

**Dynamics, Politics and Experiences of the Relations to the “Foreigners from Within” in Europe : Roma, Manush, Yenish, Gypsies and travelers.**

**International Symposium**

27 -28-29 of April 2009

University Victor Segalen – Bordeaux 2

R. Besson (ADES, Univ. Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2) ;  
L. Kotobi, F. Le Marcis (ATOTEM, Univ. Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2) &  
P. Aïach (IRIS, EHESS), K. Lurbe (ESOMI, EDC & IRIS, EHESS); Miguel Pajares,  
(GRECS- University of Barcelona) ; Elena Marushiakova (Ethnographic Institute and  
Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Science) & Vesselin Popov (Ethnographic Institute and  
Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Science).

Either in the diverse national contexts of the European Union or at the level of the European Commission, the populations recognized as Manush, Yenish, Gypsies, travelers, Roma are often constructed as a problem. They are seen as people with a different conception of housing and working in comparison to the majority; they are stigmatized for not or hardly going to school. But at the same time, the discrimination they face is regarded as unworthy of the European political project. This is what is happening in the former Eastern European countries recently integrated in the EU, in which these populations are the target of specific programs launched to reduce social inequalities and injustice and, to promote access to the rights for all. Such countries have been invited, through budgetary incentives policies, to struggle against the discrimination faced by Roma communities.

Indeed, the situation of individuals identified as Manush or Gypsies cannot be directly related to the UE integration issue, as does the one of those viewed as Roma. However it shares with Roma a community of experience, namely, an experience whose borders are drawn by various forms of discrimination (access to housing, schools, civil rights, health) and of specific programs (specific schooling, housing or healthcare structures and so on). Certainly, these situations cannot be comparable in every respect and they require to be contextualized according to specific national histories as well as to singular local logics. As regards both situations, the recognition of the individual and of his voice and desire, as well as the consideration of his singular history and the current situation has yet been replaced by a fixed representation of the individual, arising from a homogeneous and essentialist representation of the “Gypsies”, “Manush” and “Roma.”

During this three-day Symposium we would like to invite you to take part into the discussion on the situation of those we may call the “foreigners from within”. Namely, people who, even though their belonging to a particular UE nation-state and by extension, their European citizenship, do nevertheless experience the illegitimacy of their status, or to say it differently, the experience of a second-class membership condition, throughout day-to-day interactions (with the State via health or social services, with the police and the offices dealing with immigration, or with NGO’s).

The aim of this symposium is to articulate, on the one side, the deconstruction of the categories produced on these populations and, which are mobilized in the public debate or

can be observed through the practices of actors whilst being in contact with them (i.e., professional or informal carers, belonging to the social or health sector), to the exploration of both the concrete life conditions (work, housing; access to healthcare, to rights; relations to the State) and the imaginaries produced in this context, on the other side. In sum, we call for an *exploration of the experience*.

We seek to create a space for thought and discussion able to show the dialogical nature of this *experience* (i.e., the articulation of both institutional and individual logics) and its dynamics (this experience is changing according to socio-economic and historical context), without neglecting the politics that underlie this experience at different levels (politics of actors, politics of States). In doing so, we want to multiply the viewpoints on this reality. By approaching this issue through the four themes that we will introduce you later on, we want to bring together the experience of the encounters between populations (Roma, Gypsies, Manush, Yenish, Travelers) and institutional actors, the production of categories through which these populations are thought, the dynamics of these interactions, and finally, the political, economic and historical contexts in which these encounters take place.

The communication proposals should deal with one of the following themes. However, we will consider all proposals, even whose thematic may fall outside the four defined space of discussion of this Symposium.

### **Racialization, categorization, negation/recognition of the voice.**

The way populations known as Roma, Gypsies, Manush, Yenish or travelers are regarded relies upon the production of an internal otherness within the societies in which they live. This constructed otherness is sustained by diverse cross-factors which vary according to contexts, but are involved in the *racialization* of these populations. This process is not unequivocal and it is sometimes reclaimed by individuals for themselves. What are the logics and the places of *racialization*? What are the enacted consequences of this cognitive process? What are the spaces available for actors to negotiate withhold or reclaim these categories? What are the terms of this negotiation? We propose to take into consideration individuals as they have a voice, are creators of imaginaries and are both singular and social actors. We wish to pay special attention to places, to interactions in which that voice can be heard. What are the determinants of listening or not to this voice?

### **Conditions and motivations for the transnational experience of Eastern European Roma.**

The European Commission is displaying several policies aiming at narrowing the social gape that is affecting Roma in Eastern Europe (access to school, to health care, to jobs) and it is supporting specific programs to attain this objective. Nevertheless, Roma populations coming from the countries recently integrated in the EU are still suffering from extremely deprived

life conditions. Thus, the presence of Roma beggars in the cities of France, Germany, Italy or Spain is often understood as the result of “push and pull” logics: Roma do not get jobs in their own country so they move where they can find one. To do so, they do mobilize an ancestral knowledge of nomadism and resourcefulness. In the process, they are said not to hesitate to occasionally rely on mafia networks. This type of analysis based on an economic and cultural approach does not help to reflect the complexity of the phenomenon. The economic reading is based on a correct assessment of the inequalities within the UE-27 but it does not take into account the aspirations of those who, like some Bulgarian or Rumanian families, integrate what Alain Tarrius has referred as the “circulatory territories”. In such networks across all of Europe, they try to reach new narrations of the self. The cultural reading is blind to the condition of production of the Roma category in the course of the history of their country of origin, to their settled way of life or to their forced settlement before or after WW2, to the worsening of their life conditions (job and health) after the dismantling of the communist economy and, to the rise of a nationalistic xenophobia. What are the socio-economic matrixes where migration logics take place? What are the logics of continuity and rupture within the move observed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, amongst Roma populations? Beyond the economic logic, what kind of hope do the people that take part into these networks bring? What kinds of Subject do emerge in the midst of this experience?

## **Roma and Europe**

The “Roma” is to a large extent conceived as a Free Rider, a hyper-rational and utilitarian actor: someone who is not playing the game of the host society, using up social services while giving the minimum. The recurring accusations of “migration for care” are examples of this type of representation. The mobilization of these categories sometimes allows actors (professional or informal carer) to legitimate, according to their own criteria, deontological or ethical adjustments which have practical consequences such as restriction of access to care and to emergency shelters, collective repatriations in France when it is expected that they must be individualized, written mention of petty crimes on the passport by the police (such as the unauthorized sale of newspapers) or even, attempts to systematically register people into a central database system because of their origin... These local adjustments with deontology, and sometimes even with the law, are *situations of exception* that characterize the experience of Roma in their journeys within EU space. What is the impact of the experience of these *situations of exception* on the relation that individuals have with the European project? What is the relevance of this project for these people, what experience do they have of it? What is at stake here is the encounter of people bringing singular hopes with the logic of Nation-States or that of UE construction.

## **The logics of the economy of suspicion**

The encounter between different stakeholders (social and/or health institutions, police ...) and Roma seems to rely on what might be defined as an economy of suspicion. In France, this economy of suspicion is partly the product of constraints within the organization of health care and social protection, including the establishment of zones of lack of rights to free healthcare for certain populations: the legal framework to access to this type of medical aid is constantly evolving (one witnesses everlasting modifications of the conditions to be entitled to care access as well as of the criteria to obtain a postal address for the people without fixed abode), the difficulties faced by hospitals for the practice of emergency care for the poorest populations, the lack of an homogeneous policy to get access to employment or to obtain a residence permit between the different Prefectures. All these factors do affect the possibility of recognition of the other (by only accessing to its request, for example) and foster a sense of uncertainty amongst professionals, which promotes ethical withdrawal.

The participation of individuals into transnational networks or the perception of “nomadism” as being inherent to these populations is also fueling this economy of suspicion. How is this economy of suspicion produced? How does it translate itself into a set of practices and forms of “suspension of ethics”, to what extent does it justify the denial of care or the disposal of basic care? Again, what is at stake here is the understanding of both, the logic of production of suspicion and the experience of individuals.

The official languages of the symposium will be French and English. An abstract of the communications of 2,000 words in English or French should be sent to the Organizing Committee until 18 January 2009 at the following email address: [collromeu@hotmail.fr](mailto:collromeu@hotmail.fr)