than on a real level of involvement, even in those European countries where political Roma actors are present and active, such as the Eastern and Central Eu-rope countries. The reasons are obvious and reflect an institutionalized condition of exclusion from local governments having reduced the ability for self-organization and mobilisation from below.

Some analysts point out how the high expectations in declared European Roma policy regarding their organization and participation in the democratic process and in policy making ignore the historical past and the absence of such traditions among Roma communities (Acton, Ryder A. and Rostas, 2013):

with few exceptions, in the past Roma had no models of organizing and expressing their interest in society in a similar manner to other groups. As a vulnerable group, that faced severe exclusion throughout their history, Roma developed specific survival strategies and practices, often based on intense forms of social capital, adapted to the context in which they lived. Thus, expecting Roma to be able quickly to develop representative institutions similar to those of other groups in society may be not only unrealistic and ethnocentric but also indicates a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Roma situation (Acton, Ryder A., Rostas, 2013: 11).

This statement points out decisive limits with regard to articulated and sustainable participation strategies in the creation of democratic capabilities able to set up a dialogue with needs and expectations related to the different conditions of Roma communities.

The rhetoric of the involvement of vulnerable groups produces a contrary effect in the face of the difficulties inherent in achieving this goal. In fact, it can strengthen both the question of a failure in the will to integrate Roma in mainstream society and also that of reproducing their stigmatized representation. In this regard, widespread discrimination is hidden under the umbrella term of "irreducible otherness". Moreover, there is a risk of backing up a logic of differentiation between deserving and non-deserving Roma, related to how involvement in the inclusion project is perceived. From this perspective, the more deprived communities have no chance of changing their marginalized conditions.

The recent emergence of the Roma pride movement fighting processes of racism and discrimination has raised the issue of a shared identity by creating a symbolic and political space for the recognition of one's "diversity" and rights.[15]

The fact that Romani communities are too dispersed and too heterogeneous represents a serious obstacle for this chance of mobilization into a coherent protest movement (McGarry, 2013).

Some scholars confirm the weak identity of Roma, despite public perception of the supposed homogeneity of the various groups, as problems for promoting their "voice" in public opinion sphere (Schneeweis, 2014). Poverty, poor intragroup communication and low levels of education represent other negative factors influencing collective action (Acton, Ryder, 2013). Another problem, in some cases, is related to nomadic practices and, overall, "to the dual tactics of dispersal and containment, which serve to limit the development ability of Roma institutions and political activity by "diluting minority political strength" (Marcuse, 2007 cited in Powell, 2013: 126).

Thus Roma organizations tend to be transnational, national or, in some cases, regional and not encased within residential spaces, where there is more need to participate, and to create spaces of dialogue for sustaining achievable policies (Powell, 2013; Vitale, 2009). In lacking of strong political agency through mobiliza-

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[15] In terms of sociopolitical mobilization Roma people have been active in challenging discrimination and social exclusion since the inaugural Roma Congress in April 1971 (see, Brown P., Dwyer P., Scullion L., 2012).

tion, Roma are unable to adequately challenge negative representations and discrimination (McGarry, 2014).

As has been discussed, as the rights of Roma have progressively become more important at the European level, different Roma NGOs have merged as actors for articulating demands for equality and social inclusion at the transnational level. The role of Roma NGOs and associations as mediators between different transnational and national public actors and the Roma is decisive in building and implementing an effective strategy, but there remain some problems linked to the mobilization of the communities within the framework of European integration policies. Firstly, as previously highlighted, Roma NGOs have constructed a transnational identity for Roma in Europe, who are treated from an ethnic point of view as "other", as not constitutive of the dominant nation, by different government and societies (McGarry, 2011, Source, 2013). There is an implicit confirmation of a symbolic order that crystalizes the racialization of Roma as "outsiders", within national, or local, society. In this sense, as many scholars have stated, local politicians are freed from taking responsibility in the implementation of inclusion policies and are free to use this for political consensus (Vermerschees, 2013; Sigona 2011).

From a specific point of view, the reiterated image fostered by the main Roma NGOs of the Roma groups as "needy subjects" or "victims" tends to render the different experiences uniform in a kind of identity "in the negative", in line with the hegemonic discourse (Schneeweis, 2014; Timmer, 2010)

The difficulties in mobilizing Roma individuals or groups increase what has been called the "NGOisation of the Roma movement" (Vincze 2012; Trehan, 2001). As Vincze has noted, "the financialization of these NGOs reduced the potential of institutionalised civil society to sustain solidarity, and through it, to put political pressure on the state in terms of respecting human rights (including socio-economic rights) through appropriate development programmes, or pressure the state to act responsibly before (Roma) marginalisation becoming a mass phenomenon" (Vincze 2013: 36).

The consequence of this is a serious problem tied to the representativity of these organizations with respect to the needs and necessities coming from below, as well as the question of whether they are able to interact effectively with the most excluded Roma populations by offering opportunities for participation. In this sense, it is important to point out that the associations rather rarely recognize Roma people's capabilities to negotiate and to claim their rights (Vitale, Boschetti, 2011).

Ensuring representation of a deeply marginalised community that lacks familiarity with political organisations presents serious challenges. The present low levels of formal Roma community organisation and the weak links with actual Roma communities of existing advocacy networks weaken all attempts in European society to mobilise these marginalised people. Therefore, there are few alternatives to Roma NGOs and for this reason there is a need "for a long-term programme to transform NGOs into grassroots-based and knowledgeable partners for local and

national governments and international organizations" (Acton, Ryder, Rostas, 2013).

Last, but not least, a lot of Roma NGOs have reported that their participation in the different work tables is usually a mere token presence and not a real and shared process of policy-making (Ram, 2014). So, the Roma civil society continues to remain fragile and its "counterdiscourses" are marginalized (Trehan, 2009: 54). The emancipation of Roma people in general and the improvement of the living conditions of the most excluded groups pass through a strong participation in the civil, social and economic areas.

All institutions both at the national and local levels must provide the conditions for the building of democratic arenas where conflicts can find a solution and widespread discrimination can be reduced. This challenge is not sufficient to mitigate the negative effects of socio-spatial segregation within a neoliberal order, but it could be a real transition toward a different practices of integration and unavoidable mobilization of Roma.

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2

Roma and Gypsies in France: Extent of the diversity versus permanence of public policies

by *Martin Olivera*

2.1.   Introduction

According to the figures of the Council of Europe, the Roma/Gypsy population in France totals about 400 000 persons (COE, 2012). In the lack of statistics based on ethnicity provided by the institutions (the French State does not officially recognize the existence of minorities on its national territory; Amiraux & Simon, 2006), this figure is more a rough rather than precise estimate. In France as elsewhere, the considerable difficulty encountered in obtaining the exact number of Roma/Gypsies is also due to the great diversity of these social groups.[1] The socio-cultural realities that are united under the label "Roma/Gypsies" are as varied and heterogeneous as the stereotypes concerning this "population" are simplistic and unequivocal. In the case of France, because of the history of European migrations and the geographical location of the country, the Roma/Gypsy populations are particularly diversified.

This chapter aims at better grasping the forms of this diversity in France, while highlighting the permanence of public policies toward those *labelled* as Roma/Gypsies, whether national or foreign, over the long term. The first part describes the general situation of these groups in the country. We will examine the extent of the diversity of the Roma/Gypsy communities, starting from the example of Montreuil, a city near Paris. Secondly, we will examine how the French

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[1] According to the counting method used, estimates range from 250 000 (FAP, 2006) to 1.30 million (ERRC, 2005: 47). It should be noted that, in countries that officially recognize the "Roma minority", the issue of statistical measurement is equally complex, given the difficulty in establishing precisely the contours of the "Roma/Gypsy" category – for the Romanian case, see Olivera, 2010.

Republic has rigorously locked the citizens that it *wanted to consider* as "nomads" in an emergency legislation, for over a century. The second part provides some elements necessary for the understanding of the "Roma issue" in France today by examining the problems encountered by "Roma migrants" living in precarious conditions (squats and slums). The latter, though small in number (less than 20 000 in the entire country), have become a central subject of public debate during the last 15 years. We shall compare the reasons for this obsession with the facts, in order to capture what the "Roma issue" rhetoric hides.

2.2   The Roma/Gypsies in France: little-known diversity and Republican policies

2.2.1   Understanding diversities: the Montreuil example

The case of the Seine-Saint-Denis department (north-west of Paris), and especially of the city of Montreuil, is an excellent example of the Roma/Gypsy diversity that can be seen in France. Indeed, within the 100 000 dwellers living in this city, we can find:

– some *Gitans* (arrived from the south of France, via Spain from North Africa several generations ago).
– some *Manouches* (arrived from the east of France starting from the last decades of the XIX century).
– some *Voyageurs* and *Yéniches* (often linked to the *Manouches*, they are family groups from other French provinces that arrived at the beginning of the XX century).
– some Roma, called *"Roms de Paris"*, *Kalderash* or *Hongrois* (who left from the Romania area in the XIX century. They travelled for several decades through central and eastern Europe, especially in Russia, and then arrived in France at the beginning of the XX century – Williams, 1984).
– some Roma called *"Yougoslaves"* (who started to arrive in 1960-1970 thanks to the "guest worker" policy, *Gestarbeiter*, set up within the framework of the bilateral agreements with the Tito government).
– some Roma from Romania who started to arrive at the beginning of the Nineties, and among them, different family groupings from various Romanian regions (Crişana, Transylvania, Banat, Walachia…).
– some Bulgarian Roma, who also started migrating from the beginning of the Nineties, coming from different regions – some of them do not declare to belong to a "Roma community" as such but to the Turkish Muslim minority from Bulgaria.

There is therefore a great diversity of geographical origins and historical experiences. These groups do not necessarily try to establish contacts with one another, in fact they may even openly avoid each other. If, in the long run, close proximity may give rise to close bonds, and occasionally mixed marriages (for exam-

ple between French *Kalderash* Roma and *Manouches* living in the same neigh-
bourhood for decades), this is not the general rule, far from it. And such unions
are still considered by all as *a mixed union*. It is nonetheless important to note that
during the last few decades, the development of Pentecostal Evangelical move-
ments among the numerous Roma/Gypsy groups has made them rub shoulders
with each other at seasonal religious assemblies, regardless of their community
origins (Loiseau, 2004). But it is still too early to assert that this phenomenon is
giving rise to a feeling of "transcommunity belonging" outside these regular
meetings and the religious sphere.[2]

Apart from the now classic typology in the field of Romani studies that distin-
guishes the Gitans(Kalé)/Manouches(Sinti)/Roma, there are no less important dif-
ferences among Roma: in Montreuil there are "Yugoslav" Roma, Romanian Ro-
ma and "Paris Roma". They all call themselves "Roma" in the community social
grouping, but each of them says it in a different way, according to their historical
ties. Some have been living in the region for over six generations, some have ar-
rived during the last 10-15 years. Likewise, even if they all speak Romanes (liter-
ally "in the way of the Roma"), their Romanes is characterized by different ac-
cents, elements of vocabulary, expressions, greetings (and insults), tones and fi-
nally different "ambiences". And when they have to interact with other Roma,
they very often put Romanes aside and prefer to speak French. Therefore, Roma-
nes is essentially used with "our Roma", that is to say relatives, near or far, mem-
bers of the same "community" (*Natia, Rasa, Niamo*, etc.)

Apart from the language issue, the diversity among the Roma/Gypsy family
groups in Montreuil is not only historical (diversity in their journeys in the long-
term) but also cultural (diversity in the marriage customs, clothing and culinary
customs, etc.) and religious (Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Muslim…). Moreo-
ver, this diversity is also administrative and socio-economic: some have always
been French citizens, others acquired French nationality four generations ago or
five years ago, others are EU citizens (from Romania and Bulgaria), still others
are nationals from outside the EU (former Yugoslavia). Some groups live in high-
ly deprived conditions (especially squats and slums), others own their own apart-
ments, their own houses, or the land for their caravans. Some successfully carry
out commercial or handcraft activities, others are employed in the private and
public sectors, others live of expedients or in the grey economy. In short, it is ab-
solutely impossible to provide a socio-economic profile of the Roma/Gypsies in
Montreuil, as anywhere else: if these families seem mainly to belong to the "low-
er/popular" classes, they are not a lumpenproletariat removed from "mainstream
society". We should not, in France as elsewhere, confuse the usual stereotypes
that deplore (or condemn) the so-called "intrinsic marginality of the Ro-
ma/Gypsies" with the local situations, which are by far more varied.

Many Roma/Gypsies have never thought of themselves as "nomads" and are
completely "sedentary" (to the point that the very use of the term seems inappro-

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[2] Expect the great seasonal assemblies (with sometimes over 500 caravans on one site), worship is
practised throughout the year within the close community and/or on a micro-territorial basis.

priate), others move for several months a year (some *Manouches*, the *Voya-geurs…*). The case of the Romania and Bulgarian Roma who have arrived more recently is particular: they effectively travelled from their country of origin to France, but they were sedentary in Romania and Bulgaria, and want to be sedentary in their host country too. Only regular evictions from their dwelling places drive them to move. But we can see that after ten or fifteen years, the same family groups, from squat to squat, from slum to slum, try to stay in the same city or neighbourhood. There is a real desire for settling down, which is thwarted by the local and national policies of rejection (see infra). In any case, all this is not consistent with the traditional figure of the Gypsy whose identity is supposedly specifically linked to nomadism.

2.2.2. "Nomads" and "Gens du Voyage": an emergency legislation

In the French national imagination, the "real Gypsy" is above all a "nomad". Once he travelled with a horse and cart, today he travels in a large caravan and moves according to the seasons. And if he no longer moves around, it is because he or his ancestors have become "sedentary". This instinctive association between Gypsies and nomadism – not limited exclusively to France of course (Asséo, 2007) – is not only linked to popular stereotypes, but it also (firstly?) arises from the way in which public institutions consider and treat the family groups that have been *labelled in this way* for over a century. The administrative category "Gens du Voyage" ("Travellers"), therefore, does not correspond to the recognition of a traditional way of life, but to a particular legal situation resulting from the history of the French Republic.

From the time of its instatement, it has been the Republican State's intention to strictly control moving populations, perceived as instigators of instability and crime. This perception was not based on an "ethnic" issue, but on social and policy issues (About, 2010). The book *Bohémiens en France au 19ème siècle* by François de Vaux de Foletier shows that the industrial era, the period of political instability and rural exodus that followed the fall of the *Ancien Régime* and the dismantling of feudalism, led many families from all the French provinces to "take to the road" (Vaux de Foletier, 1981). A *carnet de circulation*, a travel permit booklet to be periodically endorsed, was established in 1810 for these groups in order to better control them. There followed in 1863 the *carnet de saltimbanque*. Finally, a census of the "nomads" was made nationally for the first time in 1895. All this, of course, was connected with the intense efforts for national centralization and integration to which the emerging Republic was committed (Weber, 1976).

Among these more or less itinerant groups there were family groups originating from the border regions of eastern France (Vosges, Alsace and Lorraine), where they had lived in houses since the end of the XVIII century (Reyniers, 1992). For both political (tension and war with Prussia) and economic (industrialization, rural exodus) reasons, these families left their region of origin during the final decades of the XIX century to settle in neighbouring provinces or further

afield (all the way to the Pyrenees or the Massif Central, for example). Today these groups are known as *Manouches*, and are scattered throughout France (see for example Poueyto, 2011; Williams, 1993).

It is especially for this type of population, classified as "Bohémiens nomades", that in 1912 the French State issued a collective (family) identification document: the *carnet anthropométrique*, forerunner of both the national identity card and of the criminal record. This booklet contained detailed descriptions of all the members of the family (established in accordance with the standards of emerging criminal science; Filhol, 2013). The *carnet anthropométrique* had to be presented to the local authorities, in order to ensure the "traceability" of the families. Moreover, the police had to be able to control all the persons listed in the *carnet* as a whole: hence the need for the movement of the entire family. In addition the status of "nomad" was hereditary: children born from "nomads" were automatically classified as "nomads" by the administration until their death, whether they travelled or not. During the Second World War, the "nomads" were confined in internment camps by the Vichy authorities. They were not liberated from these camps until 1946, long after the liberation of France by the Allies (Filhol & Hubert, 2009).

In 1969, the "nomads" category disappeared and was replaced by that of the "Gens du Voyage". In addition, the *carnet anthropométrique* was abolished and replaced by the *livret de circulation* where the restrictions were reduced, albeit still significant. In fact, since their administrative status places them in the category of the "homeless", the "Gens du Voyage" still today often face difficulties in obtaining bank loans, taking out insurance and also in exercising their right to vote (six months residency in the same town are required).

Because of their specific history, and even more because of the administrative regime in which they have been rigorously inserted, the "Gens du Voyage", and especially the *Manouche* communities, have developed a partly mobile life, tied to itinerant work during the summer months: seasonal craftwork, street selling and trade fairs, fruit gathering, visits to relatives from other regions of France, etc. Today, a large number of *Manouches* are effectively attached to the *value* that is "travel" and to caravan living. This "traditional mobility" is nevertheless relatively recent, since it dates back to less than two centuries, and above all, it has been developed/intensified over the long-term by emergency laws and administrative procedures.

Today, the "Gens du Voyage" are therefore those that hold a *livret de circulation*, which is deemed to reflect a more or less regular family mobility and which "gives the right" to dwell in the areas with facilities provided by the 1990 *Besson law* ("*aires de stationnements*"), where they exist.[3]

NGOs retain that one third of the Gens du Voyage never travels, one third occasionally travels and one third regularly travels. Whether very occasional or reg-

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[3] The 1990 *Besson law*, revised in 2000, states that all communes of over 5000 inhabitants must have a "reception area" for the "Gens du Voyage". As of today, 25 years after its adoption, only half of the French communes comply with this law.

ular, the mobility of the Gens du Voyage is in no way random or continuous. From year to year, their "journeys" consist of round trips between few places (Humeau, 1995):

– A base where they live for most of the year (private land, family land, camp-site or other…), a territory where the families have often been settled for numerous generations.

– Locations for professional activities and/or community meetings (market-places in tourist areas during the holidays, fruit and vegetable gathering in the summer, grape harvesting time in autumn, Pentecostal assemblies, pilgrimages, etc.).

When a family has the possibility of carrying out its economic activities permanently in its habitual place of residence, the "journey" will only concern family events (feasts, marriages, funerals, visits, holidays…). The mobility of the Gens du Voyage has therefore nothing to do with perpetual nomadism: all the families have very strong bonds with the territory that they consider their place of origin.

If we consider the average estimate of 400 000 Roma/Gypsies in France, we can observe that only just over half (about 250 000 persons) have the status of "Gens du Voyage".[4] For example, a large number of Gitans from the south of France have been living in old urban districts for several generations (Perpignan, Montpellier…), just like the "Roma of Paris/Kalderash" who live in houses (which they often own) in the Paris suburbs, etc. It is therefore important to underline that nearly half of the French Roma/Gypsies are not concerned by this specific legislation.[5] But the latter may however be subject to discrimination too, especially by the institutions. Indeed, beyond their historical, cultural, socio-economic and administrative diversity, what the Roma/Gypsies have in common is that they are subject, daily or occasionally according to the local situation, to a classification *that they try to escape from*. Not because they are "ashamed" of their "ethnic affiliation", but because the classification that has been *forced* on them for several generations (in order to better control them and keep them away) does not correspond to their own way of defining themselves.

In this context, the strategies implemented by different Roma/Gypsy family groups to improve their local integration and to guarantee the legitimacy of their presence are highly diverse, according to the place and the period. They are perpetual adaptation strategies that are developed in close connection with the environment. Some successfully adapt, others have great difficulty and find themselves relegated to the legal and spatial margins of a country that has nonetheless been theirs for centuries ("forever" from their own point of view). Relegated to a position of "second-class citizens", the latter encounter several obstacles in their attempt to access basic legal rights (Robert, 2007). From this point of view, and even if they have very little in common, their difficulties are similar to those ex-

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[4] This is an extrapolation from the official data only concerning individuals over 16 years of age holding a *livret de circulation* (FAP, 2006).
[5] And vice versa, not all the "Gens du Voyage" are Roma or Gypsies: some of them have this administrative status only for business purposes.

perienced by other Roma family groups who have arrived in France more recently.

2.3 "Migrant Roma" in slums: the making of exclusion

2.3.1 The re-emergence of a public problem

The presence in French cities of those that we nowadays call "migrant Roma" is nothing new. In autumn 1989, a slum inhabited by newly arrived families from Romania was formed in Nanterre (a western Paris suburb). Over the years, these pioneers (mostly from the western regions of Romania, on the borders with Yugoslavia and Hungary) were gradually joined by their kin, but they did not constitute a sufficiently visible population to cause any real concern to the political spheres or the media.

From 2002, with the opening of negotiations with Romania and Bulgaria in order for them to become members of the European Union, and at the same time the suppression of the visas for nationals of these countries who wanted to stay as "tourists" (for a maximum of three months) in the Schengen area, the Romanian and Bulgarian emigration towards western Europe (Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Germany), has taken on a new dimension. It is estimated today that between 10% and 20% of the Romanian population has chosen to leave for a western European or North American country during the last twenty years.[6] Those that have progressively been classified as "Roma migrants" are only a small minority of these emigrants. Some of these families define themselves as "Roma" (in Romanes) or "*ţigani*" (in Romanian/Bulgarian), others do not. Indeed, "ethnic" affiliation is not the main characteristic of this population that ought better to be defined by its life conditions and consequently its visibility in urban space: these are impoverished families of European origin who collectively occupy lands or buildings without any right nor title (slums and squats) and live practising an informal economy.

In 2005 the organization Romeurope estimated the number of "migrant Roma" in France to be "in the order of several thousand at the most", mostly present in the Paris region and the Lyon urban area. Several years later, the number was estimated to be between "10 000 and 15 000" throughout the entire country" (*2009-2010 report on the Roma migrants' situation in France*). Today, estimates remain the same, around 15-20 000 people. Following an adjustment between 2002-2006, these figures mainly refer to the same family groups that have been present in France for many years. This is confirmed by the field data when studies are carried out to obtain information on when the people arrived, or more precisely, when they *first* arrived in France: most of them declare between 2002 and 2006.

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[6] 2.1 million people according to Eurostat in 2007, the OCDE estimated the number of Romanian emigrant workers at 3 million in 2012, mainly in Italy and Spain (OCDE, 2012). Some allude to 4 million "expatriates".

In the first half of the Nineties, the image of "on the run" or "exiled" Roma was widespread. The first NGOs emerged, such as the ASAV association in Nanterre in 1989, the *"Mission Rom"* by Médecins du Monde in the Paris suburbs and the *Comité National Droits de l'Homme Romeurope* in October 1990. Seen as "outcasts" in their country of origin for centuries, subjected to "forced settlement" under Communism and victims of mass discrimination (Pons, 2005), the Roma were to resume their "journey" that had started a thousand years ago (Marushiakova & Popov, 2008). Their emigration was therefore presented as disconnected from the other east-European migratory movements undertaken for economic reasons. This exotic and/or victimary perception, which was widely shared by the NGOs and local activists (Chaix, 2008), very quickly faded away within the institutions. From 1994, the requests for asylum by Romanian citizens have been promptly dealt with (two weeks), and almost all of them (over 99% of the cases) have been rejected. In 1998, the French State once and for all deprived the Romanians of access to political asylum, according to the logic that several years later determined the formulation of the concept of the "safe country of origin" (December 2003). From "asylum seekers" to "undocumented persons" ("*sans-papier*"), the perception of these migrants therefore changed progressively. Within an electoral context[7] marked by the issues of "insecurity" (Terral, 2004) and "selective immigration" (Weil, 2005), the "Romanians" (Roma and non-Roma initially confused) have been seen negatively as illegal and undesirable people, living in the best of cases by begging, if not by stealing, prostitution and looting parking metres.[8]

However, the putting into perspective of the families' migratory strategies and dynamics highlights a situation that is very similar to that of numerous European migrants during the last century. Firstly, their departure is not so much an "escape" or an "exodus" but a choice made for economic reasons, and in most cases coupled with a desire (at least initially) to return to their home country (Reyniers, 1993; Benarrosh, 2009). From this point of view, "Roma" emigration seems deeply integrated in the vast migratory flows that developed between former Communist Europe, characterized by "economic transition", and the western European or North American countries (Black, 2010). In this respect, it must be remembered that the emigration rate among the "Roma" of Romania is perfectly identical to the national Romanian rate, oscillating between 10% and 20% according to the estimates (Olivera, 2011).

Secondly, it seems very difficult for anyone who visits the so-called "Roma camps" to detect any collective project of "community regrouping": it is rather a practical *necessity* in an immensely restricting (indeed hostile) hosting context for people with few socio-economic means, as experienced by many other immigrants in a more recent past, such as the builders of the big French slums during the years 1960-1970, from Spain, Portugal and Maghreb. Like the latter, the

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[7] At the 2002 presidential elections, the extreme-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen qualified for the second round with 17% of the votes.
[8] From 2002, the image of the "Roma Mafia networks" has often been in the headlines.

"Roma" families live together on the same site not because of their "ethnic belonging", but because they come from the same towns and villages, and in most cases, have neighbourhood and/or parental ties. Rather than seeking "recognition of their cultural identity", these people develop as soon as they can strategies of dispersal and invisibilization (Urba-Rom, 2012). Finally, although there are similarities with the immigrants that occupied the slums in the years 1950-1960-1970, their profile is also more similar to the more recent forms of transnational circulation by which numerous migrants try to establish themselves on several territories (several "settlements") linked together by a circulation area of which they attempt to exploit resources (Diminescu 1999, Tarrius 2001 & 2002, Maisongrande 2013).

The "Roma migrants" therefore show migratory strategies and dynamics that are wide-spread, indeed banal, today as in the past. Consequently, in the media and the political sphere as well in public opinion, there is often a complete misunderstanding of their migrations, as well as of their "cultural identity". The "Roma migrants" are not seen as poor workers migrating for economic reasons but as "marginal nomads", requiring the implementation of specific policies of exclusion and/or inclusion. The (re)construction of a prototype picture of "Roma people" during the last twenty years on the part of the institutions and of several NGOs has greatly contributed to the idea of a population kept from centuries "on the margins of modern Europe" and which has therefore accumulated deficiencies in all spheres of "integration" (schooling, work, health, housing, etc.). It is forgotten, for example in the case of families from Romania and branded as "Roma migrants", that almost all of them have a home in their country of origin (house or apartment) and that most of the adults had an education and experience of wage labor, at least until the 1990s. It is not necessary, therefore, to go back to the Middle Ages to understand the reasons for their emigration but it is sufficient to measure the socio-economic damages caused by the decline of the Communist regime in the 1980s, followed by the brutal implementation of an unbridled market economy during this painful (and never-ending) "economic transition" that started in 1990 (Stiglitz, 2002).

Nonetheless, "migrant Roma" are usually seen as transhistorical outcasts whose "reinsertion" needs the implementation of massive and specific measures – some NGOs, for example, see the local housing projects as an "aid to sedentarization"... For social services that are subject to budget restrictions and management efficiency policies (Chauvière, 2011) and that are caught in an agonizing context of global shortage in all sectors (housing, work, health, education, etc.), it might ultimately seem preferable not to take into consideration the presence of these families. For their part, the local and national institutions overwhelmingly choose to maintain the practices of rejection, eviction of the dwellings, return to the country of origin or, at best, not providing access to the services of common rights (Delépine & Lucas, 2008).

2.3.2 Living on the fringes of the city: the Hanul Platz example (Saint-Denis)

If the NGOs prefer to use the terms "*terrains*" (plots) and the authorities "*campements illégaux*" ("illegal camps"), the occupants use the word *platz* to refer to their dwelling place. Whether it is a squatted building, a slum of shacks made out of recycled materials and/or a site with old salvaged caravans, the *platz* is a site that is illegally occupied collectively and that may group together several families or several hundreds of individuals. This term is recent and peculiar to migration – perhaps it has been inspired by the word "*place*" used by the French Gypsies to describe their collective place of settlement (authorized or not) – and the term has no sense for those without any migratory experience.

The example of the *platz* called "*Hanul*"[9] in Saint-Denis provides a better understanding of the characteristics of such a place. The *Hanul*, like many other "illegal camps", is located in a no man's land. The main entry to the *platz* gives onto a five-carriage road (without a pedestrian crossing), and is surrounded by abandoned factories and wastelands – the first house in the direction of the city is over 900 metres away. 200 people live there, that is to say about 50 families. The *platz* is made up of a single "road", 300 metres long and ranges from 15 to 40 metres wide. Jammed between the railway tracks (RER, Transilien and Eurostar) on the one side and the surrounding walls of a company on the other, the place is overlooked by the viaduct of the A86 highway (2x4 carriageways) under which some of the dwellings have been built.

In a context of constant eviction of the so-called "Roma camps" for over ten years, this slum's lifespan is longer than normal. Founded in 2000-2001, it was not evicted until summer 2010. Moreover, the inhabitants benefited from an occupation agreement signed in 2003 with the mayor of Saint-Denis, which provided for the installation of sanitary facilities (showers and portable toilets), a water point at the entrance to the site and garbage collection. The children could also attend school in the city and intense activities were carried out by NGOs (volunteers) to provide support for the dwellers in various spheres. The occupiers for their part undertook "not to allow the slum to expand". If, until 2010, the *Hanul* situation was relatively unusual for its long-term duration (nowadays, it is rare for an "illegal Roma camp" to last more than one year in the Paris area)[10], this *platz* is exemplary in more ways than one.

First, the material conditions of the dwellings of the families are similar to those of other slums. On both sides of the single road, the inhabitants have built shacks made out of recycled materials picked up here and there during their urban peregrinations (battens, boards, pallets, doors and windows, tarpaulins, rolls of carpets or linoleum, corrugated iron sheets or PVC sheets for covering, etc.). Some of these families were able to buy old caravans (not mobile) to which they

[9] "Resting place/hostel" in Romanian.
[10] The growth rate of evacuations has not stopped rising since 2007. Today, some family groups may be subjected to dozens of expulsions in one year. This acceleration does not seem to have diminished since the change of government in 2012(Goossens, 2013).

added a canopy which could be opened or closed according to the season. These extensions serve as a living space, such as a reception area and kitchen, since the caravan is only for sleeping. Residential stability has encouraged the continuous improvement and furnishing of these dwellings, according to the luck of finding salvaged materials and to the dwellers' dexterity; some of them have even built verandas with double-glazing... The electricity produced by generators makes it possible to have a multitude of satellite dishes and the almost continuous broadcast of Romanian TV channels. As for all *platz*, the layout of the caravans and shacks demonstrates extensive knowledge of how to *live* in spaces that could be considered as "non-places" (Augé, 1992), the comfort (relative, of course) and the cleanliness of the private space clashing sharply with the exterior and the access of the "camp".

Second, as in other "Roma camps", the inhabitants of the *Hanul* are not a homogeneous group. Although they are all Romanian citizens and, for the most part, call themselves Roma since they speak Romanes, they come from different regions and they have followed different paths under the Communist regime and after its fall. The first settled here after having experienced other slums in Seine-Saint-Denis during the Nineties. They come from villages or small towns in the region of Timişoara (department of Timis), in the west of Romania, and some of them had already experienced cross-border transfers during the Eighties (mostly towards Yugoslavia or Hungary). These families lived mainly in rural areas, in a diversified linguistic and religious environment, with a historical presence of Hungarians, Serbs or Swabians (German speakers). Another family group comes from the Danube Delta region, at the eastern end of the country, in particular from the industrial cities of Tulcea, Galaţi, Braila and the surrounding areas.

The lands of origin of these main groups inhabiting the *Hanul* therefore correspond to historical regions with different cultural influences and highly diverse socio-economic and agricultural systems: the Banat of Timişoara was under Austrian and Hungarian domination from the beginning of the XVIII century and the Dobroudja (Tulcea and the Danube Delta) was under Ottoman rule until 1878. No matter what is generally said about the Roma or Gypsies (communities "outside of time and space"), the *Hanul* families are an integral part of this historical and territorial diversity, and rather than linking back to a common ethnicity, they refer to their region of origin and their family bonds to delimit the group of their own kind and to distinguish themselves from the others (Olivera, 2010). The cohabitation of these two groups in the same *platz* is definitely a default solution and neither a collective choice nor a traditional "way of life".

Over the years, in the *Hanul* as elsewhere, some people have managed to leave the slum for more permanent housing, others have moved back to their country of origin, still others have moved to another *platz* for personal reasons etc. The anxiety-provoking picture of the "Roma ghettos" that have been transplanted in a single block from the country of origin to our suburbs does not, therefore, correspond to any reality. The families of the *platz* do not live in this way in their home country. Those who live in the poverty-stricken "Gypsy neighbourhoods" of Romania and Bulgaria as they are presented in the media generally do not have the

means to emigrate. In other words, the slums do not come from elsewhere, they are a product of the city, here and now.

2.3.3 Forms of expulsion policies

At the beginning of July 2010, the police evacuated the *Hanul* and the shacks were razed to the ground by bulldozers. The operation can be seen as a symbol of the "government's firmness" in the matter of the struggle against "illegal immigration" and the "eradication of illegal settlements", a will reasserted a few weeks later by President N. Sarkozy in a public speech in Grenoble.[11] The oldest "Roma camp" in France was therefore "dismantled", putting an end to ten years of residential stability for its inhabitants. If, thanks to its intense media coverage the "Roma issue" of summer 2010 had a tremendous impact (the Minister for the Interior B. Hortefeux announced at the end of the month of August that "128 illegal camps" had been dismantled in one month), the policy of systemic evacuation of the slums and the expulsion of the "Roma" to their countries of origin was nothing new.

Since the beginning of the Nineties, the objective of the institutions had been to expel those "unwelcome" people and, with only few exceptions, the authorities (State and municipalities) had zero tolerance towards these new slums. Moreover, since the establishment in 2006 of an annual "quota" of expulsions to be achieved by the services concerned (25 000 in 2006, 36 000 in 2012), the Romanian and Bulgarian nationals – essentially the occupants of the "camps" – have represented a third of those "expelled".

Until January 2007, the lack of a residence permit for a stay of over the three-months as a "tourist" was sufficient reason for expulsion. Following the entry of Romania and Bulgaria into the European Union, the administration was forced to find new justifications for expelling these EU citizens. As from spring 2007, the occupants of the "Roma camps" were again served with expulsion orders on the grounds that in the absence of sufficient legal income they represented "the risk of an unreasonable burden for the French welfare system". This clause, which already existed in the *Code de l'Entrée et du Séjour des Etrangers et du Droit d'Asile*, had never been applied to expel a EU citizen until that time. Since 2007, it has become an almost systematic motivation used for sending Romanian and Bulgarian citizens back to their countries. At the same time, the establishment of a

[11] This "Grenoble speech" took place in mid-July 2010, after two completely unconnected events. Following the death of a young in a so-called "sensitive neighbourhood", there were several nights of urban riots in Grenoble, while 200 kms away, in the centre of France (Saint-Aignan) there were scuffles involving Gens du Voyage after the death of one of their members when he tried to force his way through a police checkpoint. The speech openly associated immigration with insecurity. N. Sarkozy declared his intention to "wage war […] against racketeers and delinquents" and at the same time drove "Roma" to the fore of the political scene as an example of "the stalemate of integration after 50 years of insufficiently regulated immigration". Totally confusing (wittingly or not?) the French Gypsies with the migrant Roma, President N. Sarkozy seized the opportunity to denounce the existence of "illegal Roma camps" which had to be "eradicated".

"transitory regime" against Romanians and Bulgarians (an opportunity made available by the European treaties to each member state at the time of entry into the Union of a new country), which drastically limits access to legal employment, confines these families to the grey economy (gathering recycling materials on the streets, street vending, undeclared work, etc.), and consequently prevents them from obtaining the necessary legal resources...

These measures have often been considered useless, even irrational. Why was this small and stable population (around 15 000 people since 2006-2007) kept in a state of vagrancy and material precariousness for several years and then subjected to a costly policy of expulsion, when these European citizens have inviolable freedom of movement and come back to the same territories several days or weeks after their expulsion to their country of origin? The legal framework, which has been continuously adapted over time, does in fact have an implacable administrative logic and political coherence. Within a context of generalized shortage (real or imagined), everything is done to keep these European citizens, deemed "difficult to integrate" because of their supposed ethnic belonging, far from the "common right": the laws, circulars and directives, which are often combined with the impromptu practices of the operators at the desk (Spire, 2008; Gabarro, 2013), form an efficient control device, and at the same time keep these "unwanted" people away.

Explicit or implicit, the category of "migrant Roma" is therefore performative, in the sense that it simultaneously motivates *and* justifies exclusion. And thus, for over fifteen years we have been able to observe the enhancement of the legal exclusion of second-class European citizens (Cousin, 2013), in a global logic of *containment*. The establishment of the OSCAR file *(Outil de Statistique et de Contrôle de l'Aide au Retour)* is the outcome of this logic. Also called "Biometric Roma File" by the NGOs that condemn its adoption, OSCAR has made it possible since 2010 to collect the identification data (civil status and fingerprints of the ten fingers from the age of 14) of the beneficiaries of the *Aide au Retour* provided by the French State, initially in order to limit "fraud". However, this device has been the main tool used by institutions for deporting Romanians and Bulgarians since 2007 on the occasion of the evacuations of the "camps".[12] Furthermore, the government had foreseen using the file in its "fight against the abuse of the short stay (less than three months as a tourist) in order to remain in France", a provision that explicitly targeted the Romanian and Bulgarian "Roma" in the "camps". The ultimate objective was to have a legal tool that would efficiently limit the freedom of movement of some European citizens within the Community space, so as to prevent them from leaving their country of origin (a kind of "house arrest").

We can see here a political and administrative expedient that had already been experimented from the beginning of the XX century vis-à-vis the "Gypsies" in Europe as a whole. As for the "Gypsy problem" in 1900 (Asséo, 2003), the "Roma issue" in 2000 in France takes place in a wider European framework, charac-

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[12] In 2009, out of 15 236 "assisted returns" ("voluntary", "humanitarian" or "integration") delivered to foreigners, over 12 000 were Romanian and Bulgarian, for a total of 9 million Euros.

terized by the (re)creation of a specific category of nationals/citizens on the basis of ethnic belonging, target of specific public policies.

The migrant Roma living in "illegal camps" continuously adapt, anticipate their evacuations, and some manage to escape the slum for good. Others continue to be subjected to forced vagrancy in the same territory. Locally, some families "benefit" from "integration projects" which can often be seen to pursue the logic of encampment. At the end of 2007, an "integration village" was set up close to the *Hanul* and it hosted about fifteen families selected after the evacuation of another *platz* in Rue Campra, located only a few hundred meters away. About 500 individuals lived there, 90 of which were selected to "take part in the project" (19 families out of the 125 registered at the time). The others had been sent back to Romania or had (re)built other slums in the vicinity. This sorting logic and the grouping of "beneficiaries" within guarded sites where they engage upon a linear "integration process" which, very often, does not take into consideration the heavy structural constraints on the social workers as well as on the institutions involved, reproduced a *camp*, this time officially organized by the authorities (Legros, 2010).

2.4   Conclusion

This rapid overview of the situation(s) of the Roma and Gypsies in France has enabled us to measure the extent of the diversity among these groups, while underlining the exceptional perpetuity of the public policies issued against them for over a century.

Today the label of "Roma", like the terms "Gypsies" or "Nomads" in the past, aims to create a cognitive, and then legal and spatial separation among fellow citizens. Indeed, those who are designated as "Roma/Gypsies" are *people from here*, mostly national or EU citizens, and not foreigners that are easily distinguishable. The XIX-century Gypsiology, updated during the last twenty years *via* the "promotion of the Roma minority" policies,[13] made it possible to characterize these families under the double seal of both ethnic ("Indian origin") and social ("transhistoric outsiders") otherness. The "inclusion of a discriminated minority" rhetoric professed by the European and International institutions (UNDP, IMF, World Bank), and also by important NGOs such as the Open Society Institute of the "millionaire philanthropist" G. Soros, may have finally separated the fate of "Roma people" from the socio-economic upheavals of the years 1990-2000, upheavals that were marked by the advent of the neoliberal order (Washington Consensus) and the increase in inequality, both in the east and west of Europe (Olivera, 2012).

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[13] Within these institutions, the change of term (from Gypsy to Roma) has, in fact, brought no remission to the question of the classification process of these social groups, the quantitative development of "expertise" has steered clear of these issues that have been disputed for over thirty years by the different social sciences in this field.

In this context, have the developments in the mass media and the advent of the "information era" (Castells, 1998) given a chance to those who are up against stereotyping or classifications from which they are trying to extricate themselves so as to facilitate their local integration and the exercise of their legal rights?

From a historical point of view, in France as in other countries, the Roma/Gypsy example causes perplexity, if not doubts. Indeed, the creation of the Gypsy archetype in the XIX century seems to be inseparable from the widespread emergence of mass literature and the popular press which, in mixing together different categories of stereotypes, have rendered the myth of "the nomad and marginal Gypsy" more powerful than the local realities which are infinitely more varied. (Mayall, 2009; Bogdal, 2011)

At the beginning of the XXI century, the exaggerated importance given to the "Roma issue" in the European political and media spheres seems to have (re)created an irrational collective anxiety towards these so-called "internal foreigners" (Appadurai, 2006). In France, apart from the specialists, no-one used the term "Roma" ten years ago. Today, everyone "knows" why "the Roma cause problems" and why they *must be* the target of specific public policies (of selective inclusion and/or global exclusion).

At the same time, like all their fellow citizens, Roma and Gypsies go with the times and use the new communication tools in highly varied ways. Whether they are migrating or not, precarious or not, illiterate or educated, men or women, they exploit the resources offered by these tools, just like everyone else (see Part 2 of the book). The uses can be recreational, individual or collective, administrative, cultural, etc. If, in many cases, they do not aim at being recognized by public opinion as members of an "European ethnic minority" and consequently only rarely correspond to what some expect from a "discriminated minority having to fight for recognition", these uses are indeed no less *useful* and *efficient* in their daily lives: to foster social life among their fellows as also to create bonds with the environment. Their use of ICTs seems ultimately to correspond to a much more pragmatic definition of social integration and citizenship than that, idealist and restrictive at the same time, proposed by the elites of the so-called "mainstream society". More generally, the practices and strategies of the Roma/Gypsies, today and yesterday, invite us to examine further the concrete and local forms of integration, instead of reproducing the disembodied rhetoric of an abstract and normative "inclusion".

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3

Contradictory Forces: The Situation of Roma People in Italy

by *Veronica Riniolo*

3.1   Introduction

Much has been written on the situation of Roma[1] in Italy: several reports, official documents and works of research have confirmed a serious and worrying framework with regard to Roma and their living conditions. Exclusion, discrimination, prejudice, lack of access to basic services, low educational levels, and widespread unemployment are analysed from different perspectives, disciplines and by different actors both at the academic and policy levels (Zincone 2001, Sigona 2002, Sigona 2005b, Ambrosini and Tosi, 2007; Bezzecchi, Pagani and Vitale 2008, Colacicchi, 2008; Open Society Institute, 2008, Ambrosini and Tosi 2009, Vitale 2009, Ambrosini, 2010; Enar, 2011; ECRI, 2012, FRA 2012, Amnesty International 2013).

Despite the persistent socio-economic exclusion and discrimination of Roma communities in Italy, the situation is in continual evolution, with new initiatives and actions which may impact – positively or negatively – on this exclusionary framework. Specifically, the presence of two different tendencies is worth underlining. On the one hand, at present in Italy a part of civil society (both Roma and gagè[2]) and public institutions is struggling to defend the basic human rights of this non-recognized minority and to improve their living conditions. Their action is supported by 1) a strong legislative framework against discrimination,[3] 2) a Na-

[1] The term Roma refers to a variety of groups of people, who describe themselves as Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Sinti and other names. This term is commonly used in EU policy documents, discussions and generally in the literature. In Italy there are three main communities: Roma, Sinti and Caminanti, that have different dialects, cultures and legal status, and specific linguistic characteristics.
[2] The term "gagè" is used by Roma people to indicate non-Roma people.
[3] D.Lgs. 9 July 2003, no. 215, *Attuazione della direttiva 2000/43/CE per la parità di trattamento tra le persone indipendentemente dalla razza e dall'origine etnica* and D.Lgs. 9 July 2003, no. 216,

tional Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities and 3) a recent Resolution of the Commission for Human Rights of the Italian Senate.[4]

On the other hand Italy is characterized by a climate of antiziganism and discrimination with an increasing spread of xenophobic attitudes in metropolitan suburbs (see also Chapter 1, Alietti), caused by the fear of having to share the same urban space with "the other", as embodied by the Roma (Bauman 2007). This is in line with a xenophobic wave that is affecting different European states (Beck 2012, Martinelli 2013), as the spread of several far-right parties testifies.[5] Moreover a securitarian approach is guiding the majority of choices adopted at the municipal level by public administrators: repeated forced evictions of settlements and camps, municipality ordinances and initiatives targeted solely against the Roma minorities, such as signs and posters discouraging begging. All these initiatives are hindering any process of Roma integration[6] in the Italian territory (ERRC 2008, Riniolo 2010). At the national level too some decisions have hindered the process of Roma inclusion, such as the so-called "Nomad Emergency" ("Emergenza Nomadi") declared in 2008 by the Italian government.

Therefore the Italian situation deserves to be attentively analysed in order to grasp the recent evolution of one of the most debated issues and hot topics in Italy, i.e. the presence of Roma and their coexistence with the gagè, even though Roma represent only about the 0.22% of the entire Italian population.

This Chapter is structured as follows: the first section presents the general framework regarding the condition of Roma in Italy, bearing in mind that precise data on Roma are not available. It also deals with some of the main challenges and problems that Roma people are facing in Italy nowadays. The second section focuses on the evolution of the normative framework, with a specific focus on the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities and initiatives carried out by other actors of society. Finally a reflection on open challenges to be addressed is presented.

Attuazione della direttiva 2000/78/CE per la parità di trattamento in materia di occupazione e di condizioni di lavoro.

[4] The Human Rights Commission of the Italian Senate, on the 10th of March 2015 concluded the examination of Act n. 456 on the implementation of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma communities in Italy and on the overcoming of camps as housing solution for Roma by approving Resolution Doc. XXIV-ter, n. 9. http://www.senato.it/leg/17/BGT/Schede/docnonleg/30030.htm

[5] To name but a few: the Sweden Democrats (*Svenska demokrat*) in Sweden; the National Front in France; the Freedom Party in Austria; the Northern League in Italy, the Progress Party in Norway, the Finns Party in Finland.

[6] The concept of integration – that will be widely employed in the present chapter – needs to be analytically defined in order to avoid a vague and evocative use of it simply as something "desirable". For the purpose of the current chapter integration is defined as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society" (Penninx 2013). This definition envisages two main actors who both play a crucial role in integration: the majority of society and migrant/minority groups.

3.2   Roma in Italy: main challenges and problems

The presence of Roma in Italy can be traced back to the XIV century and there are several documents to prove this (Mustafa 2009). A part of Roma people has lived in Italy for centuries, other groups have only recently arrived: therefore the demographic presence of Roma is the result of various migration flows, which started in the fourteenth century and have continued to the present day as a consequence of the war in the Balkans in the Nineties and the EU enlargement to the East (with flows particularly from Romania and Bulgaria).

Data on Roma are not precise due to several problems. Among others, Roma fear to register in official censuses due to the stigma linked to their identity (Ambrosini 2010; Kostadinova 2011). Moreover there are problems in collecting ethnic data, since in some cases national legislation forbids it (Ambrosini, 2010, Coses 2010). According to the Council of Europe and the Survey of the Senate[7] on the Italian territory there are about 170,000-180,000 Roma people and about half of them are Italian citizens. Roma people of all age groups represent about 0.22%-0.25% of the total Italian population.

Despite the absence of precise data, according to the National Strategy for the inclusion of Roma, the following framework may be depicted. Approximately 70,000 are Italian citizens whose first records date back to the fourteenth century and are distributed throughout the Country. About 90,000 Roma people come from the Balkan region (Non-EU citizens) and arrived in Italy in the 90's, especially after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. This group has mainly settled in Northern Italy. The third – and more recent – group of migration is made up of Roma people with Romanian and Bulgarian nationality (EU citizens), who mainly live in large cities, such as Milan, Turin, Rome, Naples, Bologna, Bari, and Genoa.

Roma people have specific characteristics which distinguish them from the majority of the population and this is particularly striking with regard to their demographic characteristics: for example the percentage of Roma children under the age of 16 (45%) is three times higher than the national average (15%) for the same age group and the percentage of over sixty-year-old Roma people (0.3%) is equivalent to one-tenth of the national average for the same age group (25%).[8]

Moreover the Roma communities living in Italy are characterized by a great heterogeneity in terms of groups, dialects and specific linguistic varieties and cultures. With regard to the legal status there are also substantial differences: as mentioned above some Roma are Italian citizens; others are citizens of other EU countries (e.g. Romania or Bulgaria); still others are non-EU citizens or foreigners who were granted asylum or subsidiary protection; finally there is also the vulnerable category of those who are (de facto) stateless people, born in Italy from stateless parents.

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[7] Special Commission for the protection and promotion of human rights, entitled, "Final report of the survey on the status of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Italy", dated February 9, 2011.
[8] Data from the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities.

The Roma communities are not concentrated in a specific area but are present in a scattered manner throughout the Country. Specifically in Italy we can identify three different groups: Roma people who live in all the regions across the country; Sinti people who are mainly in Northern Italy and Caminanti people who have been living in the municipality of Noto (Sicily) since the late fifties. With regard to the language, Roma communities in Italy speak Romanì dialects, while Caminanti have adopted the local dialect.

After this brief snapshot of the presence of Roma communities on the Italian territory and of their main characteristics in terms of demographic structure, language, legal status and so forth, it is worth recalling the main challenges and problems that these communities face at present.

Low educational attainments, labour exclusion, spatial segregation, limited access to health services,[9] xenophobia, anti-gypsyism, and multiple discrimination are the main problems involving Roma communities. Though all these problems are relevant, due to limitations of space the following sections will address the field of education and the topics of spatial segregation and discrimination.

3.3   Access to education: data of a failure[10]

Several problems affect Roma pupils in the Italian school system and the situation is particularly critical. Notably low levels of enrolment, high levels of early school leaving, and several cases of school failure are the major problems affecting Roma students and data clearly show this serious situation. In Italy Roma under 18 years of age are about 70,000 and those in compulsory schooling are about 30,000 (Tagliaventi 2014). With reference to the school year 2013/2014 Roma pupils in the Italian school system were only 11,657 that is about 1/3 of the 30,000 in compulsory schooling (ISMU 2015). These data should be read carefully since there are some problems in the system of data collection of the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR): the questionnaires used to collect data are not clear and do not allow the comparison of some variables (Tagliaventi 2014).[11] Moreover some families prefer not to declare their ethnic belonging, due to fear of stigmatization (*ibidem*). This said, the number of Roma students – 11,657 – is still incredibly low and it raises many concerns. Even more worrying is the presence of Roma students in the secondary school: according to official data of the Ministry of Education in the school year 2013/2014 only 174 adolescents attended secondary school (second level).

[9] For an in-depth analysis of Roma health conditions in Italy see among others Monasta 2011.
[10] Data of this section are those drawn up by the Ministry of Education (MIUR) and from two reports: 1) "Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. L'eterogeneità dei percorsi scolastici. Rapporto Nazionale A.s. 2012/2013", Quaderni ISMU 2014 and 2) "Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. Tra difficoltà e successi. Rapporto Nazionale A.s. 2013/2014", Quaderni ISMU 2015.
[11] Moreover the questionnaire still uses the term "nomad" instead or Roma, Sinti and Caminanti (RSC).

In addition to this the analysis of Roma school attendance since school year 2007/2008 highlights a constant and significant decrease in enrolled pupils in all orders and degrees of school with the exception of the Secondary school – First level (see Table 1).

Tabel 1 – Roma pupils in the Italian school system (2007/08 - 2013/14)

School year	Kindergarten	Primary school	Secondary school- First level	Secondary school- Second level	Total
2007/08	2.061	6.801	3.299	181	12.342
2008/09	2.171	7.005	3.467	195	12.838
2009/10	1.952	6.628	3.359	150	12.089
2010/11	2.054	6.764	3.401	158	12.377
2011/12	1.942	6.416	3.407	134	11.899
2012/13	1.906	6.253	3.215	107	11.481
2013/14	1.887	6.132	3.464	174	11.657
Var. % 2007/08-2013/14	*-8,4*	*-9,8*	*5,0*	*-3,9*	*-5,6*
Var.% 2013/14-2012/13	*-1,0*	*-1,9*	*7,7*	*62,6*	*1,5*

Source: Ismu elaboration on Miur data.

Some observations may be drawn from this diachronic comparison of data: first, during the last seven years there has been a general decrease in the total number of Roma pupils in the Italian education system (-5.6%): this decrease is particularly clear in primary school (-9.8%) and in kindergarten (-8.4%). Second, it is striking to observe the passage from primary school to secondary school: from 6132 pupils, to 3464 (First level) to only 174 (Second level). As mentioned above, due to some problems in data collection, data are not precise and probably more Roma attend secondary school than the number shown in this report. Nonetheless it is still significant to stress that the number of pupils falls significantly in the various school passages.

To conclude, data show the low impact of the inclusion strategy of Roma in education in the last few decades and, as stated in the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, there is need for an immediate intervention in this field since the exclusion of Roma from education hinders any process of inclusion in society.

3.4   Spatial segregation: camps and evictions

In Italy the term "camp" refers both to unauthorised camps and to camps set up by the local administrations. Generally they are both characterized by low living conditions for their inhabitants and difficult relationships with the majority of society (Tosi, 2009). The establishment of "temporary" camps for Roma people dates back to the 1980s, during which period several Italian regions, through regional laws, began to set up camps where Roma were supposed to live. The camp solution is underpinned by the mistaken perception of the nomadic lifestyle of Roma, which does not correspond to the Italian context, where only 3% of Roma still practise a nomadic life, mainly due to their work activities. Temporary camps worsen the housing conditions of Roma, forcing them to live in marginal urban areas. Indeed, camps are usually far from the city centres or in industrial zones and, therefore, also far from services and facilities. As Sigona states, the "nomad camps" preserve boundaries, avoid the encounter between Roma and gagé and keep Roma in a "non-place" which allows the maintenance of the *status quo* (Sigona 2005a: 270). Roma, differently from migrants, are the *internal enemy* instead of simply the foreigner (*ibidem*): they live in our cities, among us but separately, both symbolically and physically.

The numerous evictions of nomad camps are emblematic of this perception of Roma as an internal enemy. Evictions aim at making them invisible: they are *tolerated* only in marginalised areas where the majority of citizens do not see or meet them. As a consequence of their isolation, Roma do not exist as individuals but as a homogeneous groups – the "gypsy" – with all the stereotypes surrounding them (Sigona 2005a: 271).

According to recent data, about one third of the Roma and Sinti – whether Italian citizens or not – live in camps for "nomads" segregated from the rest of society and often do not even have access to the most basic facilities (ECRI 2012: 30).

Moreover, this is well described in a report where, with reference to authorised camps, it is stated that

these sites are often densely packed with containers, arranged in straight lines, each of which is intended to house up to four or five people. In the case of a container that is home to four people the average floor area per person is less than half that recommended by the Building Code standard; at the same time, the families concerned often have more members than the number of persons the container is officially intended to house. Although the general living conditions in the settlements are not insalubrious, this overcrowding poses clear health problems. Moreover, authorised settlements are often surrounded by a fence or even a wall that is higher than the average adult, and access is restricted solely to residents holding an identity badge; non-residents can enter the settlements only after showing an identity document to the guards on duty (ECRI 2012: 30-31)

These settlements are simultaneously the main Italian response to the question of housing for Roma and the main cause of tensions with residents as many events prove (see for example the eviction from Opera in Milan).[12]

To sum up, as many reports highlight, repeated evictions from informal camps undermine any effort towards social integration and violate basic human rights, exacerbating the marginalisation of individuals belonging to the weakest social groups. The idea itself of the surmounting of camps needs some clarification: the exit of those Roma still living in camps should be thought of as a gradual path toward their inclusion in all sections of civil life (labour market, education…) (Sigona 2005a: 292). More specifically, as Tosi affirms, it is important to foresee different solutions in line with the specificity of each situation and of the needs of the beneficiaries.[13]

3.5   Xenophobia, anti-gypsyism and discrimination

In Italy the Roma issue is a delicate and sensitive topic with wide-spread attitudes of denial and discrimination against them, boosted too by a political rhetoric based on security and order (Legros, Vitale 2011) and amplified by distorted information in the mass media. In particular the majority of society shows a very low level of knowledge of this minority (Arrigoni, Vitale 2008). The situation seems to get worse over time and limited improvements have been registered and there are several and documented cases of speeches of open hatred by Italian politicians (ERRC 2000, ECRI 2012). A recent and serious case regards an exponent of the Northern-League, who declared during a TV show that "Gypsies are the dregs of society".[14] This statement, which was condemned by a part of civil society while – at the same time – it was approved by another part, reflects a wide-spread attitude of hate against Roma communities which has constantly characterized Italy in the last few decades. For example, already in March 2010, the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the UN, Navi Pillay, condemned politicians for the propaganda of ideas based on racial superiority and ethnic hatred during her visit to Italy.[15] In 2011, Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, and his delegation, following their visit to Italy, expressed concern for the presence of racist and xenophobic political discourse in Italy, targeted notably against Roma and Sinti. In the report it is stated that "this type of discourse is a powerful vector of anti-Gypsyism in Italian society and as a result, it also offsets the benefits of social inclusion work for Roma and Sinti carried out around the country" (Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for

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[12] For the events of Opera and the evolution of eviction see Cottino 2009.

[13] For a more detailed discussion on housing solutions see Tosi 2009.

[14] This statement was pronounced by Lega Nord MEP Gianluca Buonanno, during the Italian TV show Piazza Pulita broadcasted on La7.

[15] See http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/HRchiefsvisittoItaly.aspx

Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to Italy from 26 to 27 May 2011).[16]

This "democratic racism", according to the Italian historian Bravi, may be traced back to the fascist regime in Italy: he maintains that the idea of "gypsy" nowadays widespread in our society does not differ at all from the definition given by the regime to justify the persecution of this group on an ethnic basis (Bravi 2009: 29). Roma culture is considered as something stable, static and not in transformation underestimating how and to what extent even Romani culture is constantly evolving in a sort of struggle between tradition and change (Alietti 2009).

The negative attitude of Italian citizens toward Roma is interestingly highlighted by two Eurobarometer surveys: in 2012 Italy and Cyprus were the only two Member States where an absolute majority of respondents (51% and 50%, respectively) did not agree that society could benefit from better integration of the Roma (Eurobarometer 2012). In line with this percentage, already in 2008 another Eurobarometer survey (2008) stressed that Italy, together with the Czech Republic, recorded the lowest level of acceptance of having a Roma neighbour.

3.6   The responses to the Roma issue in Italy: main policies and initiatives

This section addresses the policies (or "non-policies") which have regarded the Roma issue in the last few decades up to the present time in Italy.[17] This review shows how and to what extent Italy has never developed a coherent policy for Roma communities using an integrated approach (Vitale 2010: 7). Some changes, still with a lot of limitations, are taking place nowadays as a consequence of the adoption of the National Strategy for the inclusion of Roma in 2012 and these changes – with their strengths and weaknesses – will be analysed at the end of this section.

Before presenting the evolution of the normative framework, a premise is needed. As stated by Penninx (2014), analysing policies means taking into account *explicit policies* addressing the target group – in our case Roma people; policies not specifically addressing the target group – *mainstreaming policies* – such as those for education, health, the regulation of labour, which may exert a strong influence (positive or negative) on Roma integration; and finally "*non-policy response*", which is a policy in itself: avoiding the elaboration of a policy means avoiding any special responsibility for a specific group. The latter is what Bachrach and Baratz call *non-decision making*, which is the tendency to limit the scope of the decision-making process to "safe" issues (1962).

In addition to this, two dimensions of policymaking should be analysed: the *vertical dimension of policymaking* which deals with the relationships between

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[16] The report is available at https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1826921

[17] For reasons of space this is just a snapshot of their evolution and not a profound analysis of each document and initiative.

the national, regional and local levels; and the *horizontal dimension*, which is directly related to whether and how policies are implemented by other relevant actors, such as private institutions, NGOs, Roma organisations and any other civil society actors. These categories of analysis are the sphere of reference for the development of this section.

3.7 The evolution of the normative framework from the Sixties

Since the Sixties, at the national level, some fragmented interventions may be found, as reconstructed by Sigona (2005a) and Vitale (2010): in 1965 the Ministry of Public Education created special classes ("Lacio Drom") for "gypsies and nomads", successively abolished in 1982. In the Eighties two circulars of the Government addressed the issue focusing on the need to promote the education of Roma[18] and to guarantee the real equality of Roma with other citizens.[19] Until 2008, no other intervention was activated at the national level.

Then on the 21 May 2008 the Italian Government declared the "State of emergency in relation to the nomad settlements"[20] in three regions (Lombardy, Campania and Lazio) to which other two regions were added in 2009 (Piedmont and Veneto). This declaration conferred by legislation the role of special Commissioner to the Prefects and it was extended in 2010 and 2011. During this period one of the most visible actions was the censuses of the Roma living in these settlements and their fingerprinting, condemned by several bodies (ECRI 2012). In April 2013 the Supreme Court (Corte di Cassazione) declared unlawful the state of emergency closing one of the worst periods for Roma communities in Italy according to some NGOs and associations working for the respect of the basic human rights of Roma.[21]

Therefore, until the adoption of the National Strategy for the inclusion of Roma, which took place in 2012, *at the national level* a framework of *non-policy response has characterized the issue of Roma*: a jeopardized and incoherent frame of action has avoided dealing with the exclusion of Roma.

Beside this choice of non-intervention at the national level, and probably as an answer to the need to try to regulate the presence of Roma, other initiatives were carried out at the local and regional levels. At the local level at the end of the Sixties and at the beginning of the Seventies some "stop-over areas for nomads started to be set up in some municipalities in Northern Italy (such as Milan, Turin,

[18] Circular 204/1986.
[19] Circular 151/1985 by the Ministry of the Interior.
[20] Decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri 21 May 2008, "Dichiarazione dello stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio delle regioni Campania, Lazio e Lombardia."
[21] See for example Associazione 21 July Onlus http://www.21luglio.org/la-corte-di-cassazione-decreta-la-fine-dell-emergenza-nomadi/

Lucca) (Sigona 2005a).[22] Then from the Eighties some Italian regional administrations started to legislate in order to defend a supposed "right to nomadism" and to protect the so-called "nomadic culture", through a series of rules aimed at defining the procedures for the creation of authorised camps.[23] The underpinning perception of Roma as nomads has led to a solution based on this conviction, even though – as mentioned above – it did not correspond to the sedentary lifestyle of the majority of the Roma communities.[24]

The consequences of these choices are still apparent nowadays: spatial segregation, camps in marginal areas far from services and, if possible, far from the gagè. In addition to this, these solutions have rendered official the perception that all Roma are nomads and that they can live only separate from the majority of society (ERRC 2000: 11)

On the whole the analysis of Italian policies regarding Roma shows an absence of political will to formulate interventions able to address the gap between Roma and gagè (Sigona 2005a: 291). At the same time the lack of recognition of these minorities as active members of the social, economic and cultural context emerges. As Tosi states

the culturalization of the problem risks not recognizing that insertion and integration take place through access to the opportunities and resources that a society or territory offers to its citizens: houses, jobs, social services. The marginalization of Roma is first of all an excessive exclusion from these resources. This is linked to the role of policies which produce, distribute and regulate the access to these resources: social policies, housing policies, migration policies, and specific measures addressing Roma but also general welfare policies.[25] (Tosi, 2009: 203)

But contradictory forces are emerging: in opposition to recent securitarian and xenophobic trends, the Commission of Human Rights of the Italian Senate, through a resolution,[26] has declared the necessity of putting an end to authorized camps, foreseeing housing solutions which are in line with the European normative framework and with the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma communities, adopted by Italy in 2012.

This document undoubtedly represents a turning point in the Italian context: indeed with this strategy a break – at least officially – with previous responses to the Roma issue is stated. Firstly it aims at overcoming the emergency approach that has characterized all interventions both at the national, regional and local levels in the last few decades, as is well exemplified by the logic of nomad camps

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[22] For the reasons underpinning the decision to set up stop-over areas see Sigona 2005a.
[23] For a detailed analysis of Italian regional laws on "the protection of Roma and Sinti population" see Sordini 2012.
[24] According to some scholars, the nomadism theory is used to legitimise the marginalisation and segregation of Roma in Italy (Rizzin, Tavani 2009: 47). Moreover "the description of Roma as "nomads" is not only used in the service of segregating and infantilising Roma, but also in order to reinforce the popular idea that Roma are not Italians and do not belong to Italy" (ERRC 2000: 12)
[25] Translation from Italian to English by the Author of the current chapter.
[26] See footnote 32

and the repeated and forced evictions of settlements (AA.VV. 2015). These kinds of interventions should be substituted by long and medium-term actions. Secondly, and for the first time, Italy has adopted a coherent and unified approach for the elaboration of policies on the territory (*ibidem*). It also indicates the importance of favouring a cultural growth for the whole of society in order to favour the encounter of different cultures, which is often hindered by some media.

3.8 The National Strategy for the inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities

In Italy, a turning point in the way of addressing the Roma issue may be identified in the elaboration in 2012 of a *National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities* in response to the European Commission's Communication no. 173/2011 (*An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions). The main objective of the Strategy, as stated in the official document, is:

to promote equal treatment and social and economic inclusion of the RSC communities, while ensuring a lasting and sustainable improvement of their living conditions, making their accountability effective and permanent, as well as their participation in the social development, besides ensuring the enjoyment of citizenship-related rights, as envisaged in the Italian Constitution and international standards. (National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities)

The Strategy is based on an *inter-ministerial approach* aimed at involving different ministries and it has identified as National Focal Point (NFP) the Office for the promotion of equal treatment and for the removal of discrimination based on race or ethnic origin (acronym in Italian, UNAR). The governance system of the entire Strategy entails different tables and working groups as follows. Firstly, an Inter-Ministerial political Table, with the task of the political and institutional co-ordination of the Strategy. Secondly, a control room with Regions and Local Authorities with a *trait d'union* function and in mutual cooperation with the NFP with regard to those areas falling within the specific responsibilities of Local Authorities, involving representatives of the Conference of Region Presidents , the Union of Italian Provinces (UPI) and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI). Thirdly, the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti (RSC) Communities Forum, with trait d'union, dialogue and consultation functions with the NFP, the national Tables and the above-indicated control room, with respect to both the implementation of the Strategy and its periodic review and evaluation. Then, National Tables, constituted on the basis of the four priority axes of intervention –

education, labour, housing and healthcare[27] – coordinated by the respective Ministries concerned. The governance system is also enriched by Ad Hoc Working Groups, which could be set up to thoroughly examine some specific priority issues of immediate and crucial relevance for the implementation of this Strategy (such as the issue of the legal recognition of the RSC people). And finally, regional/local Tables, established on the territories with the two-fold aim of ensuring a synergic and a substantial implementation of this Strategy at the territorial level, besides carrying out a constant and widespread action of information, monitoring and awareness-raising with regard to the implementation of the respective objectives set out for each area (Regions, Provinces, Municipalities).

As mentioned above, this governance system testifies an attempt to establish for the first time a comprehensive and consistent approach to the Roma issue, which Italy has never adopted before. Nevertheless it is a strategic document that suggests what should be done but that has a limited operative impact as will be indicated in the next section. Moreover a report elaborated by associations and organisations of civil society on the implementation of this Strategy points out several weaknesses that need to be dealt with (A.A.V.V. 2015). Among these, the absence of coercive power and of independence of the National Contact Point (UNAR) (Riniolo 2010) represents a limitation in the operative implementation of the Strategy, as does also the lack of assignment of a specific budget for it. In addition to this, the difficult implementation of the document is also testified by the constitution of only 8 Regional Tables out of the 20 expected.[28] This hinders the effective application of the Strategy at the regional and local levels. Moreover the report criticises the top-down approach adopted in the definition and application of the document. The partial and mainly formal involvement of Roma shows how – in this case – participation assumes a merely rhetorical sense: indeed as highlighted by several authors, the relationship between participation and empowerment of citizens is not always univocal (Arnstein, 1969, Alietti, 2005, d'Albergo, 2010, Moini, 2012).[29]

In addition to this the Strategy – the report continues – lacks clear indications on how this document should be rendered operational in terms of responsibilities, communication between the vertical and the horizontal dimensions, monitoring of activities and so forth.

3.9   First concluding remarks

The situation of Roma in Italy, as indicated above, is undoubtedly evolving with different actors involved, both institutions and civil society. Initiatives are often in

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[27] These *main axes of intervention* correspond to the four thematic areas identified at the European level (COM 173/2011).

[28] According to the report elaborated by the organisations of civil society, at the beginning of April 2014 only 8 Regions (Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Liguria, Marche, Molise, Piedmont, Tuscany and Umbria) have formally constituted the Table (A.A.V.V. 2015).

[29] For an example of a participatory governance model see Marcaletti and Riniolo 2015.

contrast with one another: from inclusion projects to forced evictions, from declarations of "emergency" to strategies of medium and long-term impact. Very different actors are at the centre of the scene – from institutions to NGOs – while the Roma themselves are still far from playing an active role and their participation and mobilisation is still very limited.

In this evolving and contradictory context, the Roma issue which, to use the words of Legros and Vitale, is mainly an "urban issue" (2011), still represents a big problem both in terms of respect for their basic rights and in terms of the perception of this minority on the part of the majority of society. During the last decades the absence of a clear, coherent and effective political response has worsened this situation. In particular, some urgent challenges should be recalled. First, the recognition of the minority status for Roma as also put forward by the Italian National Strategy. In Italy, the main issue refers to the lack of recognition, by a comprehensive national legislation, of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti people as a minority (National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities)

The general concept of minority in Italy is linked to the linguistic peculiarities as laid down in Article 6 of the Italian Constitution: "The Republic protects linguistic minorities by means of appropriate measures". But Law No. 482/1999, which contains provisions to protect the historical and linguistic minorities, still excludes Roma people from its scope.[30] This lack of recognition of Roma as a minority is also due to the absence of their presence in a specific territory or region: as indicated above, Roma communities are widely spread over the entire Italian territory (Bonetti, Simoni, Vitale 2011). Even though several law proposals have been put forward, at present no results have been reached.[31]

Second, another urgent challenge is the need to stop the violation of the human rights of Roma as highlighted by several institutions and organizations in recent years.[32] Despite the existence of a strong normative framework on non-discrimination there is a gap between this framework and policy practice, i.e. how

[30] Italy does not recognise the Romani and Sinti languages among the historical-linguistic minorities protected at the level of full equality by Act No. 482/1999, Law 15 December 1999, n. 482, "Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche", published in *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 297, 20 December 1999.

[31] In 2008 an International Conference of the situation of Roma organized by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Social Security reaffirmed the need to recognise Roma as a minority but, after that declaration, no result has yet been reached.

[32] To mention but a few: United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), *Examination of reports submitted by States parties under Article 9 of the International Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations of CERD on Italy*, 16 May 2008, CERD/C/ITA/CO/15; *Assessment of the Human Rights situation of Roma and Sinti in Italy, Report of a fact finding mission to Milan, Naples and Rome on 20-26 July 2008*, Warsaw, The Hague, March 2009; *Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to Italy on 13-15 January 2009;* Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy. Complaint n.58/2009, 11 June 2009, European Committee of Social Rights; *Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to Italy from 26 to 27 May 2011;* ECRI Report on Italy, 2012.

policy measures are implemented in practice by bureaucrats, practitioners, local administrators and professionals.

Finally, many Roma do not have a clear legal status despite their long presence in the Italian territory. This entails several risks as clearly stated by the ECRI report:

many of them, who are not in possession of any identity document, are at permanent risk of being deported under the immigration legislation; however, those who are actually detained with a view to their deportation cannot be expelled from the country since they have no identity documents. It is equally impossible for these persons to integrate into Italian society as their lack of official documents prevents them from finding legal work or housing, from accessing public services and a fortiori from obtaining Italian citizenship. They are thus in a particularly invidious situation, being de facto stateless. Yet, because Italy does not recognise these persons as stateless, it seems that they also do not enjoy in practice the rights set out under the Convention relating to the Rights of Stateless Persons, to which Italy is nonetheless a party. (ECRI 2012: 30).

To conclude, in Italy the approach to the Roma issue has been widely characterized by a "defensive scheme" (Tosi 2009: 201) that has hindered any virtuous process of improvement of Roma living conditions. In particular some public policies have favoured the marginalization of Roma – such as repressive interventions, forced evictions with no alternative housing solutions –transforming the Roma issue into a hot, sensitive and extremely politicised topic. The adoption in 2012 of the National Strategy represents a significant advancement: nonetheless it is a non-binding document with a limited influence especially at local levels. It is worth underlining that local administrations legislate in autonomy from the national authority with quite a lot of discretionary power. However, it is exactly at the local level that the regime of "hospitalité publique" is defined and takes place (Legros, Vitale 2011). Consequently it is important to monitor whether the National Strategy will be effectively implemented at the national and, crucially, at the local level where the process of integration takes place and, above all, where discrimination and exclusion are perpetrated. Here lies the critical role of European institutions and of the NGOs in monitoring the effective implementation of the National Strategy.

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4

Privileged but excluded: the situation of Roma in Poland

by *Agnieszka Mikulska-Jolles*

4.1   Population

Roma have been living in Poland since the 16th century. Most of them, with the exception of the Bergitka Roma group, were nomadic until 1964, when the communist government introduced the law on forced settlement. Today Polish population of Roma is relatively small in comparison with other East European countries. According to the national census of 2011, there are 16.830 Roma living in Poland. Some of them – 7000 – identify themselves with both nationalities, Polish and Roma (Central Statistical Office, 2012). This number is probably significantly underestimated. Aggregated data collected by provincial local government authorities for the purpose of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland in the years 2004-2013 show that the number of Roma living in Poland ranges between 20.000-25.000. There is also a significant number of Polish Roma who migrated to Western-European countries and Scandinavia at the end of the 20th century for the purpose of seeking international protection (Kwadrans, 2011: 102). Roma migration has continued even after the Polish accession to the European Union in 2004, but its character has changed into migration for economic purposes. The most popular destination of migration (permanent or temporary) is still Western Europe, especially Great Britain.

All Roma living in Poland lead a sedentary lifestyle. According to the data obtained from the census, they are principally city-dwellers: 91.72% of the Roma population live in municipal areas. In comparison, the figures for the general population of Poland are 60.78% and 39.22%, for the urban and rural population respectively. The largest Roma communities live in the following provinces: Dolnośląskie (12.13%), Małopolskie (10.37%), followed by Śląskie (10.36%) and Mazowieckie (9.15%). The rest of the Roma population lives in other regions of Poland. Roma live primarily in cities with a population exceeding 10.000 (Central Statistical Office, 2013). Roma live mainly dispersed, yet the group shows an evi-

dent tendency to settle in clusters of households, each inhabited by several fami-lies. Major Roma population centres can be observed in southern Poland, usually on the outskirts of smaller towns. In a number of cases, Roma live in isolated set-tlements.

The above mentioned data concern only those Roma who are Polish citizens. However, there is also an unknown number of Roma migrants who have emigrat-ed to Poland from the Balkans over the last two decades. The government docu-ment, namely the Programme for the Social Integration of Roma in the years 2014-2020 (hereafter Programme 2014-2020) describes groups of Roma migrants arriving to Poland from Romania and Bulgaria as "relatively sparse" (Program in-tegracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020, 2014: 5). Two encampments of Roma from Romania located in the city of Wrocław are inhabited by a group of 80-100 persons (Nomada 2012, Amnesty International, 2013). The other groups of Roma from the Balkans also live in other big cities, including Warsaw, Poznań, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot and Krakow.

In Poland Roma are recognised as an ethnic minority but this status applies on-ly to Roma who are Polish citizens. Unlike Roma-migrants, they enjoy special rights and privileges resulting from this status. What is more, they benefit from the government-run programmes for their community, such as the Pilot Pro-gramme for the Roma Community in Malopolskie Voivodship 2000-2003, the Programme for the Roma community in the years 2004-2013, the Programme for the Social Integration of Roma in the years 2014-2020, the EQUAL Community Initiative (hereafter Programme 2004-2013) and the Operational Programme Hu-man Capital (hereafter OPHC) of the European Social Fund (ESF). The issue of Roma migrants is not present on the political agenda, especially at the national level. Exceptions to this rule were the cases of attempts at forced evictions of Roma from their irregular encampments, which received public attention and me-dia coverage. Although both migrants and "domestic" Roma suffer from racism and marginalisation, they constitute distinct groups in social and political terms. Interestingly, Roma associations advocating the rights of Roma in Poland very rarely support Roma immigrants. At the same time, however, in their political speeches they underline the political dimension of the "Roma issue" and present themselves as a pan-European minority. Due to limited space but also to the lack of data on Roma migrants, this paper will only focus on Roma-Polish citizens.

4.2   Theory - Roma as an ethnic minority and minorities' rights

Unlike Italy and France, Poland recognises Roma as an ethnic minority. In Polish law, an ethnic minority is defined as a group of Polish citizens that collectively meets the following conditions: it is smaller in number than the rest of the Polish population; it differs in a significant manner from other citizens through language, culture and traditions; it seeks to maintain its language, traditions and culture; it is conscious of its own historic national community and is inclined to express and protect it; finally, it has resided in the Republic of Poland for at least 100 years.

The definition of a national minority is the same as the definition of an ethnic minority, except for one additional requirement, that the national minority should also identify with a nation organised in its own state. The Act on national and ethnic minorities and regional language lists the following groups as minorities: Armenians, Belarusians, Czechs, Germans, Jews, Karaims, Lithuanians, Lemki, Roma, Russians, Slovaks, Tatars, and Ukrainians. This is a complete list and it does not include any other group, as for instance the Vietnamese which constitute quite a large community in Poland.

National and ethnic minorities have the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, cultivate their customs and traditions, and develop their own culture. They have the right to establish their own educational and cultural institutions as well as the institutions which serve to protect their religious identity and they participate in the resolution of cultural identity issues. The Act on national and ethnic minorities and regional language, as well as other legal provisions, includes a number of specific rights for minorities, primarily concerning their language and culture.

People belonging to a minority have the right to use freely their mother tongue in private life as well as in public, to learn or be taught in their minority language, to promote exchange and display information in the minority language. In contact with the local governing bodies, the minority language can be used as an auxiliary language to the official language. Additional traditional names in the minority language may be used next to official names of places, streets and physiographic objects. Moreover, individuals belonging to a minority have the right to use and spell their first names and surnames as they are spelt in their minority language, particularly in documents of marital status and on identity cards. National, but not ethnic, minorities also enjoy the electoral privilege, which is a lower electoral threshold in the parliamentary election. In practice, however, only members of the German minority run for election as candidates of the minority electoral committee. The rights of minorities impose substantial obligations on the state i.e., to support activities aimed at the protection, preservation and development of the cultural identity of minorities. Therefore, some cultural activities of minority institutions and organisations are subsided from the public budget.

Financial support is assigned for publishing books, magazines, periodicals, organising cultural events, television programmes and radio broadcasts produced by minority communities. Moreover, minority associations have the possibility of obtaining allocations for administrative costs and current activities. At both the central and regional levels of governance, there are bodies responsible for minority issues.

The Department for Denominations and National and Ethnic Minorities operates within the structure of the Ministry of Digitalisation and Administration, and it includes, among others, the Division for Ethnic and National Minorities and the Division of the Roma Issue. The main task of the latter is the administration of the programmes for the Roma community, while the other division deals with general issues such as drafting proposals for governmental policies towards minorities, preparing specific action plans and strategies, as well as on-going cooperation

with minorities. At the regional level, in each of the 16 *voivodships* there is a plenipotentiary responsible for issues regarding national and ethnic minorities. Among other duties, plenipotentiaries are in charge of the implementation of the government programmes for the Roma community at the regional level.

Another important institution which needs to be mentioned here is the Joint Commission of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities. It includes the representatives of various ministries and public institutions, as well as one or two representatives of each minority, depending on the size of the given group The Joint Commission is an advisory-consultative body to the Prime Minister.

In practice, this is the main platform of cooperation between the central government authorities and the national and ethnic minorities which allows minorities to express their opinions and interests. During the ten years of its activity, the Joint Commission has published 100 opinions and 8 statements. The Standing Roma Group has been operating since 2008 within the Commission. It focuses on specific Roma-related issues, including the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust, the education of Roma children, support for Roma employment, matters related to projects for Roma people funded from the *Operational Programme Human Capital*, implementation of the *Programme for the Roma Community* in Poland for the years 2003-2013. The meetings of the Group are also a platform for presenting reports on initiatives for the Roma undertaken by various public institutions, including equality bodies such as the Human Rights Defender and the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment.

It might be inferred that the legal and institutional framework existing in Poland allows minorities to live their lives as other Polish citizens and at the same time it supports their efforts to maintain and promote their culture and language.

As a matter of fact, they face a number of problems in exercising these rights and privileges, which are the result of many factors including the lack of cooperation by the local authorities, the small size of the minority population, its geographical distribution, the capacities of minority associations as well as the lack of internal cohesion within the groups. The minorities' standard of living , however, does not differ from mainstream society in terms of material status, employment or education. Only the Roma are an exception to this rule.

4.3   Practice – Roma as a vulnerable group

Undoubtedly, Roma are the most vulnerable ethnic minority in Poland. Throughout their long history of living in Poland, they have always remained on the margins of society. During the communist regime, Roma were forced to settle and live a life similar to that led by the other Poles. Children started to attend schools and some Roma undertook work, usually in large national factories and industrial plants but actually they never integrated with mainstream Polish society. Political and economic transformations revealed, and at the same time exacerbated, the problems faced by the Roma community: poverty, very low levels of education and vocational skills, unemployment, exclusion and racism.

The situation of Roma in Poland started to be a matter of interest for human rights organisations and institutions, including United Nations Bodies and the Council of Europe. The issue of Roma was also raised during the process of Poland's accession to the European Union. Furthermore the currently implemented Programme for the Social Integration of Roma in the years 2014-2020 was elaborated on the basis of guidelines and priorities outlined by the European Commission within the framework of the policy of initiation and implementation of national strategies for Roma integration.

The low level of education is often seen as the main reason for the disadvantageous situation of Roma, accordingly to the logic that the lack of education and professional skills results in their high unemployment rates. The lack of jobs causes poverty, and housing and health problems. Due to this fact, different solutions to improve the education level of Roma have been implemented. In the 1990s, separate classes for Roma were organised, and in the peak period their number reached the level of approximately 30 in the whole country. This solution was based on the assumption that Roma children would feel more comfortable in Roma-only classes. Consequently, they would be more willing to attend school and would complete at least the basic education level. However, this solution was also heavily criticised as creating further segregation and exclusion. Opponents of segregated classes also underlined the fact that the level of teaching in Roma classes was extremely low. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Roma classes have been gradually abolished. Currently, there are no Roma classes in Poland any more (Parliamentary Commission, 2012). Thus, Roma pupils attend regular classes, but not all Roma children are still fulfilling the compulsory education requirement. According to the data from the Ministry of Administration and Digitalisation for the years 2004-2011, about 85% of Roma attended school. Nevertheless, their class attendance was low, remaining at the average level of 74%. Moreover, the school achievements of Roma children are significantly lower as compared to the mainstream population - the average grade of Roma children is 2-3 (in the 1-6 scale, where 6 is the highest possible grade).

Several studies on the education of Roma children provide the following reasons for this situation: lack of trust in the education system combined with the fear of assimilation, maltreatment and discrimination by other students; marriages contracted at an early age and temporary migrations (see: Nowicka, 2011; Płocica, 2011; Różcyka, 2009; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2011; Dróżdż-Balkanowska, 2012). In addition, insufficient command of the Polish language at the beginning of the education process, combined with the absence of teachers trained to work with bilingual and bicultural children are cited as the main reasons for the low education performance of Roma children (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2011: 19-34).

Lack of support from parents and the financial shortfalls of Roma families have also been reported as important obstacles to the education process (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2011: 51-84).

Most of the factors listed above are strongly connected with Roma culture, and this correlation is especially highlighted by authors with sociological, ethnological and anthropological backgrounds. Professor Ewa Nowicka explains Roma at-

titudes towards the education system by indicating that this is a system created by an external culture and is "in its essence – non-Roma." Due to this fact, for a part of the Roma population it is difficult to accept (Nowicka, 2007: 124-148). For some Roma, the Polish education system is perceived as a tool of assimilation and as a threat to Roma culture and identity (Gerlich and Gerlich, 2011: 19-34). Moreover, the school is also a place where children are in danger of discrimination and rejection by their peers and teachers (Gerlich and Gerlich 2011: 19-34, Nowicka 2011: 48). Some authors, such as Małgorzata Różycka among others, also underline the significance of values, including a different understanding of the concept of "wisdom." For Roma, wisdom is traditionally associated with age and life experience, not with educational achievements confirmed by a certificate or a diploma. Therefore, some Roma people consider school education unnecessary (Różycka, 2009: 14-31). In this paradigm, education is not a desired value which might bring noticeable benefits. This point of view is evident among a part of the Roma population, excluding however Roma leaders (Nowicka, 2007: 124-148).

Notwithstanding, in recent years a change in thinking about the value of education can be perceived among Roma. This trend has been observed by researchers, teachers and people involved in the programmes for the Roma community (e.g. Gerlich and Gerlich, 2011: 19-34). A study conducted among Roma people as part of the evaluation of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland showed a very high awareness of the problem of the lack of education among Roma. This problem was indicated by 96.94% of respondents and, among all the social problems included in the questionnaire, it was the most frequently indicated one (Biuro Obsługi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 87).

There is also another important factor concerning Roma education which has changed over the last few years. This is the emergence of a new approach to Roma children as bicultural persons. Such an approach requires the implementation of new solutions to overcome problems related to Roma schooling. One of them, and unquestionably the most important and successful, is the employment of assistants for Roma education (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 2010: 18-19, Grzymała-Moszczyńska, 2010: 19-34). The role of assistants involves, among other things, facilitating communication between the school and Roma parents. Assistants also play an important role in helping Roma children in meandering through the school environment, they help them understand and overcome cultural differences between Polish and Roma students. The other crucial activity is the organisation of remedial classes, which also include the teaching of the Polish language to children who do not speak Polish fluently. The evaluators of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland stress the positive effects of different integrating events organised by schools or other institutions, such as "green schools", summer camps, trips. Activities promoting Roma culture in schools, directed either towards the whole school community or only towards teachers, are yet another integrating factor which raises schools to the role of basic integration hub for both Roma children and parents. All these actives are supported by providing Roma students with various forms of material or financial

aid, such as school starter kits, school meals, insurance and scholarships. As has been underlined by both Roma and teachers, the levelling of the material situation of Roma children, even if only apparent, improves the well-being of Roma pupils and results in their better treatment by their peers (Biuro Obslugi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 104-106).

Research conducted in recent years shows that the school is becoming a real place of integration. Professor Barbara Wiegl, whose research confirms an improvement of the Roma image in young people's eyes, explains that this change of attitude may be a result of the wide-spread selection of programmes implemented at schools to promote tolerance towards others (Sidorowicz, 2012). The evaluation of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland states that the situation in the area of Roma education has improved over the last decade. This is, however, not the case in the employment area (Biuro Obsługi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 17).

The last census shows only 13.31% of Roma in employment. The percentage of unemployed and economically inactive people in this group amounts to 15.54% and 62.82%, respectively (Central Statistical Office, 2013). The data collected by the provincial governors implementing the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland indicated that the situation is even worse and that the current average rate of unemployment and vocational inactivity stands at 84-95% nationwide (Program integracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020, 2014: 20). These statistics are supported by various types of research conducted in the Roma community over the last 20 years which indicate that full-time employment is rare in this group (Klima and Paszko, 2010: 130). This fact, however, does not mean that Roma people do not engage in any profit-generating activity.

The most frequent economic activity among Roma is trade. They most often deal with trading goods: cars, antiques, second hand goods, carpets, clothing and fabrics as well as household appliances (Program integracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020, 2014: 21). Although among this group there are wholesalers as well as retailers with large turnovers, most of the traders are small-scale and limited to open-air markets or door-to-door sales, usually not officially registered. Some people also collect and re-sell recyclable waste and containers (Klima and Paszko 2010: 131-132). Officially registered companies managed by Roma owners are few and far between, and their areas of activity are the arts, catering, construction, transport services and tourism (Machnik-Pado and Kudłacz 2010).

A small number of Roma businesspeople invest in their shops, restaurants, real property and petrol stations (Paszko 2007: 204-216). The Roma also seek employment characterised by various degrees of regularity, for example, construction site jobs, cleaning jobs (in the case of Bergitka Roma), public work or community work organised by local municipalities. Such jobs usually do not require high qualifications and normally pay very little (Klima and Paszko 2010: 130). Only few individuals have more prestigious jobs such as civil servant, teacher, lecturer, lawyer or journalist. A certain number of Roma people are employed on the projects carried out for their communities or as Roma education assistants.

The occupation of some women is still fortune telling or asking for charity (Klima and Paszko 2010: 131). In various reports on the Roma community, "going abroad" is frequently indicated as a source of income. However, the information on the exact form of income generated by activity abroad is difficult to acquire. Experts claim that in some cases Roma community members are registered or non-registered temporary workers (Program integracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020, 2014: 21), while in other cases, their source of income consists in social benefits received abroad.

There is a number of factors causing high unemployment among Roma people. The most important reasons include the lack of education and vocational qualifications, the lack of competitive advantages in the job market and the inability to navigate the job market (Zawicki 2007: 39-45, Kwadrans and Maroń 2010: 97-114). Research also points to the passivity of some Roma in their pursuit of employment. This refers predominantly to the long-term unemployed (Paszko 2007: 204-216). Some Roma people may show a reluctance towards performing certain jobs, such as professions associated with low prestige, and hard and low paid work. Some professions are forbidden by the Roma code of conduct as "impure", for instance doctors, nurses, plumbers or cleaners (Nowicka 2011: 48, Talewicz-Kwiatkowska 2014: 194).

This attitude to work is partly associated with the cultural uniqueness of the community. However, external factors are equally important. According to Artur Paszko (2007), the problem of the Roma unemployment has to be approached from a longer-term perspective. When Poland was a communist country, the Roma were forced to settle down and then work as unskilled labourers in large enterprises and factories. After Poland's transformation into a free market economy, unprofitable plants closed down, triggering structural unemployment which is still prevalent in many areas and affects both the Roma and Polish population. At the same time, modernisation has eliminated the demand for traditional craftsmanship (blacksmiths, coppersmiths). As a result, Roma employees who had been laid off from large factories and enterprises were unable to return to their traditional professions, apart from trade, arts and entertainment (Paszko, 2007: 204-216).

In this period of social and economic transformation Roma did not receive any support from the state, which resulted in very high and long-term unemployment (Chrabąszcz and Płachta, 2010: 77). Even today, employment offices are not particularly involved in the implementation of employment activation projects for Roma people. According to the evaluator of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland, the offices are not prepared to assist the community, and this consequently results in the absence of action (Biuro Obsługi Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 125).

Finally, negative stereotypes and the hostility of Poles towards Roma are crucial factors limiting Roma access to work and this fact is underlined by both governmental and independent experts (Program integracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020 2014, Talewiecz-Kwiatkowska 2014, Paszko, 2007: 204-216).

Although from time to time Roma organisations report cases of direct discrimination of Roma in the process of recruitment, there is no research focusing on

this specific factor and the real scale of discrimination remains unknown. Employers refuse to employ Roma due to their own negative attitudes towards them, but also because they fear the reaction of other employees or clients who might not be willing to work with Roma. Indeed, according to the yearly surveys on the attitude of the Poles towards other nations, carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre, Roma are the most disliked group by the Poles (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2015: 2).

Over the last dozen years, a number of projects have been implemented to increase professional activation and combat unemployment in the Roma community. The most common activities include the organisation of vocational training courses for Roma people, employment counselling services, the creation of subsidised jobs, work placements. Unfortunately, these projects have not resulted in a tangible increase in the level of employment in the community (Biuro Obsługi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 17). Very few Roma people find legal employment, even if they have attended vocational or training courses. From the interviews conducted as part of the evaluation of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland it emerges that few individuals find a job, and that successful employment is conditioned by references from a Pole (Biuro Obsługi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 17). In the interviews conducted by the anthropologist Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, the representatives of the central institutes involved in the realisation of governmental programmes for Roma honestly admitted that in fact every initiative to improve the situation in employment "was a complete flop" (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2014: 186).

There is no simple explanation for the lack of success in improving the situation of Roma in employment. In contrast to the education area, in which several effective measures have been developed (i.e. Roma assistants), there are no solutions or even projects which can serve as models for the successful engagement of Roma in the labour market. Initiatives and ideas developed in the framework of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland, the Operational Programme Human Capital and the EQUAL Community Initiative, have not led to the long term employment of Roma, apart from those who work in Roma associations or who perform jobs related to Roma matters. Importantly, this holds true not only for Poland, but also for other central European countries (Mappes-Niediek, 2014). One may argue that schools are obliged to accept Roma children and this is why they simply must find solutions on how to deal with them, which is not the case for employers who can freely chose their employees, according to their preferences. It is also much easier to change young people's behaviour than to activate long-term unemployed persons.

The lack of stable employment and income causes poverty, poor housing and health conditions. The majority of the Roma population occupy municipal and social housing, a kind of accommodation usually offering a relatively low standard of living. Some of them are damp and mouldy. In certain instances, they lack sanitary facilities, water supply and sewage disposal systems, electrical and heating systems, and have damaged walls and roofs (Program integracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020, 2014: 22). Financial shortfalls prevent thorough peri-

odic renovations of flats as well as ongoing maintenance, such as painting, removing mould from walls, inspecting heating installations, repairing windows or broken-down water, sewage, heating or electrical systems. Buildings erected without building permits are in the worst condition and some even violate the building code (Zawicki, 2007: 39-45). Overcrowding is a common problem (Program integracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020, 2014: 22). In the most dramatic cases, this involves whole families, sometimes of as many as five, six or even ten people. Due to their low income base, Roma are rarely able to improve their housing situation by purchasing or renting a higher-standard flat on the market. Bad housing significantly affects the health conditions of the Roma population and causes a higher incidence rate of diseases as well as below-average life expectancy (Program integracji społecznej Romów na lata 2014-2020, 2014: 19). The problems related to housing and health are partially mitigated by the initiatives undertaken within governmental programmes. As noted by the evaluators of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland in the years 2003-2014, improvements in housing conditions, predominantly including refurbishments, replacement of windows, doors, the construction of water and energy networks, etc, were the most appreciated by Roma among the programmes' activities. But at the same time, they have raised substantial controversy among both Roma and local communities. The disagreement concerns unclear criteria for awarding assistance, the amount thereof, the manner of performing refurbishments and the selection of eligible households. The refurbishments are also a cause of envy among the Poles and the Roma who have not been granted such assistance (Biuro Obsługi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 133). Unfortunately, these factors are not without influence on the process of integration.

4.4   Conclusions

It could be said that the situation of Roma in Poland has changed a lot over the last dozen years. This has happened thanks to a range of activities undertaken within the European Union programmes as well as governmental programmes for the Roma Community (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2014: 219-220). In 2011, the Ministry of Digitalisation and Administration commissioned an external evaluation of the Programme for the Roma community in Poland for the years 2003-2014 to the Office for the Management of the Social Initiatives Movement, an association which conducted comprehensive evaluative research among the Roma organisations and institutions implementing the Programme, as well as among the experts on Roma issues. General assessment of the Programme implementation was rather positive. According to the result of the survey conducted among Roma – beneficiaries of the Programme – 88% of them appreciated the activities and aid offered within the programme. The improvement of housing conditions and changes in the area of education were mentioned as important achievements. A significant group of Roma, but also of non-Roma experts, also noted the change in mutual attitudes between the mainstream group and the Roma community (Biuro Obsługi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 143-147).

Noteworthy progress can be observed in the area of active citizenship. In the last decade, the number of organisations declaring to represent the Roma community has grown significantly. At the beginning of the 21st century, there were around 20 of them. At present, according to the National Court Register data, Poland has over 100 such organisations (Romopedia, 2015). Some of them have become large and highly professional organisations, conducting long-term and country-wide activities. Małgorzata Kołaczek in her book Ethnic mobilisation of Roma and the European Union describes this process occurring in central European countries but at the same time she argues that ethnic mobilization of Roma is still lower as compared to other ethnic minorities and it is limited to very sparse elites. (Kołaczek, 2014: 194). The "gap" between emerging Roma elites and the rest of the group is underlined by both the "regular Roma" and experts taking part in the evaluation of the Programme for the Roma community. Representatives of both groups admitted there was a small group of Roma leaders whose competences (education, command of the Polish language, knowledge of Polish procedures) enabled them to represent the Roma community in interactions with the authorities. However, the leaders sometimes fail to act in consultation with the Roma community. In some regions, this "market monopolisation" by the small group of leaders can result in conflicts between the leaders regarding revenues and funding, and results in the inability to make decisions for the benefit of the entire community (Biuro Obsługi Ruchu Inicjatyw Społecznych, 2011: 9). This fact, combined with the unfriendly attitude of Poles towards Roma, may hamper inclusion of large part of this minority.

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Section 2
The role of ICTs and Roma people. Some cases studies

1

Digital citizenship and social inclusion: uses of ICTs by migrant populations and minority groups

by *Benjamin Loveluck*

1.1 Introduction

In a very broad sense, digital citizenship may refer to the various ways and means by which information and communication technologies (ICTs) affect one's capacity, as an individual or as a group, to take part in society and be full members of the polis (Mossberger, Tolbert, McNeal, 2008). This includes the exercise of democratic citizenship within a given nation-state, which hinges on such aspects as being informed about current affairs, being adequately presented and represented in the public sphere as well as being exposed to pluralism, asserting one's social and political rights and fulfilling one's obligations, and in a stronger sense getting involved in associations and community organisations, deliberating public issues, or even mobilising and campaigning on an explicitly political level. These simple definitions, however, are fraught with complexities as soon as we look at what "democratic participation" means in more detail (Jenkins, Thorburn, 2003; Anderson, Cornfield, 2003; Dahlgren, 2009; Coleman, Blumler, 2009). It gets more complicated still when we consider migrant populations and minority groups, who may straddle several countries and cultures, who may sometimes not be legally considered as citizens in their host country, and who face specific issues in terms of social inclusion.

The following chapters, which look at the very concrete ways in which Roma communities are enacting digital citizenship, aim at unravelling some of this complexity. The empirically grounded sociological observations they provide are also a challenge to assumptions that may be associated with more abstract definitions of digital citizenship. Before going into more detail however, it is worth providing some elements of context about the questions at hand. I will focus on three key aspects where ICTs have had a particularly crucial impact for migrants

and minorities in general, and for Roma communities in particular: identity formation in the context of transnational activities; ways of investing the public sphere; and finally, asserting formal civic rights and carrying out administrative obligations while facing strong digital inequalities.

1.2 ICTs, transnationalism and identities

Transnationalism as a theme emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in the field of international relations, but the specific focus on ICTs and how they affect identity formation can be dated from the late 1980s onwards. Media studies and migration studies, together attempted to assess the social implications of the new ways of articulating global and local dimensions through a variety of "mediascapes" (Appadurai, 1996). A novel understanding of diasporas stressed that migrants maintain strong ties across national boundaries (Glik, Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992), and that media and ICTs play a key role in this process. International radio, satellite television, the internet and soon the mobile phone were presented as an "international space of information flows" (Morley, Robins, 1995). This included the formation of deterritorialised media and culture industries which were increasingly offered a global reach for their production, as well as the development of more local, fragmented or autonomous forms of media production, presented as empowering for minority cultures and identities. These approaches help us shed light on the situation of the Roma communities throughout Europe, insofar as they can be considered as a collection of diasporas: despite the fact that they have shared a common history with the individual countries where they have settled, sometimes for several centuries, and despite the fact that they may not always picture themselves as a diaspora, in cases where they have recently migrated Roma groups often maintain strong ties, cultural proximity and linguistic convergence (the Romani language) with other Roma who are established elsewhere.

One first major observation is that the diffusion of ICTs has reinforced the bond between migrants and their home country. Most notably, national or regional media are now globally available, either through satellite equipment or via the internet. This means that migrants can easily access television programs, news, or radio shows which are published or broadcast in their home country. At first sight, this might seem to undermine exposure to a common, unifying public sphere, insofar as a very selective media consumption might feed the argument that ICTs and particularly the internet increase the fragmentation and "balkanisation" of the public sphere (Katz, 1996; Sunstein, 2001). However, this question has generally been addressed in terms of exposure to explicitly political differences and selection of media based on partisanship. Attempts at assessing whether reaching out towards "foreign" media and developing "ethnic minority media" might have consequences for inclusion in the "host" country are very uncertain and point in different directions (Rigoni, Saitta 2012).

Another significant effect of ICTs concerns interpersonal communications. The availability of cheap telephone and video transmissions through call shops or personal equipment, the development of platforms such as Skype or WhatsApp as

well as, increasingly, the use of social media such as Facebook, have made it possible to maintain strong and frequent bonds with family and friends who are still in their country of origin. These all contribute to the setting up of a "connected presence" (Licoppe, 2004), which affects everyone but has strong implications for migrants, who must increasingly be understood as strongly "connected" to their home country rather than merely "uprooted" (Diminescu, 2008).

In the case of migrant Roma groups, as stressed in the chapters by Giurea and Lormier and by Clavé-Mercier, they are able to stay attuned to the national media of their former homeland, e.g. Bulgaria or Romania, as well as maintaining daily contact and participating in important events – weddings, christenings, funerals etc. – with their close ones who still live there and with the community at large, which can be scattered in different places. At the same time, the digital practices of Roma migrants – sharing videos on YouTube, playing online games, streaming music or simply sharing and commenting on Facebook – are very similar to what can be found in the rest of the host society (in this case France) and mainstream culture, and can be seen as a process of convergence in many respects. These concrete practices may seem far removed from normative ideals of citizenship. However, the dual process whereby migrants and/or minority groups maintain networks of solidarity and belonging on the one hand, while interacting locally and while being exposed to other dimensions of the public sphere on the other hand, together form a slow but steady process of "inclusion from below".

1.3　Investing the public sphere: ICTs for self-presentation and –representation

The second major observation is that by lowering the threshold for publication, the web has provided alternative means of circulating information and holding records. This in turn has enabled the formation of autonomous spaces, which can coexist with the mainstream media. However, the continued significance of the mass media and the strong discrepancies between dominant forms of broadcasting on the one hand, and community-based or alternative forms of publication on the other hand, means that we should be wary of discourses depicting a straightforward democratisation of the public sphere. The complex dynamics of intermediation on the web, and the crucial role of aggregators or search engines such as Google, mean that the mere existence of alternative publications does not imply that they will be visible – i.e. that they will stand out in the overall attention economy (Hindman, 2008).

So, although they do not necessarily involve a direct challenge to the mainstream media, online spheres of interaction and publication are important as spaces for self-presentation and -representation. Also, in many cases they can form the basis for the emergence of "counter-publics" which, given the right conditions, may gain more visibility and can play a part in circulating a greater diversity of infor-

mation, contesting mainstream media framing, and challenging stereotypes and prejudices.

Forms of web presence can be approached through ethnographic observation and content analysis of websites, Facebook pages, blogs, forums, YouTube videos (see chapter by Szczepanik, Mikulska). This helps understand how ICTs are used at various levels for sharing information, publicizing key cultural aspects and highlighting lesser known but resilient cultural traits, broadcasting events and ceremonies, archiving and giving access to historical material, establishing networks of belonging and solidarity, and sometimes promoting advocacy campaigns and causes such as defending minority rights and fighting racism and ethnic discrimination. Web presence can also involve, for instance, efforts at setting up community-based broadcast media such as an online radio equipped with chat functionalities (chapter by Leggio). The radio and especially the chat room appears as a space of cosmopolitan, multilingual conviviality and playful interactions where identities are "performed" and serve to create or reinforce bonds, rather than being an opportunity for representation geared towards an "outside" public. Thus, such online spaces play a key role in sharing experience, establishing self-awareness as a community, and for adjusting the definition and the boundaries of this community in a more or less reflexive and structured way, while accounting for both the "home" and the "host" cultures, as well as a diversity of other dimensions such as religion, gender, global pop culture etc. In some cases, the establishment of a web presence can precede or follow the existence of NGOs and associations, which find a crucial extension in such online activities to support their cause. In doing so, in typically Deweyan fashion, involvement in the public sphere may grow organically and incrementally, sometimes expanding into full-blown democratic participation (Dewey 1927; see Marres & Rogers 2005 on "issue publics" on the web). But these structured and explicitly political approaches towards a greater public recognition are only the tip of the iceberg compared to the everyday, mundane and pragmatic means of enacting collective identity on the one hand, and asserting new dimensions of one's citizenship and cultural allegiances on the other.

1.4 ICTs, the "digital divide", and citizenship rights and obligations

Another important aspect of ICTs concerns the way they affect more "formal" or administrative dimensions of citizenship. This involves relying on ICTs for accessing and maintaining social rights (residence permit, social benefits, health care etc.), for finding a job or for staying in touch with the employment agency, for paying taxes, or for carrying out other types of formalities and obligations, and even submitting to surveillance and control on the part of the authorities. As is made very clear in the chapter by Giurea & Lormier, on the one hand phone contact (by texting) and online services can seemingly make the procedures more efficient for the civil servants and social workers involved, for whom face-to-face interactions can be time consuming. They can also be an advantage for minority

populations and migrants, who can to some extent minimize unnecessary travels, and also avoid some aspects of the stigma and discriminatory behaviour which these interactions may involve. On the other hand however, online procedures generate problems of access (e.g. being able to afford an internet or phone subscription), as well as introducing new layers of complexity – especially for individuals who may already have a limited knowledge of the host country's language, who may not have the educational skills required, and/or who may simply not be computer- or web-literate enough. Far from making things more easy and efficient, then, online administration can be a strong filter, which prevents many individuals entitled to welfare benefits or health care from actually receiving them. It also involves large amounts of frustration and sometimes humiliation in the face of arcane logics and technical systems, adding to an already complex bureaucratic and legal system. Finally, it entails a strong dependency on social workers, who need to be constantly involved in the process – which, in effect, amounts at outsourcing a significant part of the public administration's tasks.

Thus, the use of ICTs in an administrative context is closely tied to the wider question of the so-called digital divide. This expression is misleading, as it initially meant a rather binary division in terms of access to ICT hardware and connectivity, between "the haves and the have nots" (individuals but also organisations or countries). It has evolved since the late 1990s however, and current research focuses on the "second-level digital divide" (Hargittai, 2001), taking into account many other socioeconomic factors and more subtle forms of resource inequalities such as experience and abilities, social capital, autonomy of use, or availability of social support (Warschauer, 2003; DiMaggio et al., 2004; van Dijk, 2005; Granjon, Lelong and Metzger, 2009). Indeed digital media, as has been extensively shown, are not in and of themselves tools of social progress, which can help the levelling of inequalities. This is particularly true of the internet, which is a reading- and writing-intensive media, and which involves a strong amount of background technical knowledge. Rather, digital inequalities and existing forms of social stratification can tend to reinforce each other. This was already the case with traditional media, however the skills involved when assessing content on the Web, performing an efficient search, or writing an email have more profound implications than, say, differentiated television viewing habits.

The social contexts of usage thus appear to be central for an accurate understanding of the benefits and constraints associated with ICTs, and the online services that they provide. This is particularly true for the less privileged segments of society, such as migrant populations and minorities. Thus Roma communities, who may sometimes face unstable living conditions, low socioeconomic status, low levels of schooling, linguistic barriers, racial and class discrimination etc. may be confronted with additional difficulties when all or most administrative tasks must be carried out through online services.

Moreover, the implications of ICT use (especially the internet) for civic engagement and political participation, both at the local level and with society at large, have also been drawn – mainly by looking at the relationship between digital media usage and social capital, particularly in the US context (Norris, 2001;

Shah, Kwak and Holbert, 2001; Bimber, 2003; Boulianne, 2009). Could the inter-net also be associated with a "civic divide" (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 2003), whereby already active citizens would benefit from the surge in available infor-mation, while more politically passive individuals would remain left out? Howev-er, most of the work in this area remains inconclusive, given the multiple varia-bles at play and the difficulty of assessing them precisely. Though a correlation can often be found between intense and savvy ICT usage on the one hand, and of-fline civic and political participation on the other, establishing a causation is much more problematic, since both of these dimensions appear to be heavily dependent on social stratification in general. Thus online participation often merely repli-cates already existing patterns of civic and political involvement, while in some cases exacerbating discrepancies, especially in terms of education, income and ethnicity.

1.5   Conclusion

As the contributions to this volume make clear, while no obvious or direct effect of ICTs on citizenship and social inclusion can be measured, they now form an environment where, crucially, most of social, cultural, economic and political life is channelled. Thus ICTs affect what it means to part of a political community, insofar as they are embedded in daily life, and weaved in the everyday "acts of citizenship" (Isin, Nielsen, 2008) – understood as an ongoing and dynamic pro-cess, rooted in a multiplicity of minute and (sometimes) grand actions, and which is also heavily oriented by public policies.

Thus Roma communities, like everyone, are drawn to ICTs by the simple fact that bonding with family and friends, sharing music, watching TV shows, catch-ing up with the news, connecting with new people etc. now necessarily involves a digital dimension. However, this is particularly true of migrant populations and minority groups, who rely on complex networks of material solidarity, affective support and cultural exchanges. These involve friends and family in their home country, in the host country, and often in several other countries where the com-munity may be dispersed; they also include local contacts such as social workers and other acquaintances. Although it may be perceived as a "luxury" for outside observers, ICT usage is in fact an essential element of well-being for migrant Roma and for underprivileged people in general.

However, it must also be stressed that although some forms of usage may be easily acquired, others involve sets of digital skills which require a steep learning curve and which, importantly, are closely tied to other social factors. This is made particularly clear in the case of more constrained uses such as online bureaucratic and administrative procedures, that involve heavily standardised behaviour on the part of the user, often rely on high levels of literacy and linguistic skills, and as-sume stable living conditions. In such cases, the difficulties that deprived popula-tions are facing may be compounded rather than alleviated by ICTs. This is of particular concern insofar as it affects the formal rights and duties of Roma as cit-izens, which are a key prerequisite for social inclusion and civic participation.

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2

Radio Romani Mahala: Romani identities and languages in a virtual space

by *Daniele Viktor Leggio*

2.1 Introduction

Engagement with the Internet has often offered diasporic subjects a chance to express their voice and challenge stereotyping and marginalizing discourses about them propagated by traditional media. In the resulting discursive negotiations a crucial role in portraying diasporic identities is often played by the performative use of the multilingual repertoires accessible to diasporic subjects.

As Roma can be regarded as a diaspora and they increasingly engage with the Internet, questions arise concerning their usage of the medium: are they taking advantage of the possibilities it offers? And if yes, how?

Considering the difficulties of looking at the whole of the Romani population as a unified diaspora, I will focus on a recently re-diasporised community originating from Mitrovica, Kosovo. The representational choices made by a group of musicians from the community in creating and running *Radio Romani Mahala* (RRM), an on-line radio, are analysed through an ethnographic approach. The subtle blending of images and multilingual texts in the homepage and the musical repertoire being broadcasted indexically point at the self-perceived identities of the creators of the radio and their desired audience.

The description of the website will provide a starting point for the analysis of the interactions taking place on the chat hosted by the site. Particular attention will be paid to the discourses produced by the chat users, their language choices and the switches and mixing they perform. The analysis will show a continuity between the identities represented by the site creators and those performed by the site users. Interestingly, the representational content of such performances is often not acknowledged by the users who rather seem more interested in recreating the conviviality of the homeland.

I will argue that, free from the constraints of more traditional media, the site creators achieved to represent a cosmopolitan dimension they consider central to the identities of the Mitrovica Roma. This cosmopolitan dimension resonates with the everyday practices of users who actually embed it in their own identity performances. This results in extremely complex linguistic interactions which, combined with the non-essentialising representation provided by the website and the actual layered identities performed by users, keeps outsiders away from RRM. In such a context the representational content of interactions is thus downplayed while the joint performance of conviviality allows users to create a new homeland. These findings suggests it is crucial to complement our analysis of 'confrontational' on-line spaces used by diasporas with the more private ones in which more mundane, but yet crucially important identity performances can take place.

2.2   Diasporas on the Internet

During the last two decades, the Internet has proved to be a favourite medium among many diasporas as it helped them to remain in touch with their homeland by widening the reach of traditional mass media (Sinclair & Cunningham, 2000). Furthermore, various other Internet tools such as search engines, private e-mails, newsgroups, forums, chats and websites produced by diaspora members are also largely employed. [1]

Mitra notes how users of diasporic webspaces re-establish severed familiar relationship and constantly debate and redefine their identities. As opposed to traditional media that have often spoken for and about diasporic subjects in stereotypical ways, Mitra notes how the Internet is redesigning the patterns of ownership of means of message production. This change offers diasporas the chance to voice their opinion and challenge dominant discourses about them (Mitra, 1997; 2001; 2003).

Furthermore, as noted by Qiu (2003) many diasporic websites make a point of stimulating community awareness. Diasporic websites, "by mobilising such shared values as culture, national identity and community awareness" (Qiu 2003: 155) provide safe and comfortable spaces for diasporic people to 'hang out', share their experiences and thus create and maintain virtual communities. Considering all these elements, it appears that diasporic virtual communities and the spaces they inhabit are characterized by the active production of discourse and "the productive construction of new hybrid identities and cultures through the […] process of maintenance and negotiation between […] home and host culture" (Sinclair, Cunningham, 2000: 15).

Various other authors have also noted how diasporic webspaces are characterised by the usage of both English and heritage languages and how language

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[1] As this research was planned and started before the explosion in popularity of social networks no literature about their usage by diasporas was still available. The papers in the special issue of the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 'Migration and the Internet: Social Networking and Diasporas' (38/9, November 2012) deal with the topic.

choice and codeswitching serve various discourse related functions such as re-framing communication as informal, mitigating face-threatening acts, marking content as jocular and highlighting attention-seekers, insults and appeals. At the same time, switching into heritage languages is often used as a display of ethnic identity, particularly through fixed expressions such as salutations and similar formulae. It is therefore suggested that these behaviours foster a sense of solidarity among speakers while simultaneously showing speakers' desire to express local identities in global contexts (Georgakopoulou, 1997; 2004; McClure, 2001; Paolillo 1996; 1999; 2001; Sperlich, 2005).

It is important to stress that many of these authors put heritage languages and English in a binary opposition, with heritage languages indexing indigenous culture and authenticity and English marking host cultures and values like assimilation and rootlessness. Androutsopoulos' study of German-based diasporic websites (2006; 2007) provides a more nuanced picture of these linguistic practices by distinguishing between edited content, produced by the websites' owners, and users' content, produced by users in forums hosted on the same websites. In the majority of the cases, edited content is dominantly in German due to the commercial nature of the websites and the owners' orientation toward a multi-ethnic audience based in Germany. Such choice determines the prevalence of German in users' content as well. Heritage languages, however, are still employed in the same ways discussed above. German and heritage languages, however, do not stand in a clean opposition. The picture is complicated by the presence of English both in edited and users' content. The co-presence of English, heritage languages and German in the edited content is chiefly attributed to a desire to align the websites with the so-called global culture for commercial purposes while at the same time retaining a sense of ethnic identity. In users' content, the usage of heritage languages does not simply index ethnicity and the usage of English index an uncritical adoption of global culture. Switching between English, German and home languages, instead indexes multiple cultural affiliations, each language used as an icon of individual identities, including but not limited to ethnicity.

It seems clear that the performative usage of complex multilingual repertoires plays a crucial role in portraying the diasporic identities that are at centre of the identity negotiations considered typical of diasporic webspaces.

Based on linguistic evidence that identify the Roma origin in India and considering their dispersal across Europe over the past five centuries (Matras, 2002), Roma have often been regarded as a diaspora. Many Roma activists, furthermore, have grounded their call for unity and mobilisation on an understanding of themselves as diasporic subjects sharing a common Indian origin and a history of marginalisation. In the efforts of these activists, the Romani language has been an emblem of unity allowing for the emergence of a transnational Romani identity (Matras, 2015). It has also been suggested that, on webspaces used by Roma activists, the content of discussions and the usage of both Romani and various major European languages closely match the descriptions of webspaces used by other diasporas (Leggio, 2011b; 2012). At the same time, very little is known about the behaviour of Roma Internet users outside of those spaces specifically devoted to

the fight for Roma rights. Furthermore, an analytical category such as diaspora can be problematic when applied to individuals who, in spite of their commonalities and a condition of dispersal, might not regard themselves as diasporic. In the following sections, I will therefore clarify how particular Roma groups can be regarded as diasporic and then look at the ways in which lay Roma use the Internet and at the kind of identities they embrace on it.

2.3   The Mitrovica Roma and Radio Romani Mahala diasporas on the Internet

The classic definition of diaspora proposed by Safran rests on three core factors: migration from a historical homeland, preservation of the memory of this homeland and the perception by diasporic subjects that "they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host countries" (1991: 83-84). As some prototypical examples of diasporas such as Jews and Armenians, the Roma are indeed conscious of their marginal status in the host societies and have resisted complete assimilation. What sets them apart is the lack, except in activist narratives, of any widespread consciousness of their common origin in India. However, as noted by Silverman (2012), even if India does not feature as the homeland for all of the Roma, individual groups that have migrated out of Eastern Europe in the past forty years regard and cherish the places they have left as their homelands. Silverman therefore argues that the dispersal of such smaller groups constitutes a genuine process of diasporisation and charts the dense networks of transnational communication created by Balkan Roma and the identity negotiations taking place through them. She also hints at the increasing importance of the Internet in creating and supporting such networks. In order to look at this role of the Internet and, in particular, at the functions played by the languages employed in processes of identity formation and maintenance, I will now introduce one such group of recently dispersed Roma and the main website they used between 2004 and 2011.

One of their self-designations, Mitrovica Roma, clearly suggests that this group originates from Mitrovica, Kosovo. They were fully urbanised and the majority of the community lived in the Romani *mahala* 'district' along the river Ibar (Lapov, 2004; Leggio 2011a). Their other self-definition, *Xoraxane Roma* 'Muslim Roma', points at their religious affiliation. However, they also openly participated in various Christian, both Orthodox and Catholic, celebrations.

Since the late 1970's they periodically migrated to Western Europe for economical reasons. Following the Yugoslavian conflicts in the 1990's they permanently settled between Germany, France and Italy. Some of them were accepted as refugees, while other maintained their status as labour migrants. In France[2] and Germany they were allowed to settle in regular houses. In Italy, although fully sedentary, they were generally accommodated in camps for nomad, thus margin-

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[2] See Section 1, Chapter 2.

alizing them and forcing them into nomadism (Lapov, 2004).[3] Since the official resolution of the conflict in Kosovo in 2006, the German government targeted them (as well as other Kosovo Roma) for repatriation, a solution strongly opposed by Roma as they generally lost their houses in the conflict and do not feel safe about returning to Kosovo (Knaus, 2011; Visoka, Beha 2010). Finally, in France, although not directly targeted by the recent repatriation policy, Mitrovica Roma are suffering from the increasing anti-Roma attitude of the national authorities. Speaking Romani, Albanian, Serbo/Croatian, in certain cases also Turkish before their dispersal (Leggio, 2011a), Mitrovica Roma also added the languages of their current countries of residence to their linguistic repertoire. Another change experienced by the community following its dispersal has been the enthusiastic and massive embracement of the Internet. Between October 2009 and May 2011 the main hub of their Internet presence was a web-radio named *Radio Romani Mahala*[4] (RRM).

Created by Sultano and Elvis, two musicians living in France and owners of a small recording studio also offering photo and video footages at community celebrations, the site has been active since 2004. The technology used to broadcast is provided by Flatcast[5], a German-based portal for multimedia streaming offering free peer-to-peer facilities, including a chat functionality. The facilities offered by Flatcast must be embedded into a pre-existing website, which in the case of RRM is based on the free platform offered by the German company Beepworld.de[6]. Neither Beepword.de nor Flatcast.com have any control over the content created by the RRM owners and they have added element after element to the site. This results in an unusually long homepage that stretches over about six average-size screens.

The homepage opens with the website name (Figure 1). In it, not only the *romani mahala* is mentioned, but the river Ibar as well. Furthermore Kosovo (in this instance only spelled according to Albanian conventions) and Mitrovica are also mentioned. Immediately under the website name is a first address, in Romani, to the audience: *tumencar si i ekipa ko radio* 'the radio team is with you' followed by the DJs names.

The welcome message, written in the community languages prior to its dispersal (in the following order: Serbo/Croatian, Albanian, Qur'an Arabic and Romani), further reinforces the website connection with Mitrovica and Kosovo. Mostly in Serbo/Croatian, but also using plenty of internationalisms is the phrase presenting the website: *original net kafe chat radio za sve nacije i genracije* 'original net café chat radio for all nations and generations'. Finally, the message wishing good listening to the audience is entirely in Romani: *I ekipa taro o radio mandjol tu-*

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[3] See Section 1, chapter 3.
[4] http://www.beepworld.de/members97/romani-mahala/. Since 2011 Facebook has progressively become the on-line space of choice for the Mitrovica Roma but at the time of my fieldwork (2009-2011) its usage was limited.
[5] www.flatcast.com
[6] www.beepworld.de

menje sukar asunipe ko nevo bersh -- 2011 'the radio team wishes you good listening for the new year -- 2011'.

Figure 1: RRM homepage 1 (Accessed 14-05-2011)

On the left of the screen is the navigation menu, followed by a promotional banner by Beepworld.de. After four default links to the homepage, to RRM's email, to a guestbook (with no messages left on it) and a feedback form, is a link to a now closed French-based NGO, URYD (Union of the Roma of former-Yugoslavia in Diaspora[7].) The following links are to news sites, other on-line radios and on-line TVs.

All the radios are offshoots of RRM itself. I have never seen *Radio Kamlipe* 'love' active and it seems to be kept as a backup in case RRM should fail. The other two radios, *Romano Ilo* 'Romani hearth' and *Romano Tarikati* 'Romani way' (from Qur'an Arabic *tariqa* 'way, road') were active only during the Muslim festivities celebrated by the community and only broadcasted Islamic prayers. A German-based Bosnian website offering a selection of MP3 and transcriptions of Islamic prayers is linked along with the radios. Finally all the on-line TVs and news portals are produced by non-Roma (in Serbo/Croatian, Albanian and English) but originate from or are dedicated to Mitrovica and Kosovo. Along these external links there are a few internal ones leading to YouTube video galleries of singers from the community, to a photo gallery of Sultano, Elvis and the other DJs and to a selection of Qur'an chapters with Serbo/Croatian translation.

[7] Up until 2008, URYD coordinated the efforts of various smaller NGOs assisting Yugoslav Roma trying to settle in France

Figure 2: RRM homepage 2 (Accessed 14-05-2011)

The Beepworld.de banner continues down the page beside more multimedia content (Figure 2). An animated picture of the European Union flag and the Romani phrase *ma bistren tumaro thand* 'don't forget your country' precede a video documenting the situation of the *mahala* ten years after the conflict and a picture of a NATO soldier during the military intervention.

Figure 3: RRM homepage 3 (Accessed 14-05-2011)

The animated picture of a credit card introduces the promotional section of the homepage (Figure 3). Here, along with more animated pictures there are the contact details of Sultano's studio and a list of the services offered. Of particular interest is the presence of a stylised version of the Romani flag as a background for a white dove and musical instruments considered traditional of the Kosovo Roma.

RRM homepage clearly shows how Sultano and Elvis are promoting an image of the website as an open, cosmopolitan space while at the same time creating a memorial to their lost homeland.

While the use of Romani and the naming of the radio itself serve the latter function, the use of the main languages of Kosovo, the opening of the website to all nations and generations and the European Union flag hint at their cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, the usage of Qur'an Arabic and the links to radios and websites dealing with Islam together with the links to non-Roma websites dedicated to Mitrovica and Kosovo simultaneously celebrate the Roma and their religion and place them into the wider context of Kosovo and the world.

However, Sultano and Elvis are professionals and are thus also using the website to advertise the services they offer. Yet, even when advertising, they flag both their Romani-ness and their cosmopolitan attitude by inserting the Romani flag and other symbols of Romani identity together with a symbol of peace.

This subtle balancing between cosmopolitanism and specificity is further reinforced by the choice of tunes broadcasted. RRM repertoire is, exactly as the website, based on a cosmopolitan attitude and includes South Asian, Turkish, Serbian and Bosnian pop and folk music, Romani music from all around Europe and Western genres such as hip-hop and R&B. The majority of tunes broadcasted, and by far the most popular with the audience, are however songs in Romani mostly performed by musicians originating from the Mitrovica community. Interestingly, the younger musicians have started recording hip-hop and R&B songs in Romani.

The design of RRM homepage and the music it broadcasts clearly shows what seems to be the perceived identity of the community by the site owners. In this respect, the page conveys the sense of a diasporic, hybrid identity. However, as the product of a small group of individuals, it tells nothing about the radio users' attitudes and ideas about their own identities. In order to understand them I will therefore look at the interactions taking place on the chat.

2.4 Chat interactions

Considering how overt identity negotiations featured prominently in the literature about diasporic webspaces, it was surprising to find out that no such discussion occur on RRM chat. Users mostly use Romani and generally prefer to engage in mundane talks about the places they have been to and the persons they have met, their day-to-day struggles at or to find work and the ups and downs of family life. Yet, even these conversations constitute a relative minority of the messages and are largely overwhelmed by salutations and formalised shouting.

Addressing a salutation to the whole audience upon joining or on leaving the chat is a very strong norm on RRM. A typical sequence of greetings and responses is illustrated in Example 1.

	RRM message	Translation
a	Admir: selam aleykum sarinenge ko radio (18:22:25)	*selam aleykum to everyone on the radio*
b	U1: JASAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA (18:22:28)	*c'moooooooooooooooon*
c	Admir: zdr zdr dj (18:22:29)	*hello hello dj*
d	*ROMANI MAHALA*: ALEKIM SELMA ADMIR (18:22:33)	*aleykum selam Admir*
e	Admir: zdr zdr Guest94423807 (18:22:36)	*hello hello Guest94423807*
f	U2: hav ci korii jak emrahhhhhhhhhhh (18:22:36)	*I eat your blind eye emrahhhhhhhhhh*
g	MiiLKa_qoKoLLaDa*: POZ ADMIR (18:22:40)	*hello admir*
h	U2: zdrr admirr (18:22:43)	*hello admir*
j	U3: cekkkkkkkkkkkkkkkk emrah (18:22:45)	*c'mooooooooooon emrah*
k?	_-_EmRaH StYLe_-_: NA NA NAMANGAV TU MER PARO Guest94423807 HEHE (18:22:48)	*no no I don't want you to die badly Guest94423807 hehe*
l	U3: zdr admir (18:22:52)	*hello admir*
m	MiiLKa_qoKoLLaDa*: MMMMMMMM (18:22:53)	*Mmmmmmmm [singing noise]*
n	*ROMANI MAHALA*: TEHRA SI ABAV AMENDE O ERMINI IBRAHIMIIIII JOJJJJJJJ (18:22:53)	*there's a party tomorrow at our place ermin ibrahim c'mooon*

Example 1: Greetings and formalised shouting

Admir had just joined the chat. In quick succession he first addressed the Islamic greeting inserted in a Romani sentence (1.a) to the whole chat and then a Romani greeting (*zdr* a shortening for *zdravo* 'hello') specifically to the DJ (1.c). The first of Admir's choices can be regarded as marked, as it flags his identity as a Muslim Roma. The DJ quickly replied (1.d) and although having been addressed specifically with a Romani, un-marked greeting, chooses the Islamic, marked one. Doing so, he acknowledged both the presence of Admir and his apparent desire to forefront his identity as a Muslim Roma. However, Admir then turned to another user and greeted him using *zdr* again. At this point a number of other users (1.g, 1.h, 1.l) greeted Admir. Contrary to the DJ, they used Romani greetings (*zdr* and *poz,* another shortening for *pozdravo* 'hello'). They, therefore, preferred Admir's unmarked choice and aligned themselves to it by greeting him simply as a Roma. It is worth noting that the Romani greetings are, in the dialect of the Mitrovica Roma, well-established borrowings from Serbo/Croatian. On RRM chat, they are also the only Romani words that people abbreviate, following norms that are common on Serbian-only chats (Hentschel 1998).

1.b and 1.j also show the usage of formalised shouts. In off-line communication, such words are shouted during *abava,* community celebrations like weddings, circumcisions or religious festivities. *Abava* always involve music performances, and these words, used by singers to punctuate and give rhythm to their singing, are also exchanged among audience members and between the audience and the musicians. They are used to encourage people to dance and to express appreciation for the music played. On the chat they are used similarly to show appreciation for the music and to encourage users to participate in the conversations.

Although apparently empty of content, they recreate the atmosphere of the *abava.* In Mitrovica, *abava* took place in the street in front of the celebrating family's house and any resident of the *mahala* was aware of it and could join in, even if just with a greeting and a shout. This is of course impossible today as families

live in different places. However, when a family celebrates something, plans and arrangements are made plenty in advance so that at least part of those residing elsewhere can join. RRM itself is used to let people know an *abav* is taking place, as shown in 1.n. *Abava* obviously constitute an occasions during which at least a portion of the community can be reunited. RRM, with its music and chat and its virtual presence in any family that owns a networked computer, offers this same opportunity on a daily basis.

As in any off-line festive gathering, people on RRM take the opportunity to catch up with friends and relatives, to have relaxed conversations and to build new relationships. The fleeting nature of party talks is not affected by the break-ing down of conversational turns typical of chat conversations and actually fit into it almost naturally. Similarly, the joyful atmosphere created by the music and shouts reinforces the light and playful tone of chat conversations. Given this fes-tive atmosphere, maintenance of the community takes place through small talks interspersed with jokes and humour.

	RRM messages	Translation
a	U1: zdr farija (18:31:47)	*hello farija*
	2 messages cut	
b	U1: sar san tu (18:31:48)	*how are you*
c	_* FARiJA *_ : ZDR U1 (18:31:56)	*hello U1*
	2 messages cut	
d	_* FARiJA *_ : SUPER SIJUM (18:31:58)	*I'm super*
e	_* FARiJA *_ : thx(18:31:59)	*thx*
f	_* FARiJA *_ : a tu (18:32:00)	*and you*
	2 messages cut	
g	U1: super (18.32:06)	*super*
	4 messages cut	
h	U1: katar san tu farija (18:32:13)	*where are you from farija*
	77 messages cut	
i	_* FARiJA *_ : U1 Me Italia sem (18:33:40)	*U1 I'm from Italy*
l	_* FARiJA *_ : a tu (18:33:42)	*and you*
	20 messages cut	
m	U1: mesem tari fr farija (18:34:04)	*I'm from fr farija*
	4 messages cut	
n	U1: sode bos si tut farija (18:34:14)	*how old are you farija*
	52 messages cut	
o	_* FARiJA *_ : U1 BUT PURI SEM TUCE (18:35:38)	*U1 I'm too old for you*
	3 messages cut	
p	_* FARiJA *_ : PARDOSNKI (18:35:45)	*I'm sorry*
	194 messages cut	
q	U1: farija si tut msn ce korije (18:41:58)	*farija do you have msn you blind one*
	15 messages cut	
r	_* FARiJA *_ :VA U1 SIMAN SE ACIVE NI ACILO KONI BI MSN GANE VI MI MAMI SILA MSN (18:42:22)	*of course U1 I have* [it] *but if no one lives without msn today you know even my grandma has msn*
	12 messages cut	
s	U1: ka dema co msn farija ako madje (18:42:48)	*let's give me your msn farija if you want*
	4 messages cut	
t	_* FARiJA *_ : MO U1 SAFAR MSN MANCE BREE (18:43:10)	*hey U1 but what msn do you want brooo*
u	~ danijela ~: pozzz svima (18:43:13)	*hello everyone*
v	_* FARiJA *_ : NAJ MAN TUCE MO MSN (18:43:16)	*I don't have my msn for you*
w	_* FARiJA *_ : SORRY (18:43:17)	*sorry*

Example 2: Establishing connections

The chat also offers a chance to (re)establish connections with distant community members. As people are on-line with their user-names, efforts are put into discov-ering who the person behind a user-name is. The accepted routine for doing that involves asking where people live, who their relatives and friends are, how old are them and so on in the hope of finding out that people either know each other off-line or have some acquaintances in common. The asking and answering of ques-

tions is mutual, often punctuated with jokes and other small talks. Example 2 will illustrate this together with some of the strategies users employ to present their individual identities.

* FARiJA * regularly presented herself on the chat as a strong, modern woman, but still tied to Romani values and culture, which she shown by her preference to write in Romani. She always showed herself as self-confident and independent. Because of that, she tended to receive much attention from male users. At the same time she was quite selective about whom she was interacting with and often rebuked unwanted approaches with sharp comments.

For the previous hour or so, U1 had been trying, with some success, to get women's Windows Messenger (MSN) addresses to carry out private conversations. However, most of the women he had interacted with had left the chat and most likely also their MSN. He then turned his attention to _* FARiJA *_ and asked how she was, a tried and tested icebreaker on RRM (2.a, 2.b). _* FARiJA *_ reciprocated the greeting in Romani (2.c) then, using *super,* an internationalism common in young people speech in various countries, stated she was feeling great (2.d). She also thanked U1 using a shortening for *thanks* (2.e). Then, in Romani, she gave him a chance to start a conversation (2.f), to which U1 replied using the same internationalism employed by _* FARiJA *_ (2.g). This was a smart move by U1 as he managed to retain _* FARiJA *_ attention and find out where she is from (2.h to 2.m).

However, _* FARiJA *_ attitude changed as soon as U1 asked for her age (2.n). Asking for the age of someone from the opposite sex is generally regarded on RRM as an attempt at starting a flirtatious conversation, provided the two people involved are more or less of the same age. Therefore _* FARiJA *_, who was clearly not interested, first let U1 wait for more than a minute then, without saying her age nor asking for his, just stated she was too old for U1 (2.o). She anyway sweetened the refusal (2.p) by switching to a slang expression common among Southern Italian teen-agers and young adults. This expression, French *pardon* with a Slavic-sounding end (*-ski*), is however meant to be slightly sarcastic and anyway conclusive of any previous discussion.

Apparently U1 accepted that and for the next six minutes he did not try to interact with _* FARiJA *_. However, he later tried another approach and asked if she had a MSN account (2.q) closing his request with a very common Romani moniker, generally reserved for unruly girls. _* FARiJA *_, after making him wait again, using only Romani shoved him off and ridiculed him by displaying her persona of a modern woman (2.r). Yet, U1 insisted in his request, although now he looked less self-confident (2.s). _* FARiJA *_ then reacted aggressively and, using only Romani, violently dismissed U1's request. However, she then switched to English to close the interaction and mitigate her previous message (2.t to 2.w).

Clearly, while in her first messages _* FARiJA *_ was using Romani, English and internationalisms to engage in a friendly conversation with U1, in the ones from 2.o onwards, Romani became the language of distance and even aggression and English and Italian slang were used to mitigate these feelings and to save

face. Even in spite of this change, the portrayal of _* FARiJA *_ persona remained constant, thus it is not a single language that conveys it, but rather the whole of her linguistic repertoire.

	RRM Message	Translation
a	_-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_: <<<<< CIAOO KO RADIO MANDAR KA SUNDIJA PALO 12H00 (18:34:31)	<<<<<<< *goodbye to the radio from me catch you at around 12H00*
	8 messages cut	
b	U3: lele emrah (18:34:45)	[*mocking sound*] *emrah*
c	_-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_: CIAOO SVIMA DanieleItalianoDilo BYE BYE PI PAJ HEHE (18:34:45)	*goodbye everyone DanieleItalianoDilo goodbye drink some water hehe*
	3 messages cut	
d	_* FARiJA *_ : Ciao Emrah Ga Muzi e gurumnjen (18:34:55)	*Goodbye Emrah Go Torment the cows*
e	MiiLKa_qoKoLLaDa*: NAA EMRAHJ KAJ DJAAAAAAAAAAA (18:34:55)	*noo emrah where are you gooooooooooing*
	1 message cut	
f	U3: emrah (18:34:56)	*emrah*
	2 messages cut	
g	U13: CIAO EMRAH (18:35:04)	*goodbye emrah*
	3 messages cut	
h	_-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_: FARIJA AVAV TE MUZIV TU HEHE (18:35:06)	*farija I come to torment you hehe*
i	edy.boy: HOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO 18:35:12)	*hooooooooooo*
j	_* FARiJA *_ : DIK CE KO SUNO (18:35:14)	*look joh in your dreams*
k	U3: ahahhaahahahahah (18:35:14)	*ahhahahahahaha*
l	U14: bes emrah kaj ca tu (18:35:15)	*stay emrah where do you go*
	185 messages cut	
m	_-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_: CIAOO KO RADIOO KA SUNDIJA POSLEM DanieleItalianoDilo BISOU POUR LES FILLES POUR LES MEC BOX (18:41:24)	*goodbye to the radio catch you later DanieleItalianoDilo a kiss to the girls to the guys a punch*
	15 messages cut	
n	U7: HAJT AKANA MO EMRAH CA LELE SODE DROMA KA PENE CAO (18:41:42)	*c'mon now bro emrah go* [*mocking sound*] *how many time will you say goodbye*

Example 3: Humor

As both entering the chat and interacting in it offer a chance to portray users' own identities, similarly leaving can offer a chance to strengthen these identities. Example 3 shows an interminable goodbye performed by _-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_, a young man regularly portraying himself as a prankster without equals and a self-styled ladies' man.

As _-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_ announced he was leaving, but will come back later (3.a), most of the women present at that moment wished him goodbye but at the same time tried to make him stay (3.b, 3.e, 3.f, 3.g).

He ignored all of them to wish another general goodbye and, with a switch into English he teased me about the fact I had just said I was having a beer (3.c, my message not included in the excerpt). At this point _* FARiJA *_, with whom he is good friend, intervened and true to her persona pushed him away, suggesting he could take his pranks somewhere else (3.d). He instead took her message as a hook for staying and threatened to make her the victim of his jokes (3.h). _* FARiJA *_ answer came shortly after and reminded him of who he was dealing with

(3.j). The hook _-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_ was waiting for came from U14, another woman, who asked him where he was going (3.l). He stated he was going to have some kebab and for the following five minutes he kept inviting people to join him just to drop them with a joke. Then (3.m) he wished another general goodbye and a menacing 'see you later' to his latest victim, me. Finally, to show how good he is with women, he switched into French to send kisses to the girls and punches to us boys. However, he was still not done and as a girl asked him to stay a bit more he hung around, silently, until U7 jokingly invited him to actually leave (3.n). The few switches in _-_EmRaH°StyLe_-_ goodbye are again strategic as they either create or reinforce a bond through some shared knowledge or experience (his using English to wish me goodbye, 3.c) or serve to depict the user's persona (his using French, the stereotypical language of love to appear as a lady's man, 3.m).

Example 2 and 3 clearly shows how humour and the desire to represent oneself as a strong persona drastically complicate the association of Romani, as language of identity, with the community and that of other languages, as languages of utility, with outsiders. Rather, all the resources in each individual user's linguistic repertoire are mobilized depending on the specific and situated communicative goals each user is pursuing and the particular identity they want to portray.

The search for relatives and friends, immersed in the on-line recreation of off-line community gatherings is what, I will suggest, makes RRM chat a diasporic space. In this space, contrary to what has been observed on other diasporic webspaces, the community and its essence are not debated and represented to insiders and outsiders. Rather, on RRM chat the Mitrovica Roma community is recreated and users perform their being members of such a community. This, together with the general light tone of the discussion, can also explain why serious discussions relating to the host countries and the wider society are avoided. RRM simply is not the place where to *talk about being a Mitrovica Roma* in any given country, but the place where to *be a Mitrovica Roma*.

Being a Mitrovica Roma, however, is not a monolithic, uncomplicated identity shared by all participants, but rather a dynamic set of overlapping practices enacted by each individual user in different ways and at different times. This is particularly evident in the behaviour of certain users, those ones I referred to as strong personas. They constitute a pool of regular users who over time have established themselves as dominant characters on the chat. Each developed their unique personal on-line identity by blending different behavioural facets of what can be regarded as stereotypical characters, like the prankster, the ladies' man, the independent woman, into the norms and practices that makes RRM chat a diasporic space.

Given the textual nature of interactions on RRM, the use of various languages plays a crucial role, both in interactions overall and in the efforts of strong personas in sustaining their on-line identities. In turn, the mixing and switching between various languages help to further characterize RRM chat as a diasporic space in which multiple identities are enacted.

2.5   Mitrovica Roma on-line identities

I have suggested that, free from constraints imposed by outsiders, RRM owners have created site that is a memorial to the lost homeland. Furthermore, I have shown how RRM users recontextualise community norms and practices, such as formalized shouting, within the new domain offered by the Internet. At the same time, new practices such as searching for acquaintances, exchanging MSN contact details and, most strikingly, the regular usage of written Romani emerged spontaneously.

Although analysing it will be beyond the scope of the present paper, the usage of written Romani is striking as none of RRM users have had any formal training in Romani literacy. It will suffice to say here that RRM users' way of employing this non-standardised, still developing language closely match the practices of both other lay Roma on social media (Leggio & Matras forthcoming) and of institutional actors involved in Romani standardisation (Friedman, 2005, Halwachs, 2011, 2012).

Interestingly, however, the usage of written Romani is not embedded into any attempt at gaining a voice in public debates about the community itself and its links with the wider European Roma population. Using Romani on Internet, instead, serves to recreate the conviviality of the homeland. In doing so, users do not display purist and exclusionary attitudes by subscribing to a monolithic idea of what being Mitrovica Roma should be. Rather each RRM user performs their own personal, hybrid identities. Such personal identities retain a shared sense of Romani-ness at their core, flagged through the dominant usage of Romani. Yet RRM users access and deploy forms from all the different linguistic repertoires they are exposed to. Their preference for certain forms over others is guided by communicative targets (i.e.: achieving humour, asking politely) and at the same time by the desire to portray oneself simultaneously as a Roma from Mitrovica living in the diaspora but also as participating in wider circles (i.e.: Islam, the global popular culture).

RRM linguistic practice is then characterized by the usage of what Blommaert and Backus (2013) define as superdiverse repertoires. As they suggest, superdiverse repertoires are by no means limited to diasporic, mobile populations but rather constitute the basis of most linguistic practices in the contemporary, globalised world. The usage of any linguistic resource is valued on the basis of its indexicality, its capacity to point "towards socially and culturally ordered norms, genres, traditions, expectations" (Blommaert, 2010: 33). As a result, depending on the given socio-cultural context some elements "are systematically perceived as valuable, others as less valuable and some are not taken into account at all" (Blommaert, 2010: 38).

The various elements in the repertoires employed by RRM users have clear indexical values and are displayed "in order to make sense to others, that is, in order to operate within the norms and expectations" (Blommaert, Backus, 2013: 29) characteristic of RRM chat. Romani is indexical of the ethnic ties shared by users. Serbo/Croatian, French, German and Italian index their condition as a diaspora.

Qur'an Arabic points to belonging to Islam. English and internationalisms, particularly those abbreviated following on-line conventions, display a positive orientation towards global popular culture. On the other hand, the absence of any prescriptive attitude suggests that no element is valued more than the others. As RRM users are aiming at recreating the conviviality of the homeland in their mundane practices, they use all the available linguistic resources. As long as successful communication, and thus conviviality, is achieved the usage of any resource in their repertoires is accepted without questions.

This does not mean that RRM users are unaware of the values each resource in their repertoires can assume in different settings. In fact, given RRM users' more or less overt refusal to engage in any critical reflection about their practices, I am not in a position to describe what their broader attitudes towards the elements in their repertoires might be. Nor can I claim that their attitude erases the stratification of languages based on the socio-cultural values attributed to them. Rather, the point is that this stratification is temporarily ignored.

As a result the linguistic interactions emerging through users' practices on RRM are extremely complex, comprising many overlapping and not clearly bounded linguistic forms. This means that outsiders are only able to participate on RRM chat if they can master the Mitrovica Roma truncated repertoires. Furthermore, as RRM homepage offers an image of being Roma that does not match the expectations of outsiders, they are even less likely to access the site. As a result, when on RRM chat, users are not faced with essentialising discourses and are thus able to freely engage in a series of practices, through which they display their individual and group identities apparently without thinking about what these practices and performances might come to represent for outsiders. In such environment there is, as far as I have seen, no space for the emergence of discussions about a supposedly unique and true identity as Mitrovica Roma.

Considering how much theorising has been produced around the issues of representations and self-representations of diasporas, particularly regarding their engagement with the Internet, it is worth reflecting upon the absence of this characteristic from RRM interactions.

As I noted earlier, the majority of Romani activist website or newsgroup closely match the common academic description of diasporic webspaces The narratives representing Romani identity produced in such spaces might vary in details, but often converge in presenting the whole Romani population as a single diaspora, united by its language and striving to overcome a century long condition of marginalization and discrimination. In these narratives, distinctions based on religious affiliation, country of residence and class are very often put aside.

In her work about diasporic Balkan Roma in the US, Silverman (2012) similarly notes how "Roma constitute a multiplicity of cultures that neither intermarry nor identify as one group; this variation is erased by conceiving of the Romani diaspora as a unified cultural unity" (40). Furthermore she stresses how "enactment of identity via performative genres, especially music, is a visible, audible symbol in the Balkan Romani diaspora. Through performances, identity is conceptualized" (41). Yet she also notes that musicians, as much as activists, sometime capi-

talize on unified notions of the Romani diaspora when, in the pursuit of their goals, they have to represent it to non-Roma (see also Georgieva, 2006).

We can then assume that in every diaspora, on a regular basis, people perform their diasporic identities in everyday practices. Only in some occasions some of them, often in a position of material or cultural privilege, represent these identities to outsiders, often essentialising them in a single master narrative.

It would thus seem, as Gajjala (2002) noted, scholarly attention to the on-line presence of diasporas has so far only focused on the latter few.

Indeed in the early years of the Internet it is likely that diasporic subjects using it had "access to the same (or similar) power structures as the researcher. They, as much as [the researcher, were] anthropologists, reporting not just about [their] own diasporic communities […] but also […] about [their] host society/culture" (Gajjala, 2002:89). The discourses produced in such diasporic webspaces were thus similar and resonating with the academic discourses produced about diasporic subjects and, I would say unsurprisingly, caught the attention of researchers. Yet, over the years the Internet has become more accessible to underprivileged diasporic subjects.

As we have seen on RRM, rather than engaging in the same processes of representation documented in earlier research, underprivileged diasporic subjects replicate everyday performances on the Internet. This performative engagement with the medium allows them to maintain a sense of unity and shared belonging among community members. At the same time, it allows individuals to display varying orientations towards cultural elements drawn from the repertoires of the majority populations they are in contact with. These findings suggest that we should start reconsidering our approach to diasporic webspaces and shift the attention from 'confrontational' on-line spaces, used by privileged often politically engaged subjects, and also look at more private spaces in which mundane but yet crucially important identity performances take place.

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3
Uses and roles of ICT in transnational mobilities among Bulgarian Roma migrants in France

by *Alexandra Clavé-Mercier*

"The problem is all the modern conveniences that they are provided with here, and they are supplied with mobile phones by the city, and so they pass the word around and then many others arrive!"[1] When a neighbour of a Bulgarian Roma squat appeals to the municipal authorities at the local council meeting in a French provincial city in such a way, several aspects regarding these migrants come to the fore. We can discern a certain criticism, shared by numerous neighbours of the squat, of the host plan provided by the associations and political institutions for the Roma migrants. To think that the city council would supply telephones to migrants within the implementation of its hosting policy is a significant sign. Apart from this criticism, the common portrayal of migrants is clearly at stake: the perception of Roma migrants living precariously in squats does not coincide with the fact that they own mobile phones. Now, reality clearly shows that one can be a Roma while, at the same time, being connected! But what for? It is interesting to highlight that these telephones, which are visible because often used, are considered as a decisive factor in explaining Roma migration. Methods of representation are clearly at the heart of the matter, the underlying idea being that if Roma migrants use their phones so much, they are using them to bring over other members of their families.

This premise reflects the generalized fear of the well known "suction effect" which characterizes the reactions of both civil society members and associative, institutional and political stakeholders when confronted with the collocation of migrants in the urban wastelands of French cities, and more generally of west-

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[1] Minutes of the council meeting of the X district on 09 December 2011.

European cities. From this perspective, the role of mobile phones is specifically brought into question with regard to the connection between mobility and territorial anchorage. It is interesting to further examine this concept within the framework of a central question: How can an analysis of the use of ICTs by Bulgarian Roma migrants regarding their migratory dynamics and territorial boundaries give us information?

3.1   Communication as a confirmation of the community despite the distance

3.1.1   Uses of communication tools

The Roma here observed come from the Pazardzhik region in Bulgaria where they live in *mahala*, segregated neighbourhoods similar to ethnic ghettos where state-controlled infrastructures are almost non-existent. This spatial marginalization is flanked by economic marginalization due to the precarious nature of the everyday lives of these Roma who struggle to survive doing daily jobs in agriculture or unofficial cross-border trade (selling various products in the streets or in the *mahala*). Generally, they carry on as best they can. These Bulgarian Roma people are also subject to significant social marginalization which is manifest in their interactions with the "non-Roma" who strongly distance themselves from the Roma, and that is based as well on an underlying racial discrimination. In the French city where I conducted my fieldwork, there are many migrants living in squats where they have recreated a socio-spatial organization that is based on this social grouping, providing them with significant social and economic opportunities.

Although certain migrants do effectively own mobile telephones, as underlined in the introductory ethnographical quotation, many Roma use call shops to communicate with the members of their families staying in Bulgaria. The way these shops and mobile phones are used is interesting to observe.

Certain call shops, which can be traditionally found in the working-class and immigrant areas of the city since they are mostly used by migrants, are literally besieged by the Roma who, as it were, tend to make them their headquarters. The call shops used are those found in locations of the city that are strategic for the migrants' trade (next to an important transport hub, for example), but also those call shops whose employees or managers are considered friendly by the Roma – which is far from true in many cases, despite the lucrative aspect offered by the presence of the Roma. Popular call shops are also those selling coffee and having tables and chairs, so that one can wait until the person "over there" is available, or have a discussion with others who pass by, assimilate the information received from "over there" or exchange the latest information between here and there… Moreover, the majority of call shops also have computers, which the migrants use mainly for international communications via Skype. There are also cybercafés in the Bulgarian *mahala*, making it possible to have contacts with those who are not

present. These have multiplied in the last few years, concurrently with the opening of the European Union's borders and the recent waves of migrants towards the western countries. These places in particular, which bring together different means of communication, therefore play a major role in migratory life.

In general, the telephone, whether fixed and public or mobile and personal, is a central feature for Roma migrants as it enables them to keep in contact with their country, or rather with the geographically distant people who are nonetheless part of the social grouping and to receive and give information.

3.1.2 Uses of ICT emphasizing the social bonds

The use these migrants make of ICTs also underlines the importance of social bonds among the Roma. The Velichka case clearly shows the importance of the telephone in a couple relationship between a woman who spends most of her time in France, and her "partner" who is a microbus driver based in Bulgaria. Her mention of using the telephone is effective and significant as soon as she talks about her love relationship: she told me that her *"partner"* Suleyman sends her 50 euros each month. He is in Bulgaria, a microbus driver between Bulgaria and Portugal. They see each other now and then when he passes through [the shanty town], sometimes for some hours *"to drink a coffee"*, sometimes for *"one night"*. But they often speak on the phone, she adds.[2]

The mobile phone also serves to show one's prosperity when one goes back to Bulgaria: the newer, the better. The mobile phone owners who receive calls in Bulgaria from France are very proud and ostentatiously answer in the presence of others. The importance of the use of the mobile phone can also be seen by observing the transactions taking place around this object: it often acts as a bargaining chip within the social grouping, or even with "French" people. In effect, a large number of mobile phones are bought by men from "friends", in particular as exchange payment in the context of transactional sex. So Shefket, a young twenty-year-old, talks of his *"French friends"*, thanks to whom he knows that restaurant, that nightclub, or has spent the afternoon bathing in a private pool, or owns the latest mobile phone. The mobile phone, apart from its primary communication function, is therefore used both as an instrument for acquiring prestige in the community, and as a trading vehicle. In both cases, it is a question of fostering sociability bonds, even if with different objectives.

Television is also an information and communication tool that is widespread among migrant Roma living in squats, just as it is for Roma living in Bulgaria. By taking their television aerials with them in their frequent mobility between both countries, the Roma can watch the same programmes they watch in Bulgaria, and so be informed on the latest news or music through the videoclip channels. This therefore enables them (in France or in Bulgaria) to exchange opinions – which often leads to heated debates on all subjects such as economic, social or political news, or on the vicissitudes or the ending of the latest drama series. Some of the

[2] Field report, 30 January 2012.

latter are actively followed by everyone such as, for example, the Turkish series "Fatmagül", broadcast between 2010 and 2012, telling the story of a young woman confronting feelings and family honour within the framework of her marriage.[3]

ICT is therefore used by Bulgarian Roma migrants to stay in contact, keep informed, and maintain strong bonds with their country of origin, which demonstrates the crucial role ICT plays to foster the social enclave. Indeed, ICT is mainly used in the Roma social grouping (whether migrant and not), as shown by the frequent changes of the mobile telephone numbers which create many difficulties, that the staff in the French NGOs and the operators of institutions have to deal with… while in the community the new number is known by everyone.

3.2   ICT, a co-presence tool for Bulgarian Roma migrants

More than as a simple communication tool, ICT is used by the Bulgarian Roma observed to *remain together* despite the geographical distance created by their mobility.

3.2.1   ICT as tool and factor of transnational life

Analyzing their migratory dynamics, the numerous round trips of Roma between France and Bulgaria lead us to consider their everyday lives from a transnational perspective. Apart from the actual movement of goods and persons together with the transfer of a considerable amount of funds to Bulgaria, which are the most significant indicators of the transnational quality of Roma, other elements enable Roma migrants to live their daily lives in the transnational space between Bulgaria and France. Everyday life, made up of bonds, thoughts, in fact a simultaneous presence of "here" and "there", is tangibly represented by different means. For the most part these are the tools that make transnational life possible, such as those associated with the latest ICT. The Roma are no exception, since the means by which they can communicate, and even more be together in spite of the distance, are widely used by the migrants who can afford them (Nedelcu, 2009; Diminescu, 2010). Hence the importance for Roma migrants of call shops, which enable them to make cheaper international phone calls, of mobile phones and of the Skype computer software.

The use of Skype is given preference in the homes (in France as well as in Bulgaria) by computer owners, who are quite numerous now. This can be understood in relation to the privacy desired for these conversations and also, above all, on account of the particular use of this tool. In effect, it is not just only a matter of communicating in order to chat or to give and receive news, as I was able to observe in the squats every day. Very often, when Skype is on and one person is in

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[3] The imported series was a national success in Hungary, with a share of over 60% in 2012, as reported in the study "A year of television in the world" conducted by the French institute Médiamétrie.

communication with another and they can see each other on the screen (which is sought after and appreciated), it is not necessarily for having a conversation on a precise subject or only between two people. The use effectively made shows a desire to be "with the other" despite the distance: the other is present via the screen, as if he were in the room and could "follow" the everyday life unfolding before him. In this way the person in the shack here is not totally engaged in this conversation and may be doing several other things at the same time while he/she is talking, from time to time, with his/her far away relative. It is therefore not unusual to see people going in and out of the shack, saying a couple of words to the person on the screen, and carrying on with their business with the people physically present. Very often one can also see the entire family in front of the screen as also life "over there" unfolding before them. Sometimes Skype is on but the screen remains empty: the other person has gone off to do something else, he/she will return later, or perhaps another person will, or Skype may be switched off for one reason or another – errands to run, a friend to visit, a doctor's appointment. Moreover, no signal for the start or end of a conversation is used: no "good morning", no "goodbye"; the other person is there almost permanently, so it is not necessary.

The way the Roma use Skype in their everyday lives is therefore indicative of a desire for the other person's presence despite their geographical absence, and even more for an effective continuity of life within the social enclave beyond national borders, i.e. transnationally. So these "virtual" practices are no different from other practices that make up people's daily lives today (Vertovec, 2003; Nedelcu, 2009).

Other everyday objects also enable migrants to lead a transnational life and are clearly essential for them. They include the Bulgarian TV antenna box that accompanies them in their movements and also reflects their transnational lives, due to the need for help from a family member or friend to pay the monthly television antenna fees in Bulgaria. The importance of Bulgarian television in France is especially significant as regards children's education: learning by mimicking while watching music videos of *chalga*[4] stars, and also listening to Bulgarian – certain families worry about their children's lack of knowledge of Bulgarian in view of a possible return to Bulgaria one day in the future. The tool also enables Roma to spend time on French soil while at the same time being somehow virtually "present" in Bulgaria by being immersed in the language and indeed, in a different universe. In this perspective, ICT clearly provides the tools for building a transnational life, enabling the Bulgarian Roma people to live their daily lives at times "here", and at times "there", and not only *either* here *or* there.

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[4] The *chalga* is a Bulgarian popular folk music genre that began in the mid-Nineties. It mixes oriental rhythm with pop, and combines music and dance. It is mainly performed by Roma, and is similar to a *bona fide* "culture". See Ditchev, 2009 or Kurkela, 2007.

3.2.2 ICT in migration for renewing family organization

The use of ICTs in migration enables the Roma to get round certain marriage customs. It allows married women to maintain "virtually" daily bonds with their families when marriage used to mean geographical separation from them, or taking some distance from the parents-in-law.

Migratory life can effectively unsettle the life of a couple and of the family as it had been established in Bulgaria, i.e. *how it should have been*. Let's take, for example, the case of three married sisters who had arranged to meet in France together with their parents, as only siblings can do in Bulgarian *mahala*. They no longer live (at least during their stays in France) with their parents-in-law and, more extensively, with their families-in-law. This does not mean that the bonds between them have weakened, because they are maintained thanks to the daily and occasional tools (such as the return home) of transnational life, for example Skype, which is switched on almost permanently to allow them to communicate with the family (and family-in-law). Nevertheless, this new family organization created by migration and installation in transnationalism has greater consequences for women in their capacity as daughters-in-law. In effect, this enables them to escape, at least in the material sense, from the role of *bori* (daughter-in-law), as lived by the Roma. In other words, escape from the obligations and comments that necessarily arise in such situations[5]. Meliha, one of the sisters, pointed this out to me many times through malicious comments such as: *"I haven't done the housework today, but I don't care, my mother-in-law doesn't know!"; "Here I feel calm and relaxed, she doesn't make comments about my life, except when I talk to her about it, but I can switch off the computer!"*. In this case, ICT plays a specific role in the modification and organization of the family by introducing new leeway which the women seize to set themselves free – admittedly only relatively, but at least virtually – from family supervision.

For Bulgarian Roma, such new migratory dynamics translate themselves into changes concerning the family institution, whose contours are being redrawn, even though the family is still at the centre of concern and at the heart of daily social life. These elements may be considered as premises for changes in the everyday lives of Bulgarian Roma, especially as regards the social grouping. Changes for the Roma indeed seem inescapable following the upheavals brought about by these migratory dynamics; within a very short space of time, they have passed from a limited life in an enclave to an everyday life of surfing across the national, social, identity and symbolic boundaries which had restrained them in the past.

In the case of Bulgarian Roma migrants therefore, ICT appears to be a tool for co-presence, a driving force for transnational life. Furthermore, it acts as an "interfering system" with regard to geographical borders in order to establish a

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[5] On the status of the *bori*, cf. Iulia Hasdeu, 2008. Other similarities have been detected on this subject between the Căldărari Roma that she studied in Romania and the Bulgarian Roma in this study: the role, status, obligations and apprehensions of the *bori* are globally the same.

transnational daily life that consequently requires modifications, adjustments and changes, especially within the family sphere.

3.3 Conclusion

The use of ICT by Roma migrants shows that they are emotionally attached to their country of origin, but that this affection is associated with a strong attachment to the community, despite the physical, spatial and geographic distance that may exist between them. More than embodying a territorial attachment to the geographical contours defined by the Bulgarian nation-state, the Roma live in a transnational territory, a life determined by their mobility. It is understandable, therefore, that the territorial attachment of these Bulgarian Roma and their relationship with their nation-states are necessarily called into question by their insertion into this moving transnational territory where ICT plays an essential role. Lamia Missaoui, Fatima Qacha and Alain Tarrius (2013) have shown that the transmigrant himself/herself puts into question the *raison d'être* of the nation-states, as well as the power inherent to any territorial division: *"For some people, both rich and poor, the nation's contours and ideologies are slowly disappearing. The overthrow of influential landowners and of the power ascribed to them by their destitute subjects without property or legitimacy, is taking place before our eyes. It is the overthrow of the master-and-slave dialectic via a weakness in the chain: not owning anything and withdrawing oneself from local powers by creating moving expertise bestows a new power."* (Missaoui, Qacha, Tarrius, 2013: 182).

However, can we say that the Roma do not own anything? The importance that their homes in Bulgaria have for them, as well as the certain attachment for their country of origin highlighted by their circulation says the contrary. During their daily transnational lives, the Bulgarian Roma migrants seem to give particular importance to material goods: vehicles, computers and telephones feature as basic goods for transnationalism and they are the object of multiple transactions, revealing their importance since they provide the Roma with *"moving expertise"*. Therefore, if the Bulgarian Roma are a little different from the migrants observed by Missaoui, Qacha and Tarrius because of their (meagre) material possessions, nonetheless their relationship with the State, at the local level, seems to be similar. In fact, by living in the Bulgarian *mahala* deserted by the State, the Bulgarian Roma have already been putting a certain distance between themselves and the State. Even more, by virtue of their adherence to this moving territory, they continue to increase this distance, this independence from State power, which in turn has practical implications in terms of subjectivation: *"It is a happy realization: the new master, hungry for wealth, frees the poor from their local confinement, from the repeated stigmas of an enclave or the curse of an aimless wandering."* (Missaoui, Qacha, Tarrius, 2013: 183).

In this perspective, ICTs play an important role in "freeing" these Bulgarian Roma from confined living spaces contributing to the creation of a moving terri-

tory which is their own. The ICT tools, together with other aspects such as the possibility of moving and the experience of other inter-ethnic relationships with the "French", establish and feed new sociability bonds and the expansion of a field of possibilities that seems to be at the heart of an unprecedented and positive subjectivizing experience for these people.

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4

Improving citizenship?ICT practices in three "Roma integration projects" in France (Seine-Saint-Denis)

by *Adriana Panait Giurea and Clémence Lormier*

4.1. Introduction: integration projects "for Roma" in France

In the last fifteen years, despite the general framework of local and national rejection policies towards "migrant Roma" in France (Romanian and Bulgarian citizens living in precarious habitats – see chapter 2.1), some municipalities have taken the initiative of implementing social integration and housing programmes for some Roma families living in slums. The department of Seine-Saint-Denis (north-west of Paris), a former industrial area undergoing ample urban regeneration and particularly affected by the presence of squatters and slums, has been the site of various initiatives since 2007-2008. Some of these projects, named *"villages d'insertion"* by the public authorities and the operators of associations, consisted in selecting a group of people living in slums in order to identify "legitimate beneficiaries" of this initiative, according to the logic of "potential integrability" (Legros, 2010). The "beneficiaries", a selected minority,[1] received provisory housing and were sustained by the social services, while the others, the majority of the slum occupants, were evicted from their dwellings and/or sent back to their countries of origin. This selective procedure, which complies with the current immigration policies focused on the concept of "selective immigration", has often been criticized by grassroot NGOs. Although the "results" were somewhat limited and questioned (Olivera, 2013), the *"villages d'insertion"* projects pro-

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[1] Between15-20% of households counted in general. A *"village d'insertion"* hosts on average roughly fifteen families (about 80 persons).

moted by the prefectural authorities ("local state authorities") benefited from a certain degree of institutional and media recognition. However, public policies of hosting with regard to Roma migrants living in precarious conditions are far from being limited to just one type of project. For over fifteen years, in Seine-Saint-Denis as elsewhere, the municipalities and NGOs have been developing alternative programmes, less focused on social control and the selection of "good/deserving immigrants".

This chapter aims to report how ICT is used by the Roma and the social workers in such alternative "integration projects" that have been developed in three cities (Montreuil, Bobigny and Saint-Denis, in Seine-Saint-Denis) since 2008-2010. These projects all have in common the fact that they did not begin with a selection of the beneficiaries: all the families present in the squats or slums were included.[2] Moreover, the social support offered to these families was not aimed at "making them autonomous", but rather started from the principle that they were *already* autonomous and that this autonomy/independence is the main resource in order to facilitate their access to common rights and, ultimately, to permanent accommodation. In other words, it is not a matter of fitting the beneficiaries into a rigid and inflexible "national integration" scheme, but of adopting a flexible and pragmatic approach to local integration, based on the internal competences and dynamics of the families.

Following this principle the authors of this chapter, as employees of the Rues et Cités Association, have been involved with the beneficiary families of these projects for many years. The association works together with the municipalities of Montreuil, Bobigny and Saint-Denis to ensure social support for the families hosted in the integration sites. These families legally occupy serviced places (water, sanitary facilities, electricity), in modular structures or in caravans provided by the local authorities. Although their situation is less precarious than that of the inhabitants of illegal squats and slums, it is not necessarily less precarious given the forced overcrowding, the lack of sufficient sanitary infrastructures, and more generally, the considerable uncertainty regarding the duration and end results of these public hospitality programmes, which more often than not are launched and designed in emergency situations.

4.2 The Rues et Cités Association and the social support programme for Roma migrant families

The Rues et Cités Association was created in 1974 as a Specialized Prevention service (Peyre, 2006). Its objectives are child protection, the prevention of social exclusion and professional integration. Street educators are present in three cities in Seine-Saint-Denis: Montreuil, Bagnolet and Noisy-le-Sec. Moreover, from the very beginning the association has worked with Roma/Gypsy populations in the

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[2] Almost 100 families in Montreuil (350 people), 50 families in Saint-Denis (200 people) and 40 families in Bobigny (140 people).

department, in order to prevent social exclusion or marginalization of minors and their families. The Association's competence is recognized by its partners (professionals and regional authorities) thanks to its activities with different Roma/Gypsy communities in the area.

Following a fire in a large squat in Montreuil in 2008, where about fifty Romanian Roma families lived, Rues et Cités took part in the development of a large-scale integration and rehousing project. The project, which lasted five years, was conducted by the City of Montreuil and cofinanced by the Prefecture: three social workers were engaged to work with the families in different fields: schooling, health, access to rights, professional integration etc.

In 2011, the Association started on a second project in Saint-Denis, similar to that in Montreuil. In the summer of 2010, following the eviction of the slum called *Hanul* (see Section 1, Chapter 2), the municipality of Saint-Denis decided to help these families. Together with the families and their supporters (a group of activists and NGOs), they decided to set up a participatory housing and support project with the common objective of social integration and, ultimately, access to permanent housing. An inter-cultural mediator was assigned to this project by the Rues et Cités Association in January 2011.

Along these same lines, from July 2012 to May 2015, the Association took part in the monitoring of an integration project implemented in the city of Bobigny. In this more modest programme, the City identified a number of families who had been present in the district for many years, had been greatly marginalized and had been given no access to legal rights. The project was devised on the basis of the urgency of providing support for these families, and a caravan site opened in October 2012. A team of two social workers then assisted forty Roma families - about 140 persons. The team guaranteed its daily presence at the site until the premature end of the project, following a change in the local council (municipal elections of 2014), which put an end to the city's commitment towards these families.

Although these three projects had similar modes of intervention, they were implemented in very different ways, with regard both to partnerships and to the kind of funding received (State-funding or not, duration of the intervention, number of social workers and NGOs engaged in each programme, etc.). Despite these differences, the intervention guidelines remained the same. These were the following:

- to contribute to promoting good relations between the Roma families and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and of the whole city;
- to assist and guide the families and individuals in their integration and access to rights in all spheres;
- to mobilize the institutional services with regard to the families' problems and to support them in their work;
- to provide the municipality with reports both on progress and on the difficulties encountered;
- to ultimately concentrate on fieldwork and access to permanent housing together with all the partners.

The intervention of the social workers and the elaboration of the family projects were based on the understanding of the concept of citizenship primarily conceived as *full access to legal rights*. The guarantee of a certain stability in accommodation, the official domiciliation certificate and health coverage constituted for example vital prerequisites for ensuring administrative procedures for adults, normal schooling for children and professional insertion.

The daily presence on the sites with these families has allowed the social workers to observe three types of ICT uses, which are: the recreational use, the use as communication tools and the administrative use. Of course, these uses vary with the age groups, with significant differences between adults and teenagers. After presenting the recreational and communicational uses, the chapter particularly focuses on the use of ICT with regard to administrative procedures. Does ICT play the role of facilitator in the integration processes of the families, or is it an impediment to effective access to legal rights and the exercise of citizenship?

4.3   ICTs: various uses, various purposes

With regard to the recreational uses, adults essentially use satellite TV and mobile phones. The large majority of families still have a very strong bond with the country of origin, which in this context means watching Romanian TV channels. TV subscriptions are taken out in Romania, and the equipment (satellite dish and decoder) is brought over to France and installed in their dwellings. Very few families watch French TV channels. Numerous conversations are focused on the news regarding their country's politics, the changes in the weather, and other events taking place over 2 000 kms away. Just as if a part of themselves remained in Romania, they build a micro-universe in their environment which perhaps allows them to lessen and to take some distance from the marginalization and daily difficulties encountered within a context of material insecurity (even if on authorized sites) and the uncertainty regarding their administrative access to legal rights.

The communication tools make it possible to develop and maintain social bonds with friends and relatives in Romania or in other countries of Europe, and also to develop relationships locally (work colleagues, friends, customers…). This is a new emerging network, which is built up over a long period of time, the time of integration. The telephone is used by everyone: touchscreen phones are common among young adults, and recently tablets and smartphones have become widespread among the children, often given as gifts or as a reward by their families. The social networks are becoming increasingly important for the new generations. They are a means of exchange with their peers and they also represent inclusion in visual communication with the family members back in Romania, especially via Facebook. In this case, the young act as intermediaries and facilitators in this new world of online/network/virtual communication.

As an example, in Bobigny, the burial of a family member in Romania was the subject of videos and photographs that were circulated throughout Facebook in less than an hour by young adults close to the deceased. In response, videos of the

funeral wake held in Bobigny were sent by the adolescents to the relatives in Romania. In Saint Denis, one can see the same dynamics of interactive exchange between the members of family groups left in Romania or living elsewhere in Europe, regarding key events in the lives of these groups, especially through the circulation of wedding photos and videos. The skills developed by young people and adolescents enable the families to maintain the bond with the scattered family groups.

As regards adolescents and children, the Internet has become today's preferred method of communication and exchange and it is used regularly: some spend several hours a day on the Internet. Currently, in our area of intervention, access to the Internet is more often made via a mobile phone or tablet, with individual telephone subscriptions or using available internet connections, either legal or illegal. Young people often use the operator *Lebara*, which enables them to buy relatively cheap prepaid cards and offers free communication between holders of cards of the same operator. Young people, as well as numerous adults, have in this way developed a communication network compatible with their financial means. Today, fewer and fewer young people go to the "Internet Café" for web connection.

As with all adolescents, the use of ICT (for example, Facebook) gives young Roma the feeling of belonging to a group in various contexts: possession of a user account, time spent in front of the screen, number of friends, type of published information, interests… For young people, the Internet is the means of access to culture, a culture of exchanges and a "freebie culture", like an extension of the word of mouth. In general, the most shared cultural contents are music, videos, films and pictures of the community, but also, more extensively, other fields of interest (sports, cars, celebrities, etc.). In Bobigny, young mothers share funny viral videos on maternity, which they post on Facebook: these videos ridicule clumsy or uncommitted fathers. This gives rise to discussions on the latter's lassitude when they have to take care of the children by themselves, and gives voice to a desire for emancipation that is little heard within the social group.

In highlighting the attitudes, emotions and opinions that arise within a large circle of individuals, the users of the social networks associate themselves with one or more groups of peers with whom they share the information they have posted. The intensive use of Facebook does not exclude other networks, such as youtube, video sharing, streaming sharing music via Bluetooth, or online computer games. Just like all the other young people of their generation, the young Roma seem to have very little awareness of the potential risks, of the fact that there is a complete lack of guidance from their families who have little knowledge and control of these new means of communication. Just as in any other family, parents are not necessarily aware of the issues regarding the diffusion of personal data on social networks.

Therefore, we can observe a highly widespread use of ICT, and especially smartphones which, in fact, does not differ from that of the surrounding society. Recently, thanks to the increasing use of smartphones and tablets, Skype has also made its entrance and has facilitated vocal and visual exchanges, most often with members of the family back in the home country or abroad. The generational dif-

ferences and an unceasing evolution of the use of social tools and networks are exactly the same as those observed in the so-called "majority culture".

4.4   Administrative uses: facilitated access to citizenship?

4.4.1   A logic of dematerialization

The use of ICT for administrative purposes is certainly the easiest observable by the social workers since it is directly resorted to by the beneficiaries for carrying out all or part of their administrative procedures. These procedures are mainly centred on social rights, whether they be right of residence, social benefits (family or contributory), job search, sickness coverage or healthcare. Until the opening of the job market to Romanian nationals[3] in January 2014, access to employment proved to be extremely difficult, and this forces adults to find other means of carrying out their activities such as independent work, according to their fields of competence: metals recycling, trade, removals, waste recycling. The success of these individual firms requires the constant use of mobile phones (for making appointments), mailboxes and websites for the management of their business ("pôle emploi.fr", "auto-entrepreneur.gouv", etc.). Finally, the use of ICT also concerns fulfilling "citizens' duties", such as income tax declarations and tax payments, once again online.

The dematerialization of administrative procedures is conducted by the institutions, which urge users to avail themselves of digital technology in order to relieve congestion of the services. A large number of tools have been implemented during the last ten years. In early 2009, the Ministry for Public Services set up "*mon.service-public.fr*", an internet portal for online administrative services that combines access to different online accounts: registration on electoral rolls, change of address, declaration of death or loss of identity documents, the setting up of businesses or associations, access to family benefit systems and health insurance, etc. The site uses a mix of Internet and mobile phone technology and for greater security it requires the introduction of an access code via SMS.

A further example: since 2013 the "*service étrangers*" (foreigners' office) of the Bobigny prefecture gives priority to procedures via the Internet and SMS for making appointments or for the follow-up of the regularization process. The use of IT tools is also encouraged by the social workers because it saves time and avoids journeys back and forth for the beneficiaries as also for social workers. In one of the intervention sites, the key family administrative documents were scanned and placed on *dropbox*. All this therefore suggests that ICT is constantly employed, without people deliberately deciding to do so and without a real awareness of the new restrictions that are being created.

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[3] Between 2007 and 2014, although they were EU citizens, Romanians and Bulgarians had considerable administrative difficulties in applying for salaried employment, and consequently social security ("transitional period"). In fact, persons who were poorly qualified and with few resources found it impossible to access legal employment.

In the face of a complex institutional and regulatory environment, and above all, in the continuous ongoing reorganization, administrative procedures become a challenge as they require a thorough knowledge of institutional procedures and of their constant changes. Certainly, it has been observed that to accomplish certain steps using information technology tools allows you to get round some of the difficulties specifically encountered by persons categorized as "Roma" by the institution operators. The online file archives, for example, help to prevent such discrimination as refusal at the desk on the basis of physical appearance and presumed ethnicity. Nevertheless, the use of these tools that have been standardized for the middle-classes raises new problems regarding access to legal rights for people in precarious situations.

4.4.2 An administrative use that is not without difficulties

Indeed, if ICT has been efficient under certain conditions, its use requires a number of technical and social qualifications and of material conditions in order to be fully exploited. Firstly, access to a telephone network and to the web is essential. The institutions take it for granted that this access is guaranteed and easy for all users. Nevertheless, in most cases these networks are only accessible at a price that is high for families living in precarious conditions and they also require electricity that is often absent or limited in squats or slums. Therefore, since phone packages are not common because they are costly and restricting, many of the site inhabitants often change their phone number because they buy "on credit", which hinders the continuity of the administrative or medical-social follow-up (e.g. a medical appointment made or changed via text message, phone confirmation, etc.). To material insecurity we must add problems regarding language skills and educational background. Making online arrangements implies knowing how to read and write, especially in the language of the host country and, even more so, in the specific register of administration language. Mastering the lexicon used by administrations is completely out of the question for a population the majority of which is little educated, poorly qualified professionally, and sometimes even illiterate. The authors observed, especially among persons over forty years of age, a downright incapacity to use the ICT made available to them. They did not know how to formulate a question in French, or understand messages that had been sent to them. Knowledge of information technology, even minimal knowledge, proves in this case to be indispensable: managing an email account, using a search engine or browsing a website are essential skills for an effective handling of the administrative procedures.

The example of the *Pôle d'Emploi*[4] is a typical one: the application for registration in the job seekers' list is made initially by telephone, then with an official in person. But the follow-up of the file and the job search process is essentially made via email and one's "online personal space". Furthermore, the preservation of the job seeker status is subject to monthly updating, either online or by telephone, and

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[4] Pôle Emploi: French governmental employment agency.

to a series of restrictions in terms of delays and the information to be provided. The complexity of these procedures (receiving one's id and password, getting on the site and then navigating in one's personal space) is even more overwhelming when the person has difficulty in reading , using a keyboard, etc. This results in a form of dependence on the social workers: in the absence of human and direct interlocutors and faced with a constant flow of information and obligations coming from the administration, the beneficiaries need continuous assistance.

This situation is even more restricting when the dematerialized procedures, instead of being an alternative to the physical procedures, completely replace the latter. The Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis requires the exclusive use of the Internet for making appointments to renew or change the residence permits. The institutions are attempting to establish training courses for these compulsory tools, but the offer does not seem well suited to the needs of the public in terms of availability, content and pedagogy.

At the same time, despite the dematerialization of the procedures there are several physical requisites, the main restriction being the requisite to have a certificate of residence. This involves, if residence is not on an authorized site (and even the latter is sometimes arbitrarily refused by certain institutions!), a long identification procedure with the social services of the city, which are often reluctant to officially recognize the presence of people living in great poverty in their city. Without this official affiliation with the territory, an administrative procedure cannot even be initiated: the dematerialization procedures, far from eliminating this obstacle, have enhanced it even further.

Although, differently from the physical reception of people in the institutions, dematerialization prevents exposure to discrimination, such as refusal at the desk or hostility seen as an act of violence, in due course, it could become a "new filter" between the people and the rights they are attempting to acquire. In the end, this situation deters users from claiming their rights; they are discouraged by the complexity of the processes and at the same time they are deprived of human contact. The face-to-face dialogue between the official and the user, albeit asymmetric, does provide space for negotiation and for the adaptation of the services to the needs of the users. This possibility of adaptation and negotiation, which is necessary in the case of special situations such as those where people live in precarious conditions, is made impossible by the inflexibility of the new (binary) tools...

Confrontation with online procedures can therefore be experienced as a humiliation and can generate a sense of frustration, a feeling that all one's efforts have been in vain. The injunction to "integrate" and the emphasis on "republican values" are in contradiction with the inability to implement integration processes that render integration effective. From this paradox, incomprehension and a feeling of weariness arise among the so-called "beneficiaries" of these public policies. For example, a young adult living on the Bobigny site with ten years of schooling and with regular continuing training in order to make progress, is very unhappy with the fact that she finds it difficult to prepare her declarations online. Placed in a stalemate situation despite her endeavours, she now calls into question the personal and social status which she has progressively built up for herself. After

months, this situation has led her to abandon all the administrative procedures that should guarantee her access to legal rights such as minimum social benefits and social security… and occasionally, to tear up those "papers" in a fit of disgust.

Therefore, what is at issue for these people is the need to acquire, with the aid of the social workers, the necessary autonomy to rise to the challenge of the de-materialized administrative procedures.

4.4.3   What kind of appropriation and by what means?

Faced with these new barriers, the families develop informal strategies based on the identification of resource persons (at the family level and at the local community level), generally young adults or adolescents with the above-mentioned skills. The transfer of skills from one purpose to another and from person to person works in a roundabout way, from recreational, to communication, and finally to administrative. Learning the codes is carried out as a game, almost unconsciously. The young represent the initial driving force of this dynamic. The support they provide for their parents represents a definite point of interest for them: the enhancement of their knowledge within the family groups.

Some NGOs have seized upon this dynamic and are implementing actions to respond to the identified needs of poor families. Here, a case in point is *Connection Solidaires*, in Seine-Saint-Denis, an innovative programme created by Emmaüs Connect, in partnership with *SFR* (an ICT supplier) and other operators in the Paris social sector. The aim of this project is to provide long-term ICT access for a fragile and precarious minority group in order to enable them to develop skills for social-professional integration. The programme is structured in three parts around a global objective. Firstly, to ensure facilitated access to the Internet and to mobile phone packages and equipment available on the market, as also to fixed prices for prepaid cards, computers and telephones, which are three to six times cheaper than regular prices. The aim is to reduce expense and balance the budget. It also aims to ensure a personalized advisory service, with the purpose of developing autonomy in selection and proficiency regarding ICT offers on the market. Workshops are organized to develop ICT skills such as job seeking online, and the creation of a social or professional network. The project guarantees an 18-month assistance and access to offers. There is also a mediation platform for negotiating payments, setting up instalment plans or changing the contract.

The specific role of the social workers of Rues et Cités in the training process has proved crucial, but also paradoxical: the objective was to encourage and empower people so that they could become independent in their dealings with the institutions. Nonetheless, social intervention, which is characterized by the emergency and complexity of the individual situations, leaves little space for a long-term training of the beneficiaries vis-à-vis the administrative system. This assistance is in jeopardy because of the tight time schedules (the need for quick "results") and of the low number of social workers available. There is thus the risk that the so-

cial workers will take over the dealings with the institutions rather than the bene-
ficiaries acting for themselves.

The example of the use of online *CAF*[5] accounts is indicative of this tension:
social workers are regularly called upon by the beneficiaries to enquire about the
progress of their benefits applications and are caught between the importance of
being able to give a quick answer to the families and the long-term objective of
teaching them to consult their personal accounts. In this context, people more or
less know which course to take, but in the immediate future they give little im-
portance to the objective of autonomy, and in most cases, depend totally on the
presence of the social workers. To guide them while they connect to the Internet,
browse their personal account or carry out a procedure would ideally require re-
peated sessions, which would facilitate tacit learning, especially for adults of over
30 years of age.

Ironically however, we can see that in the three housing projects here men-
tioned, a number of young Roma have, at some time or other, played the role of a
technical resource coming to the aid of the social workers when the latter have
faced failures of their own computers. These young people could be called upon
to reinstall an operating system (OS), reconfigure a local network and even
change a motherboard and a video card. This is where their skills lie, skills ac-
quired "on the job"... but which have proved essential for allowing the social
workers to continue their own work.

4.5   Conclusion

Although the dematerialization of administrative procedures may have "simpli-
fied" life for the members of the middle and upper classes, sometimes it has had
the inverse effect of complicating the procedures for people with specific social
problems and who apply to the institutions to access their legal rights. This dema-
terialization then proves to be a further generator of inequality among users. Fi-
nally, the practical training done within the families often clashes with the arbi-
trary dimension of the access to legal rights and the granting of benefits: an un-
motivated refusal or a discretionary acceptance opposed by the prefecture or so-
cial services is therefore misunderstood and seen as an injustice when such a great
effort has been made. Understanding the mysteries of digital technology does not
make it easier to understand the (deliberately?) complex administrative and legal
procedures, which are also in constant evolution.

The difficulties that Roma in precarious situations have in accessing their legal
rights highlight the limitations of the dematerialization of the administrative pro-
cedures, even though it is presented as a vehicle for equality and as a guarantee of
"efficiency". These same obstacles may, of course, be encountered by other poor
migrants and low-skilled populations. The "citizenship" priority therefore reveals
its limitations: the demand for the social integration of a minority group presup-

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[5] *Caisse d'Allocations Familiales*, family allowance fund for aid to families and income
supplement.

poses that the group has the means to accomplish its duties, and, above all, to effectively benefit from its rights. This consistency between rights and duties – one cannot be dissociated from the other – is hindered by the intricate workings of the administrations that force people (so called "beneficiaries" and field social workers together) to deal as best as they can with defective systems. Defects that the polished aesthetics of institutional websites and the rigorous sequencing of online forms fail completely to disguise.

Faced with such a situation, the diversity of the strategies and the responses of the families that we have observed reveal a creativity and capability for adaptation requiring the support of the professionals of the various institutions or associations. The long and complex social integration process, a period of transition towards the acquisition of new codes and knowledge, cannot be achieved successfully with the sole efforts of the migrant and/or the poverty-stricken families, but must be performed in collaboration with all the different parties involved. And the experience of these three "integration projects" shows that, during this process, the most reluctant to collaborate are not the Roma... despite what politics and the media frequently repeat.

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5

Cultural uniqueness, memory of the traumatic past and a struggle for equal opportunities in the present. A study of self-representations of the Polish Roma on the Internet

by *Marta Szczepanik*

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of Internet self-representations of Polish Roma individuals and their organizations through a study of the Internet content created by the representatives of the group and conducted in 2014 and 2015. In the framework of this research we analysed 17 websites, including web pages of Roma organizations and associations of various types, on-line journals, blogs and YouTube videos posted by Roma individuals.[1]

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[1] The following websites were analyzed: International Meeting of Gypsy Bands "Roma Days" (*Miedzynarodowe Spotkania Zespolow Cyganskich "Romane Dyvesa"*): http://www.romanedyvesa.com*;* Gypsy Music Theatre "Terno" (*Cygański Teatr Muzyczny "Terno"*): www.terno.com.pl; Association for the Promotion of Roma Culture and Tradition (*Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury i Tradycji Romskiej*): http://www.kalejakha.pl; Cygański Zespół Muzyczny: http://www.cyganskakapela.ugu.pl; Website dedicated to Karol Parno Gieliński: http://www.parno.polinfo.net/; Website of Bogdan Trojanek and the Royal Roma Foundation (*Królewska Fundacja Romów*): http://bogdantrojanek.pl; Paulo's blog: http://romowie.blog.onet.pl/;
Dialog-Pheniben: http://dialogpheniben.pl/kwartalnik/; Studia Romologica: http://www.studiaromologica.pl; Romologica.net: www.romologica.net; Virtual Caravan (*Wirtualny Tabor*): http://wt.romologica.net/; Romano Atmo: http://www.romowie.com/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=8; Roma Quarterly

The main purpose was to unpack dominant autonarratives of the Polish Roma community through a study of the prevailing themes present in the on-line content. Websites and the Internet are essentially viewed here as platforms where group identity can be constructed. Three most evident themes have been identified and extracted which are: the protection and presentation of the Romani cultural heritage, the commemoration of the past, in particular of the *Porajmos*, and the civic engagement to improve the present situation of Roma in Poland.

Scholars have become increasingly interested in studying the influence of the new technologies on the processes of forming new types of identities – digital identities (for example: Koosel, 2013; Siibak, 2010). Several studies have pointed to the fact that individuals tend to construct and reconstruct their social identities on the Internet around ideas associated with the "ideal self" (for example: Marwick, 2005; Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield, 2006; Manago, Graham, Greenfield and Salimkhan, 2008). According to these studies, analogously to what occurs during face-to-face communication described by Erving Goffman (1959/1990), impression management is of crucial importance for participants; through processes changing and controlling their "self-presentations", Internet users create and project their ideal self-images. They engage in these activities in an attempt to determine the images that others have of them by "conveying an impression to others which it is in their interests to convey" (Goffman, 1990). It is argued here that similar processes occur at a group level when a group, by choosing one piece of information instead of another or by focusing on particular themes, conveys a particular message directed at those who are not members of the same group.

Before beginning the analysis of self-representations of Polish Roma people on the Internet, it is important to make some important points. Firstly, this analysis was conducted primarily through the lens of the recipient of the Internet content, therefore it refers not only to the way the Roma community presents itself but also to the way in which it is read by visitors (in particular: by non-Roma readers). Secondly, such an analysis requires generalisations and may omit some aspects that could be significant in the case of different research questions. For example, due to the small number of Roma in Poland and their generally similar social conditions (long-settled communities, Polish citizenship, knowledge of the Polish language) we did not focus on the specific Internet content that would relate to any particular Roma ethnic group, described in Chapter 1. According to our observations, Roma organizations and associations do not generally distinguish themselves on the basis of ethnic belonging (even when presenting Roma culture) and instead refer to the general notion of "the Roma of Poland". However, such information occasionally appears (see below).

(*Kwartalnik Romski*): http://www.romowieradom.pl/kwartalniki.html; Polish Roma Union (*Związek Romów Polskich*): http://www.romowie.com; Stowarzyszenie Romów w Polsce: http://www.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/; Mobile Centre against Discrimination of the Roma People (*Mobilne Centrum Przeciwdziałania Dyskryminacji Romów*): http://antyrasizm.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/; Project "Moda na Tolerancję": http://www.modanatolerancje.romowie.com/index.php/nasze-interwencje.

Another important aspect is the socio-political context in which Roma organizations operate in Poland. According to data from the National Court Register, over 100 non-governmental organizations were registered in Poland as of 2014, declaring themselves as Roma minority organizations (Programme for the Integration of the Roma Community in Poland for the period 2014-2020, 2014). A vast majority of these entities have been registered during the last 10-15 years. This numerical increase is connected with the beginning of government-run programmes for the Roma communities which provide funding opportunities for, e.g., local administration authorities and non-governmental organizations. Roma organizations (along with non-Roma NGOs) propose and implement projects corresponding to the strategy and priorities of the government programmes. They compete for funding not only with local authorities but also with organizations led by non-Roma, which is often a source of frustration.

It is important to note also that only few of the many existing Roma organizations operate actively, i.e. carry out projects and undertake activities as described in their statutes. Not all of them have Internet websites; sometimes the websites exist but the contents are modest and outdated. The 17 websites analysed in this study are the most wide-spread and active ones. They are frequently updated and provide information relevant to their field of interest, including: Romani culture, traditions and art, information on projects implemented in the field of employment education, historical information and accounts, commemorative events, workshops and seminars for both Roma and non-Roma, information on current issues affecting the Roma community in Poland and reports of various bodies and institutions related to the situation of Roma. The majority of Roma organizations have websites in the Polish language. Only a few of them, for example the Roma People Association in Poland (*Stowarzyszenie Romów Polskich*) have them translated into English, or, as is the case for the Polish Roma Union (*Związek Romów Polskich*), into English and Romani. The content of the web pages and the way the information is presented permits the identification of dominant autonarratives of the Polish Roma community which will now be analysed in detail.

5.2   Cultural uniqueness

The content of the majority of currently active websites of Roma-led organizations refers predominantly to Romani culture and aims at describing and promoting it among the non-Roma. With few exceptions (see below), these websites are run almost exclusively in Polish. They contain articles on Roma history, traditions, religion, way of life, music and customs. Some organizations are directly linked to particular cultural events, for example, the Bronisława Wajs "Papusza" Association of Artists and Friends of the Gypsy Culture (*Stowarzyszenie Twórców i Przyjaciół Kultury Cygańskiej im. Bronisławy Wajs 'Papuszy'*) is the organizer of the International Meetings of Gypsy Bands "Roma Days" (*Miedzynarodowe Spotkania Zespolow Cyganskich 'Romane Dyvesa'*) which have been taking place in Gorzow Wielkopolski every year since 1989, now under the

honorary patronage of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Ministry of the Interior and Digitalisation.[2]

The Festival website contains information on the significance of the city of Gorzów Wielkopolski for the continuity of Roma culture in Poland; it was to this city, located in the so-called Recovered Territories which became a part of Poland after the Second World War, that the first Gypsy caravans, moving from eastern territories, arrived in 1947. These caravans carried members of the artistic families of the Dbicki, Wajs, Krzyanowki and Jaworski. Gorzów was later the place of residence and of the artistic work of the famous Roma female poet Bronisława Wajs "Papusza". Gorzów is presented as a city where Roma and non-Roma have lived together for years in mutual respect, and "Romane Dyvesa" plays an important role in promoting intercultural dialogue, as it tries to introduce "authentic" Roma culture to the *Gadje* audience. Here too more than 50 years ago Edward Dbiski established the Gypsy Music Theatre "Terno" (*Cyganski Teatr Muzyczny 'Terno'*) which is still active.

It runs its own Polish and English language websites providing, e.g., information on the possibilities of booking a private spectacle of a musical theatre or a show of authentic Gypsy caravans. Edward Dbicki is presented there as a figure serving as a guardian of authenticity, a person who has managed to "protect the Romani culture against commercialism and poor quality".[3]

The notion of the authenticity of Roma folklore often appears when Roma speak of themselves in the context of commercial and non-commercial cultural activities. For example, the Association for the Promotion of Roma Culture and Tradition (*Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury i Tradycji Romskiej*) from Cracow, made up of members of the Carpathian (Bergitka) Roma family band "Kałe Jakha" (Eng. "black eyes") promotes itself in the following way:

"In our genuine music there is everything: wandering caravans, coppersmiths fixing cauldrons and pots, furtively stolen hens, horse fairs, fortune-telling, kidnappings, scuffles… There is a world from gypsy legends and dreams. The world which will die when the last gypsy violinist passes away".[4]

This seems to be in contrast with other Roma bands which prefer to lay emphasis on the "international character" of their music and the ability to perform during all kinds of public and private gatherings, such as: city festivals, weddings, graduation balls and corporate team-building events. Such websites provide music samples and information on booking and payments.[5]

In addition to the websites of organizations, Roma promote their culture through personal websites, blogs and YouTube videos. One such example is the website dedicated to Karol Parno Gierliski, a Roma-Sinti artist and social activ-

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[2] International Meeting of Gypsy Bands "Roma Days" (*Miedzynarodowe Spotkania Zespolow Cyganskich 'Romane Dyvesa'):* http://www.romanedyvesa.com.
[3] Gypsy Music Theatre "Terno" (*Cyganski Teatr Muzyczny 'Terno'*): www.terno.com.pl.
[4] Association for the Promotion of Roma Culture and Tradition (*Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury i Tradycji Romskiej*): http://www.kalejakha.pl.
[5] For example: Cyganski Zespół Muzyczny, http://www.cyganskakapela.ugu.pl.

ist, Holocaust survivor, deceased at the beginning of 2015.[6] The website presents his impressing legacy, including paintings, sculptures, poems, stories and a Romani language textbook for children. Bogdan Trojanek, leader of the Roma family band "Terne Roma" (Eng. "Young Roma") and president of the Royal Roma Foundation (*Królewska Fundacja Romów*), runs a website which presents both his musical and political actives (in 2015 he was appointed the Prime Minister's consultant for the commission on ethnic minorities).[7] In addition to this, there exists an interesting (though not recently updated) blog run by a Roma individual nicknamed "Paulo" containing information on Roma music bands and theatres, lists of Roma associations, pieces of Roma poetry and stories received from the readers.[8] The author has also published letters describing the personal encounters of Polish readers with Roma. Some contents related to Roma culture can also be found on YouTube. This is a rich source of video records of important events and ceremonies of the Roma communities in different Polish cities, such as weddings or baptisms. Such videos presenting Romani music and dances can be easily found after entering in the browser some simple Romani words denoting, for example, "Roma wedding" (*Romane biaw*) or "Roma music" (*Romane gila'*) (Medeksza, 2010).

Besides using the Internet for the purpose of popularising Roma culture in the above-mentioned contexts, there also exist on-line journals and academic and semi-academic periodicals aimed at readers who wish to explore traditional and modern Roma culture from the scientific point of view. The oldest and most well-known is perhaps *Dialog-Pheniben*.[9] It is a socio-cultural quarterly that has been published since 1995 by the Roma People Association in Poland (*Stowarzyszenie Romów w Polsce*) and since 2015 by the Dialog-Pheniben Foundation and it is co-financed by the Ministry of the Interior and Digitalisation and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. It focuses on issues regarding the social and cultural life of the Roma minority in Poland and in Europe together with current matters related to the protection of human rights, tolerance, discrimination, racism and xenophobia, integration and intercultural dialogue. Its intention is to "familiarise its readers with the multidimensional Romani world through scientific and journalistic reflection". The journal publishes texts in Polish and its online version has been available since 2011. The chief editor, Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska is a doctor of anthropology and a renowned scholar of the Roma background. Apart from *Dialog-Pheniben*, since 2008 there also exists a scientific annual *Studia Romologica* issued by the Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów – an institution that holds permanent exhibitions dedicated to Polish Roma culture and traditions. *Studia Romologica* is not a Roma initiative *per se;* it is a highly ranked scientific periodical publishing quality texts of researcher-romologists from all over Europe which are subject to a double-blind review process. Members of the *Studia Romo-*

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[6] Website dedicated to Karol Parno Gieliʂski: http://www.parno.polinfo.net/.
[7] Website of Bogdan Trojanek and the Royal Roma Foundation (*Królewska Fundacja Romów*): http://bogdantrojanek.pl.
[8] Paulo's blog: http://romowie.blog.onet.pl/.
[9] *Dialog-Pheniben*: http://dialogpheniben.pl/kwartalnik/.

logica editorial board and reviewers include distinguished Polish and European scholars, some of them of Roma background. It has a website which, together with the online version of the annual, is currently under development.[10] Other Roma magazines are of a more journalistic character and include: the entirely on-line magazine and web portal Romologica.net,[11] initiated by Agnieszka Caban, an activist and cultural theorist of Roma origin, which publishes articles on various topics in Polish, English and the standardized Romani language and it is directed towards both Polish and Roma readers; and two other bilingual (Polish and Romani) magazines in both paper and digital versions (*Romano Atmo*[12] and *Kwartalnik Romski* [Roma Quarterly]'[13]) presenting current issues affecting the life of the Roma community in Poland and dedicated primarily to Roma readers. In addition to this, initiators of the "Romologica.net", in the framework of the same project, have created a virtual museum of Roma culture under the name of "Virtual Caravan" (*Wirtualny Tabor*)[14]. It gathers digitalised pieces of Roma art including sculptures, paintings, graphics and music, from museums and private collections across the country which are later put on display online. It is aimed at preserving and presenting the Romani cultural legacy to the majority of population but also to young Roma who are not familiar with it.

According to Bielak (2013), the Roma press, in spite of its relatively short tradition, can be praised as extensive and valuable and has a great potential for future development. An important factor that has contributed to the popularity of Roma periodicals is that the diffusion of the Internet has solved the problem of availability and distribution caused by very low circulations; all the magazines discussed, i.e. 5 out of the 6 existing, are available in the electronic version. Bielak also connects the emergence of new titles with the improvement of the education level among the Roma community. Educated Roma of the younger generation are becoming more and more active in the journalistic field and serve as role models in the circles of family and friends respectively, encouraging the education and professional development of others.

5.3   Memory of the *Porajmos*

Memory of the genocide, also referred to as the Roma Holocaust or *Porajmos*, is an important part of the historical and cultural narrative of the Roma people. In Poland, it has a specific additional dimension related to the fact that numerous mass killings were committed against the Roma people on Polish territories, in particular in the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Polish: *Oświęcim-Brzezinka*). The above-mentioned Roma jour-

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[10] *Studia Romologica*: http://www.studiaromologica.pl.
[11] Romologica.net: www.romologica.net.
[12] *Romano Atmo*: http://www.romowie.com/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=8.
[13] *Roma Quarterly (Kwartalnik Romski)*: http://www.romowieradom.pl/kwartalniki.html.
[14] *Virtual Caravan* (*Wirtualny Tabor*): http://wt.romologica.net/.

nals regularly publish articles related to the *Porajmos*, such as historical analyses, personal testimonies and reports from commemorative events and meetings.

According to Kołaczek (2014: 196), "the history of persecutions became an immanent element of the contemporary Romani identity and it often appears to leaders to be more effective in advocating for the interests of Roma than other components of the Roma identity". One such example is the activity of the Polish Roma Union (*Związek Romów Polskich*) in Szczecinek, which in 2001 established the Institute of Roma Memory and Heritage and Holocaust's Victims.[15] It is a research and documentation institution that conducts interdisciplinary research on the Holocaust, the history of the persecutions of Roma in Europe, Roma culture and traditions with particular emphasis on the Second World War period. The work of the Institute takes place alongside other activities of the organization which include an assistance project for the community supporting Roma in the education system and labour market.

One of the most active and oldest Roma organizations in the country, the Roma People Association in Poland (*Stowarzyszenie Romów w Polsce*), in Oświecim, has been devoted – since its establishment in 1992 – to the commemoration of the history of the Second World War and of the Roma who perished in the Holocaust. The association's website[16] contains historical information about the story of the persecutions of the Roma from the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany to the physical extermination of thousands of Roma people across Europe. This section ends with a chapter entitled "The Holocaust syndrome" that speaks about the collective trauma of genocide among the European Roma people and about the presence of a "Holocaust stigma" in the whole of post-war Roma history and culture. The website further presents testimonies of survivors and witnesses. It is composed of about 25 entries which include the name, family name, a short description of the war experience, and the information of each person's post-war place of residence. There are also a few longer stories that those survivors have provided for the Association's historical archive, videos with registered meetings of survivors with groups of young people, and video reports from events commemorating the anniversaries of the liquidation of "Zigeunerlager" (the Roma Camp in Auschwitz). Apart from this, the website contains information related to the Association's second field of activity – the protection of the rights of the Roma and the battle against racism and discrimination on ethnic grounds. For example, there is a subpage, presenting activities conducted by the Association in the framework of its project "Mobile Centre against the Discrimination of the Roma People" (*Mobilne Centrum Przeciwdziałania Dyskryminacji Romów*)[17] which includes: a hotline, free legal assistance, trainings, mediation and the monitoring of racist incidents all over the country. According to Kapralski (2012: 274), the Association represents an interesting example of "connecting past-oriented activities,

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[15] Polish Roma Union (*Związek Romów Polskich*): http://www.romowie.com.
[16] Roma People Association (*Stowarzyszenie Romów w Polsce*): http://www.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/.
[17] Mobile Centre against the Discrimination of the Roma People (*Mobilne Centrum Przeciwdziałania Dyskryminacji Romów)*: http://antyrasizm.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/.

including the creation of the places of memory and organization of ceremonies commemorating the extermination of the Roma during the Second World War, with defensive actions [in the present] aimed at counteracting the acts of violence committed against the Roma". The organization itself was set up as a response to the anti-Roma riots that took place in Mława in 1991 and since its very beginning its goal has been, apart from its commemorative role, to prevent such incidents happening again. The Association's founder Roman Kwiatkowski states that the location of its office was not a coincidence; Auschwitz-Birkenau was a place of extermination of many Roma, including the members of his own family and today it has become a symbol of the persecutions committed against them by the Nazis, but it also refers to the acts of violence, injustice and discrimination they continue to experience today, including an anti-Roma pogrom in Oświęcim in 1981 and riots in Mława in 1991. In this way, Kapralski argues, we witness a "symbolic delegitimization of the acts of violence against Roma through their connection with the persecutions committed by the Nazis".

5.4   Civic engagement

Roma as active citizens are the third and developing autonarrative analysed in this study. The popularity of the Internet and the generational change that has resulted in the emergence of educated Roma elites contribute significantly to the development of engaged attitudes. Through Internet websites, Roma organizations enable visitors to participate actively in the life of the community and to become active in solving its most burning issues. The cultural change described by Bielak (2013) and the emphasis put on the role of the written media also make it possible to establish network links with the majority of population, up to now absent, who has an important integrating value. The creation of a common space for the exchange of ideas takes place in the academic field, as in the case of the quarterly *Dialog-Pheniben*. The above-mentioned "Romologica.net" portal , initiated by a Roma intellectual, welcomes texts written by young Roma journalists which are published along with those prepared by Polish experts. This web portal focuses on Roma culture, history, political movements and current issues affecting the community, including instances of discrimination and racism. It is an example of the inclusion and activation of a disadvantaged group mediated through information and communication technologies (ICTs) which enable them, for the first time, to have their voices heard by a wider public.

Technologies are also used in an innovative way by the most active Roma organizations. Through its Mobile Centre against the Discrimination of the Roma People (*Mobilne Centrum Przeciwdziałania Dyskryminacji Romów*), the Roma People Association combats discrimination and racism by encouraging both Roma and non-Roma to report such instances online through a special form.[18] The

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[18] As of June 2015, the website has been visited by 641 836 persons. This is a very high number taking into account the size of the Roma community in Poland. It is not clear, however, if this number refers to single visitors or to the total number of visits.

cases litigated by the organization's lawyers concern discriminatory on-line contents (articles, press releases containing information on the ethnic background of offenders, racist statements of public officials, Facebook groups inciting ethnic-based hatred, etc.). In addition to this, the Centre offers phone consultations through a hotline and, if necessary, onsite visits of a qualified legal counsellor across the country. Representatives of the centre also frequently engage in mediations and negotiations with public authorities. A similar initiative is currently being implemented by the Polish Roma Union, within the framework of a project aimed at promoting tolerance.[19] Its main purpose is to monitor and combat acts of discrimination and intolerance against Roma. It encourages visitors to report abuses and hate speeches, provides samples of documents (such as crime reports, complaints, etc.), and offers legal assistance.

It can be noted that socially engaged Roma organizations rarely focus on accounts of marginalisation, or poverty of the Roma community. The Roma People Association and the Polish Roma Union, for example, concentrate their efforts primarily on counteracting discriminatory and racist practices and tend to refer to the vulnerable position of the group as a result of such practices. They reject the narrative of victimisation and they favour public discourse and processes occurring in the public sphere. The Roma People Association representative points out that this victimising narrative entails expectations of special, more favourable treatment for the Roma community. This treatment (partially present in the government-run programmes) may lead to tensions between Roma and the majority of society. Roman Kwiatkowski, President of the Association, has commented on the 2014-2020 budget allocation for the government programme in the following critical way:

"As Roma, we don't want to be perceived by local authorities and communities as those who have more rights than other citizens. All problems should be solved in a social and citizenship-based manner, not an ethnicity-based one. This money will push us even more to the margins of the civil society" (Gąsior: 2014).

The avoidance of victimising narratives is accompanied by the efforts to challenge persisting preconceptions and stereotypes in the whole of society (including among Roma themselves) which contribute to the vulnerable position of the group. According to the perspective presented by the Association, Roma do not aim at being treated in a more favourable way as compared to the rest of the Polish population, but they need to have their rights equally respected so that the conditions for economic and social prosperity of the community can also become more equal.

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[19] Project "Moda na Tolerancję": http://www.modanatolerancje.romowie.com/index.php/nasze-interwencje.

Internet websites, blogs and YouTube videos, and on-line journals created by the Roma people may be interpreted as their self-representation mediated through digital technologies. Among the most important themes and narratives are: cultural uniqueness (in both its traditional and commercialised forms), the commemoration of the past and civic engagement against discrimination and racism. Information provided online is aimed at both Roma and non-Roma readers and it is profiled to fit the needs of both groups.

Roma are active in a variety of fields and their autonarratives are complex. Cultural organizations and associations often symbolically employ the romanticised image of Roma caravans wandering freely through fields and forests and vibrant musicians performing songs that are passed on from generation to generation. The notion of the authenticity of the art performed is often used by organizations who want to distinguish themselves from those providing "unauthentic" commercial services. Following the political transformations of the Nineties, the question of Romani history, in particular the history of the Second World War has become an important topic. It is reflected in the activities of the two oldest and most prominent Roma organizations in Poland: the Roma People Association in Oświęcim and the Polish Roma Union in Szczecinek, which document and collect materials related to that period and participate in the politics of commemoration in important historical sites, including the "Zigeunerlager" in Auschwitz. Some researchers have pointed to the symbolic connections established by the activities of these organizations between past persecutions and present discrimination of the Roma community in Poland. Roma organizations successfully employ new technologies in the fulfilment of their statutory missions. Two examples of such a use are the web portals promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, which encourage both Roma and non-Roma visitors to take a stance against instances of discrimination and hate speeches. Instead of focusing on narratives of victimisation and poverty, they support equality of rights through the monitoring of processes occurring in the public sphere. It is still difficult to evaluate the impact of such initiatives on the relations between Roma and the majority of society. What can be observed, however, is the increasing role of ICTs in shaping active citizenship attitudes, especially of the young Roma. A similar opportunity is also provided by web pages which encourage the professional development of aspiring journalists of Roma background.

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Concluding remarks

by *Martin Olivera*

What follows does not aim to conclude this work but returns to some points high-lighted in the previous chapters so as to identify lines of thought for future research.[1] To do this, we will discuss some issues raised in the previous pages putting them in perspective with the notions of "citizenship" and "inclusion". This means questioning the conventional uses of these concepts in the light of the realities of Roma/Gypsy groups, in this way allowing the inadequacy of these uses to emerge.

One of the first conclusions that can be drawn from the different chapters in the book is that the use of ICTs, on the part of Roma, is quite normal, if not absolutely banal... Even in very precarious situations (i.e.: Roma migrants living in slums or in squats), people every day use smartphones and their applications for many different purposes: communication, picture- and video-sharing, listening to music, games on line, business opportunities etc. Even touch pads have recently appeared in the slums and the older perople, as everywhere, try to familiarize themselves with these new technologies (sometimes with difficulties…). That is to say, Roma individuals are no more no less skilled in the use of these tools than anybody else. Few of them are computer specialists but what is special in this? Thus, it is well to remember that Roma are not Moonmen or medieval outcasts... They keep abreast of the times. The question then is this: "in which ways?" And this question involves the issue of "citizenship" and "inclusion".

Many NGOs and European institutions are waiting for Roma along the road of "cultural recognition" and "political emancipation": Roma, usually seen as members of the "most marginalized minority in Europe", should invest in the ways and means of "empowerment" and in the conquest of the civil rights guaranteed by the liberal democracies in which they live. Nevertheless, misunderstandings often here arise. Even when they have their "own radio" (see D. V. Leggio's chapter), the media are not used as tools for public representation but as a way to nourish the intimacy of the social group: in fact, *Radio Romani Mahala* is conducted by and for the peers, who have been scattered in different European countries for

decades. In this respect, if one is looking for a "minority radio", one would be disappointed: "Roma people" are not visible here, but only *some* Roma, those who have roots in Kosovo and have experienced emigration across Europe, sometimes since the 1970's. They certainly form a real *community* (even a virtual one sometimes) with a specific "culture" and a peculiar "identity". But their culture and identity does not really fit the standard definition of "Roma identity": it is a definitely cosmopolitan and flexible one, more than a reference to an immemorial ethnic belonging tied to a primordial and distant origin. These Roma know very well *who* they are and *where* they are from and, in fact, do not waste time asking such questions… They spend much more time being themselves, here and now.

In fact, it is first and foremost non-Roma (though mostly from the upper-classes) who have been asking such questions for at least two centuries. Typing "Roma" on a keyboard to search in *Google* produces significant results. If the first ones refer to different facts or current political debates in the newsreels, the successive links lead to websites which propose some answers to "who are the Roma?" And it is interesting to note that most of those websites are made *by* and *for* the non-Roma and mobilize the same "knowledge": the distant non-European common origin, the situation of social marginality for generations, the presentation of Roma subdivisions etc. Ultimately, these sites are, like (old-fashioned) books, the only places in which to find "Roma-as-a-whole", namely a virtual community imagined by those who consider themselves as autochthonous and naturally legitimate in the country in which they are living. Even when someone of Romani background has realized the website the information found there is more or less the same. The recurrence of these data seems to provide a foundation for their evidence: if everyone shares and repeats the same "knowledge", then it is necessarily true. And, despite its ideological or aesthetical variations, this knowledge is based on the same assumption: *Roma are marginal*, either through their own fault or because of the hostility of the so-called "majority societies".

The chapters of this book show that the "marginality" of the Roma is nonetheless not obvious or even fundamental in their daily experience. Roma groups develop plenty of dynamics and strategies, they constantly weave relationships with the environment as well as managing to maintain a certain autonomy etc. Of course, *some* Roma have been suffering from a growing socio-economic and spatial segregation for more than two decades, in their country of origin as also in the immigration countries. Of course, anti-Gypsyism is growing, especially among the political elites in Europe. The chapter of A. Giurea and C. Lormier suggests for example that the "simplification" of administrative procedures through ICT could be an effective (if not deliberate) way of not granting rights to those who are perceived as "spare" or as "human surplus", especially migrant Roma.

However, it would be hasty to conclude that discourses (of pity or full of hate) *on* "Roma people" reflect the very diverse daily realities of Roma/Gypsy communities. Hence, we can question the current strategy that aims at rendering "positive the image of the Roma" while reproducing a globalizing and unequivocal vision of an "inherently marginal minority". In short, it is urgent to refuse to establish *any link* between Roma/Gypsy identities (dynamic, diverse and multifaceted) and

anti-Gypsyism: people are not discriminated because of their personal identity or family belonging (i.e. as members of a particular community) but because those who discriminate mobilize a global representation *of their own* of Roma and Gypsies. Therefore it is necessary to assume that the fight against stereotypes requires above all a fundamental reconsideration of the *categorization process* that nourishes stereotypes. That is to say, it entails an understanding regarding what purpose it serves – which has definitely nothing to do with any "Roma identity".

Somehow, Roma and Gypsies seem to know this very well. Their absence from public space *as Roma/Gypsies*, and in particular their invisibility as a "minority" on the web, is not necessarily related to a lack of education or IT competence, or to "shame of their ethnicity" etc. Perhaps it is primarily related to the fact they do not see the advantage of mobilizing *under this label* (which is historically built for discrimination), and because they have other resources to ensure their local legitimacy and their individual and family autonomy. That is to say, other ways by which to (auto)integrate and to be (active) citizens, i.e. full members of the Cité, without ceasing to be members of a particular social grouping. This does not mean they are hiding themselves, but that the ethno-national perspective is not the only one possible for "finding a place", individually and collectively, in a complex society.

Instead of incessantly deploring the "lack of integration" of Roma and Gypsies, we should perhaps try to understand better the ways in which these social groups have been *well and truly an integral part* of European societies for centuries, for better and for worse. From this perspective, the rhetoric of " inclusion", referring to an ideal society that does not exist outside the upper-middle classes, is probably not conducive to a better understanding of the dynamics of exclusion *and* integration at work today. Before trying to "empower people", it may be useful to understand how people are already empowered, locally and concretely. This means accepting the fact that this empirical and effective power and the strategies employed do not always coincide with our own way of experiencing the world. This new starting point is not necessarily an obstacle to the relationship but, perhaps, part of its very possibility.

Edited by Alfredo Alietti, Martin Olivera and Veronica Riniolo

Virtual Citizenship?
Roma communities, Inclusion Policies, Participation and ICT Tools

A significant part of the Roma population, the largest minority in Europe, has to face increasingly difficult living conditions in spite of the growing commitment on the part of diverse actors – both institutional and non-institutional – aimed at promoting strategies and processes of social, economic, political and cultural inclusion. In particular, Roma participation and representativity still appear weak when compared to the principles enunciated by European policies. On this account, a central issue should be the discussion of the role of the new technologies (ICT) in promoting the rights and claims of Roma. In an age of social networks and of their potential chance of becoming effective cultural and political instruments, an analysis of the integration of vulnerable minorities cannot avoid taking this into account.

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