



*The immigration of Romanian Roma to western Europe:  
Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies  
(MigRom)*

**REPORT ON  
THE PILOT SURVEY  
*France***



Migrations et Numérique

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNTRY-BASED CASE STUDY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<b>PILOT SURVEY BRIEF</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1.1	BACKGROUND AND ORIGIN	6
1.1.2	ACCESS TO HOUSING	6
1.1.3	ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE	6
1.1.4	ACCESS TO EDUCATION	6
1.1.5	EMPLOYMENT, LEGAL STATUS AND ACCESS TO WORK	7
<b>1.2</b>	<b>PUBLIC DEBATES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.3</b>	<b>POLICY AND OUTREACH</b>	<b>8</b>
1.3.1	LOCAL AUTHORITY ENGAGEMENT	8
1.3.2	VOLUNTARY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT	8
1.3.3	PROJECT LINKS	9
<b>2</b>	<b>THE PILOT SURVEY: BACKGROUND</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>THE RESEARCH TEAM</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>PILOT SURVEY STRATEGY</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>PILOT SURVEY : “ESSONNE-SEGARCEA FIELDWORK”</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>SOCIODEMOGRAFIC DATA</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1.1	PLACE, LOCALIZATION	11
3.1.2	SOCIODEMOGRAFIC DATA: SIZE, STRUCTURE AND NETWORK OF HOUSEHOLDS	12
<b>3.2</b>	<b>MIGRATIONS.</b>	<b>15</b>
3.2.1	MIGRATION MOVEMENTS AND TRAVELS	15
3.2.2	MOTIVES FOR MIGRATION/PUSH AND PULL FACTORS	16
3.2.3	MIGRATORY EXPERIENCES	17
3.2.4	CURRENT PERCEIVED NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS	17
3.2.5	FUTURE EXPECTATIONS	18
<b>3.3</b>	<b>WORK, ECONOMIC STRATEGIES</b>	<b>18</b>
3.3.1	IN ROMANIA BEFORE AND AFTER 1990	18
3.3.2	PRESENT OCCUPATION AND STRATEGIY	19
3.3.3	PLANS, EXPECTATIONS, DREAMS	20
<b>3.4</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>21</b>
3.4.1	PRESENT HOUSING CONDITIONS. HOUSE, NEIGHBORHOOD, LOCALITY	21
3.4.2	BACKGROUND OF HOUSING CONDITIONS IN ROMANIA	23
3.4.3	HISTORY OF HOUSING IN MIGRATION	23
3.4.4	PLANS, INVESTMENTS, HOUSING EXPECTATIONS	24
<b>3.5</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>FAMILY HISTORY</b>	<b>25</b>
3.6.1	FAMILY SOCIAL HISTORY	25
3.6.2	GENEALOGY AND FAMILLY NETWORK	29
<b>3.7</b>	<b>LANGUAGES</b>	<b>30</b>
3.7.1	LINGUISTIC COMPETENCES AND LANGUAGE BIOGRAPHY	30
3.7.2	ATTITUDES ABOUT ROMA AND OTHER LANGUAGES	30
3.7.3	COMMUNICATION IN THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE	30
3.7.4	COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND TRASNATIONAL EXPERIENCES	30
<b>3.8</b>	<b>HEALTH</b>	<b>31</b>

3.8.1	HEALTH CARE ACCESS	31
3.8.2	LIFESTYLES AND UN/HEALTHY HABITS. USE OF TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS	31
<b>3.9</b>	<b>SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>31</b>
3.9.1	RELATIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS	31
3.9.2	POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPATION	32
3.9.3	INTERNAL COMMUNITY POLITICS	32
3.9.4	SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ETHNIC BORDERS	32
<b>3.10</b>	<b>IDEOLOGIES</b>	<b>33</b>
3.10.1	FAMILY RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND	33
3.10.2	BEING ROMA: VALUES, NORMS, CONSTRUCTS OF DIFFERENCE	34
3.10.3	GENDER IDEOLOGIES	35
<b>4</b>	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>36</b>

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## 1 Introduction to the country-based case study

Roma migration in France, in particular in the Paris region, has a specific character connected with the fact of living in urban slums that bring together families from a specific region in Romania and who are subjected to regular forced evictions. Each expulsion obliges the families to reconstitute another shantytown. The Roma themselves call these collective addresses “platz”. A second feature of the French situation stems from the deliberate ambiguity in which the political State keeps Romanian Roma so as to exclude them from the advantages of free circulation within the European space. A third aspect has to do with the current political situation: since 2010, all politicians, whatever their political color, have spotlighted Romanian immigration in debates on national security. In 2012, this political crystallization led to the creation of an *ad hoc* mission within the French interministerial delegation for housing and access to living quarters (DIHAL).

It is important to keep in mind the primacy in French public policy of the shantytown and eviction practices when dealing with figures on the Romanian Roma population in France. According to the association Romeurope (Schulmann, 2013), there are some 15,000 Romanian and Bulgarian Roma living in precarious conditions in France. This figure, calculated on the basis of information provided by local NGOs, has remained stable for the last five years. DIHAL bases its count on police numbers for slum-dwellers, all nationalities and ethnic groups taken together, the majority of whom are Romanian nationals and to a lesser extent Bulgarians. In 2013, DIHAL estimated a total of some 17,000 persons.

The living conditions, housing and health of these populations are described in the reports of numerous associations, in particular, Amnesty, Médecins du Monde and Romeurope. All show extremely degraded conditions and a population under constant pressure. In this case, one can speak of institutional violence. The reasoning engendered by these figures but also the reports on this population is tautological: a study is made of Roma/Romanians in a precarious situation only to conclude that their precariousness is structural, without questioning the institutional character of the shantytown and its constraints. In France, “Roma” has become a

socio-ethnic category while remaining somewhat ambiguous. In reality, Roma without housing problems are totally invisible to politicians, associations and even researchers.

A more localized focus on the figures advanced by DIHAL in September 2012 shows the following distribution of shantytowns in France:

Region	Number of camps	Number of persons by region
Alsace	14	424
Aquitaine	6	454
Auvergne	4	78
Basse-Normandie	2	56
Bourgogne	3	287
Champagne-Ardenne	2	65
Île-de-France	153	6956
Languedoc-Roussillon	28	967
Midi-Pyrénées	9	415
Nord-Pas-de-Calais	54	3116
Pays-de-la-Loire	36	1469
Poitou-Charentes	3	45
Provence-Alpes-Côte	41	1250
d'Azur	35	1081
Rhône-Alpes		

The great majority of shantytowns are concentrated in the highly urbanized zones of the departments of Ile-de France and Nord-Pas-de-Calais. In Ile-de-France, the slums are located essentially in the poor north Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis and in the large residential suburb of Essonne, south of Paris. We therefore chose to conduct our survey in these two departments.

## **1.1 Pilot survey brief**

### **1.1.1 Background and origin**

This group initially settled in a Roma platz in 2005 near the Paris suburb of Massy. In 2007, after the eviction of some one hundred persons, the group split in two shantytowns in the city. In 2009–2010, several fires forced the inhabitants to move their platz. It was at this time, in April 2012, that one of the groups moved to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, then Orly, and the other to Wissous, where we met them. Last October they moved after eviction to Vigneux and then in December to Champlan (in the same district). They come from villages in the southeast of Craiova. The migration began just after the revolution but most of the people moved less than ten years ago.

### **1.1.2 Access to housing**

This group of Caramizari Roma live in several illegal shantytowns in the southern suburbs of Paris. There is generally neither water nor electricity and evacuations and fires are frequent.

### **1.1.3 Access to healthcare**

The people often have State medical aid (*Aide medical d'Etat*) which gives them free hospital care. According to the annual report of Médecins du Monde and the 2012 report of the regional health observatory (Halphen, 2012), the real health situation of the Roma who live in the Paris shantytowns is catastrophic (tuberculosis, diabetes...), owing more to precarious and unhealthy housing than to lack of access to medical care.

### **1.1.4 Access to education**

Although they do not present hard data, the reports of associations such as Romeurope show an alarming lack of school attendance, particularly in the

department of Ile-de-France. This may be, on the one hand, the outcome of the unlawful refusal on the part of mayors to enroll the children in school and, on the other hand, an indirect effect of the evacuation policy: the rate of school attendance rises only after prolonged presence in one place.

#### **1.1.5 Employment, legal status and access to work**

Before January 1<sup>st</sup>, it was in practice impossible for Romanians and Bulgarians with little or no training to work legally in France. The persons we met all work in an informal economy. According to Prefect Reinier of the DIHAL, since 1 January 2014, each month some 200 shantytown inhabitants receive a residence permit that is tied to a salaried job. This shows an interesting tendency toward inclusion in the legal job market.

### **1.2 Public debates**

In France, the public debate about Roma has simply become more hysterical and more disconnected from reality since 2010. Politicians from all political parties are constantly taking positions on the Roma, for any and every reason. If we look back at the highlights of 2013, we see that a twin-pronged polemic mobilized the media and the political world as a whole for the months of September and October. We say twin pronged because it was sparked by a remark by the Interior Minister about the impossibility for Romanian Roma living in shantytowns to integrate the French culture and was exacerbated by the expulsion of a Kosovar high-school girl refused right of asylum (the Leonarda affair)(Marchand, 2013). Peak media production reached 140 articles a day in the French dailies and ended with the President of the Republic intervening. The debate did not produce any public policy.

## 1.3 Policy and outreach

### 1.3.1 Local authority engagement

There are three models of local intervention.

- The most frequent model consists in trying to curb the development and viability of the shantytowns. This involves letting the situation deteriorate further (refusal of access to water, garbage collection, schools and even municipal services in general. It also involves calling on the mayor's powers to evict either by the owner of the occupied land or by an administrative police officer. Our two fieldstudies, in Courneuve and Wissous, fit this model.

- The second model of intervention is simply to guarantee access to civil rights (water, schooling, housing...). This initiative requires elected officials to impose their will on the municipal administration. In this perspective of proactive access to civil rights, Bordeaux specifically set up mediation between the Roma families and the administrative services.

- The third model is based on a specific action with regard to a selected and numerically limited Roma group. Here the dominant model found in many towns is the village designed to promote insertion (*village d'insertion*) or the sorting of inhabitants and their transfer them to a specific place with better accommodations but no actual brick-and-mortar houses. This kind of action is always limited in time (between 3 and 5 years° During this period, social interventions are conducted. These interventions have two objectives: insertion of individuals and social control of the group. Our fieldstudy site at Saint-Denis fits this model.

### 1.3.2 Voluntary sector engagement

The concerned associations in France stem from three traditions: catholic or protestant, communist, and secular. To this can be added the State operators, in the form of associations, and the Roma or pro-Roma associations created in



the 1990s.

At the level of our fieldwork, we find in Wissous a local association comprised of communist and catholic volunteers, ASEFRR. In La Courneuve, the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), Médecins du Monde and La Voix des Roms are active. In Saint-Denis. The social intervention is financed by the town and carried out by the association Rues et Cités; there is also a large number of active volunteers from the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (Human Rights League), the MRAP (Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples).

The various associations communicate via a platform run the collectif Romeurope.

### **1.3.3 Project links**

With the third sector:

At the local level we have daily working links with the ERRC and the suburban branch of Médecins du Monde, both of which intervene in La Courneuve. There is extensive cooperation, too, with the associations active in Saint-Denis: Rues et Cités and Firme 93. At the regional level, we are in contact with ASEFRR via the monthly meetings of Romeurope-Ile-de-France. Nationally we participate actively in Romeurope.

We have developed relations of trust with the teams working in Saint-Denis and the greater urban area of Plaine Commune. Relations with municipal administration of La Courneuve are conflict ridden and those with Essonne non-existent.

At the national level we participate actively in the DIHAL working groups.

## 2 The pilot survey: Background

### 2.1 The research team

The fieldwork was led by Petre Petcut (the program's research assistant) and Grégoire Cousin (post-doctoral researcher).

Florin Nita and Ionut Tranca (Roma assistants) were recruited as independent contractors for the duration of the survey.

Henriette Asséo (scientific directrice) and Grégoire Cousin coordinated the survey and directed the draft of the mid-term report.

### 2.2 Pilot survey strategy

The pilot survey was conducted on three different sites, all in the Paris region. For each site a tandem (a researcher and a Roma mediator) conducted the interviews.

- Grégoire Cousin and Florin Nita in Saint-Denis with a Ciobotari community from Tulcea (Drobogea): 2 interviews in Saint-Denis + 2 interviews in Tulcea
- Grégoire Cousin and Florin Nita in Courneuve with a community of Evangelicals originally from Bihor: 10 interviews
- Petre Petcut and Ionut Tranca in Essonne with a community originally from the Segarcea countryside (Dolj): 10 interviews.

Two study trips were made, one to Tulcea and the other to Craiova, to meet community elders and consult the archives. These study trips were conducted in a clearly historical anthropological perspective.

To support the research, and more particularly the analysis, we set up a monthly seminar at the FMSH entitled *Roma (Tsigani) transnationality in question: Methodology and theory*: (see program at: <http://www.fmsch.fr/fr/c/1356>).

The aim of the seminar is to challenge theoretical a priori connected with transnationality as applied to the past and present circulation of Roma in Europe and

beyond. A transdisciplinary approach was used in examining the strong historical resonance of present-day circulation modes, thus making it possible to address, but without conflating them, historical, sociological, legal and anthropological issues. In emphasizing methodology and a theoretical analysis of the systems of mobility, the seminar aims at a polycentric approach to circulation regimes and the effects induced by the constraints of national belonging.

This theoretical reflection led us to three ideas that guided our work:

- The necessity of an approach in terms of social networks more than in terms of ethnic or social categories.
- The necessity to understand the local family history of each group, since the history of a family's local insertion partially conditions their present social position.
- The necessity to keep the analysis on a group-by-group basis owing to the heterogeneity of the different groups' social history even within Romania.

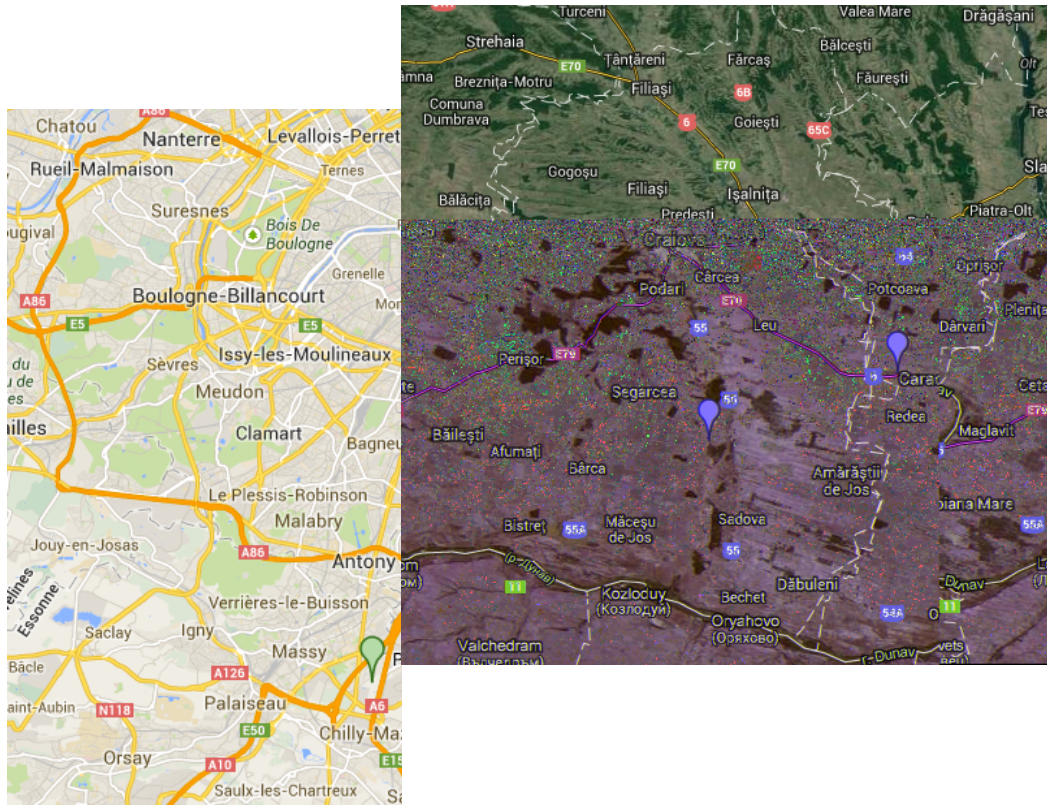
In relation with the last point, we chose to present here only the results of the “Essonne-Segarcea fieldwork” in order to provide a homogeneous reading of all of the interactions involved in the field.

### **3 Pilote Survey : “Essonne-Segarcea Fieldwork”**

#### **3.1 Sociodemographic data**

##### **3.1.1 Place, localization**

The families interviewed were first at Wissous until October 2013, then at Vigneux (Essonne). The following map shows the location of these two shantytowns in the Paris region.



*Key: green drop, platz at Wissous; brown drop, platz at Vigneux.*

All of the families originally come from an agricultural zone in the southeastern part of the department of Dolj

### 3.1.2 Sociodemographic data: Size, structure and network of households

We chose two presentations of the demographic data in order to present a synthetic overview: a table summarizing personal demographic data and and a map of household networks.

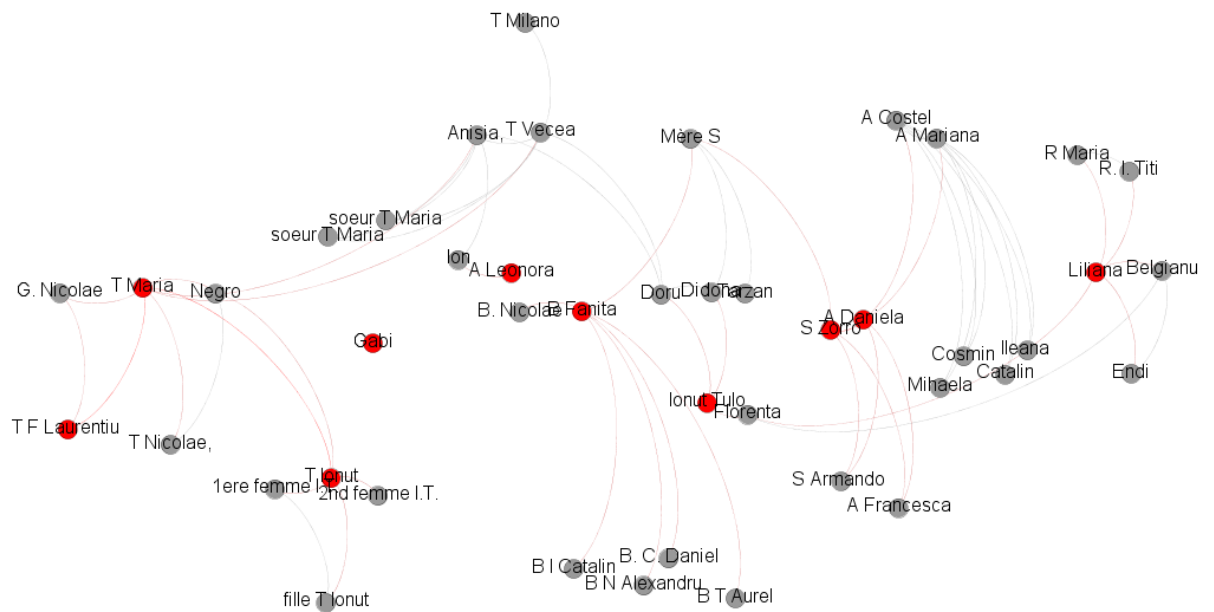
#### 3.1.2.1 Table of the demographic data:

This table contains all of those interviewed as well as all of the members of their family mentioned. From the 10 interviews conducted at Wissous we have extracted the data on 44 persons.

Label	Age	Sex	Mentions	Place of origin	Living	Country of residence or death
T Maria	1964	f	self	Horezu	yes	Fr
soeur T Maria	1960	f	T Maria		yes	Ro
soeur T Maria	1968	f	T Maria		yes	Ro
T Milano		m	T Maria		no	Ro
Negro	1962	m	T Maria		yes	Ro
T F Laurentiu	1994	m	self	Horezu	yes	Fr
G. Nicolae		m	T F Laurentiu	Horezu	yes	Fr
T Nicolae	1987	m	T F Laurentiu	Horezu	yes	Ro
Florenta	1992	f	T Ionut	Horezu	yes	Fr
Ionut Tulo	1991	m	self	Horezu	yes	Fr
Doru	1973	m	T Ionut	Horezu	yes	Fr
Didona	1975	f	T Ionut	Horezu	yes	Fr
T Ionut		m	self	Horezu	yes	FR
T Vecea	1940	m	T Ionut	Horezu	yes	Ro
Anisia	1943	f	T Ionut	Horezu	yes	Ro
A Leonora	1977	f	self	Horezu	yes	FR
Ion		m	A Leonora	Horezu	yes	Fr
B. Nicolae	1972	m	B Fanita	Grecesti	yes	Fr
B Fanita	1975	f	self	Grecesti	yes	Fr
B I Catalin	1996	m	B Fanita	Grecesti	yes	Ro
B T Aurel	1998	m	B Fanita	Grecesti	yes	Ro
B N Alexandru	2001	m	B Fanita	Grecesti	yes	Ro
B. C. Daniel	2004	m	B Fanita	Grecesti	yes	Ro
Tarzan		m	B Fanita	Ghighera	yes	Fr
S Zorro	1981	m	self	Bechet	yes	Fr
A Daniela	1987	f	self	Horezu	yes	Fr
A Mariana	1970?	f	A Daniela	Horezu	yes	Fr
A Costel	1964	m	A Daniela	Horezu	yes	Fr
Mihaela	1984	f	A Daniela	Horezu	yes	Fr
Ileana	1985	f	A Daniela	Horezu	yes	Fr
Cosmin	1994	m	A Daniela	Horezu	yes	Fr
Catalin	1996	m	A Daniela	Horezu	yes	Fr
S Armando	2010	m	A Daniela		yes	Fr
A Francesca	2011	f	A Daniela		yes	Fr
Liliana	1974	f	self	Horezu	yes	Fr
Belgianu	1973	m	Liliana	Horezu	yes	Fr
Endi	1994	m	Liliana	Horezu	yes	Fr
R Maria	1930?	f	Liliana	Bacau	no	Ro

R. I. Titi	1929?	m	Liliana	Bacau	no	Ro
femme T Ionut		f	T Ionut		yes	Fr
filie T Ionut		f	T Ionut		yes	Fr
mère S			zorro		no	Ro
Gabi	1981		self	Caracal	yes	Fr
1re femme T Ionut		f	T Ionut		yes	Ro

### 3.1.2.1 Map of interviewees' family networks of interviewees



*Key: Interviewees-Red, Family members mentioned by interviewees – gray*

## 3.2 Migrations.

### 3.2.1 Migration movements and travels

All of those interviewed left Romania between 2005 and 2007. Only one person arrived directly in France in 2012. Four adults left for Germany first, one for Greece, and the rest came to France directly. The migration circuit often runs through Italy or Spain after Germany. The trip to Western Europe costs between 300 Euros in 2005 and 100 Euros today. The return trip costs less. Germany has fallen out of favor with men owing to the impossibility of finding un-declared work. A woman spoke of her sister who works in Italy. The trips are organized collectively and made by car.

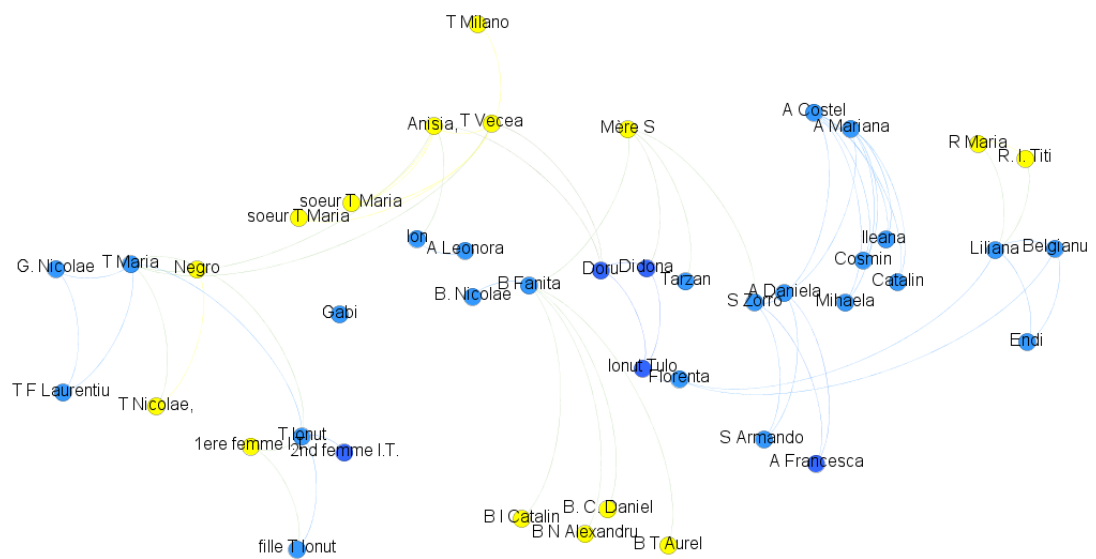
### 3.2.2 Motives for migration/Push and pull factors

Those interviewed were unanimous: they gave economic problems as their main reason for leaving: lack of money, loss of work, food scarcity. Two women talked about the need to help their children back home. One man talked about the difficult working conditions in Romania. Most of those interviewed send back money to a family member (between 50 and 100 Euros a month), sometimes to children back home, sometimes to the big brother looking after the family home.

Most persons joined family or friends already living in Massy. They received payment for the trip at a later date. One of the women claimed to be one of the first to have arrived in Massy in 2005, because the transporter was part of a group of farmers from Oas already living in trailer homes in Massy. The families from her husband's village joined them later. With time, three persons from the village have specialized in transportation from Essonne to the village in Romania. They use 7-seater minibusses.

Above and beyond the instrumental network, migration is seen as a means of being part of society both here and there. The familial character of Roma migration seems to us an important point differentiating it from other migrations. The following schema of the interviewees' families shows those present in France in blue and those in Romania in yellow.





We thus see that the majority of family members live in France, with the exception of grandparents and a few children

### 3.2.3 Migratory experiences

The interviewees construct a back-and-forth pattern of circulation, relatively spaced out in time, between their village and where they live in France. Temporary returns to Romania initially last a few months on average, especially when the children have stayed behind, then more and more time passes between trips. Circulation was more intense until 2007 owing to the ban on spending more than three consecutive months in the Schengen Space. Today the frequency of trips home depends on available resources and family events. Bachelors have a more intense pattern of circulation and travel to other countries of immigration where they have family or friends.

### 3.2.4 Current perceived needs and aspirations

Interviewees stressed that the village in Romania has improved materially because the whole village has immigrated. The improvement concerns the Romanian houses first of all. One interviewee added that migration has changed the way villagers

behave: they are more stressed and greedier. The most frequent demands are for family allowances and rehousing outside the shantytown (see 3.4).

### **3.2.5 Future expectations**

Interviewees explained that they would like to live in their home village, in their own house. But all added that they do not want to go back to Romania “to be hungry again”. Most of the interviewees do not have a position on the future. Two express the wish to settle in France, which does not stop them making plans for a house in Romania. “I really love Romania because that’s where I have my house, but I love France because that’s where I find money.”

Of the ten people interviewed, eight had no opinion concerning the effects of lifting the transitory measures. Two thought there would be free access to the labor market starting in 2012, one thought that Roma would be able to settle freely in the shantytowns, and another that the children would have an easier time going to school.

## **3.3 Work, economic strategies**

### **3.3.1 In Romania before and after 1990**

For the group as a whole, the post-war generation worked as brickmakers, either self-employed or on collective farms. In the second case, they were subjected to quotas and to the constraints inherent in a planned economy. The independent brickmakers had based their work on a seasonal circulation within a fairly large radius (they cited Timisoara, Hunedoara, for example). The next generation continued to make bricks into the early 1990s. At the end of the 1970s, a few persons were taken into communist production units: industry (the chemical *combinat* in Craiova) or agricultural work (collective farms). The fall of the Berlin Wall had two important consequences: the disintegration of the working relationship on collective farms and the effects of the post-1989 agrarian reform. People were obliged either to travel the

country in search of seasonal work or to hire on as day laborers with farmers who had recovered their lands in the reform.

Of the five family units, in the broad sense of the term, two families kept agricultural lands distributed under the agrarian reform, amounting to between 60 and 200 ares. One family leases agricultural land (1 hectare), which they work. All of those interviewed say their family keeps backyard poultry and a vegetable garden (looked after by the grandparents) for household consumption.

Two interviewees stand out from this picture.

Gabi is connected to brickmaking through his mother, but his paternal grandparents used to be silversmiths. His parents worked, under communism, on a collective farm. Since 1990, they have built up a business selling second-hand clothing in outdoor markets. Gabi learned to sing in the village of Barbulesti after his parents separated and his mother moved away. He worked as a singer for some ten years in Romania before immigrating.

Liliana's father, who is from Bacau, was a musician in a cultural center and also worked in an industrial bakery.

### **3.3.2 Present occupation and strategiy**

Economic occupations are conditioned by the nature of the platz. We think there is a "platz economy", characterized by surplus labor supply and inclusion in a local economic fabric. The existence of economic relations within the platz induces a reconfiguration of the resources in terms of solidarity and commerce. The interviews give several examples of this platz economy.

In two of the families interviewed, the men work in the building trade as laborers for a carpenter or a painter. This is non-declared activity, day labor that operates through a network of job providers who come to the platz looking for workers. One woman said that people come to the platz to hire her for housework. Their continued

presence at Wissous gives visibility to the labor supply comprised by the adults in the shantytown and structures labor relations. The evacuation of the platz caused the inhabitants of Wissous to lose their hiring network.

Another activity connected to the social network concerns the recycling of scrap metal. This activity is carried out by all of the inhabitants as the opportunity arises. It requires a place to stock, sort and and transform the scrap into valuable basic materials, as well as immediate access to numerous hands when needed, and especially a network of workers, foremen or bosses who sell or offer scrap.

The great majority of the women beg in front of the stores near the platz. They describe a relationship of giving connected with repeated encounters in the same place and the familiarity acquired with locals. Begging is a women's activity, but both men and women frequent charitable associations in equal proportions. Today begging brings in no more than 5 to 20 Euros maximum for eight hours of presence. Keeping up the local network of mutual acquaintances is a determining factor in the strategy of families seeking to stay in the sector where people know one another.

The musician sings in Roma communities settled in the Paris region, but has real difficulty surviving. The head of the platz has a monopoly on sales in the platz: sodas, cigarettes, alcohol, drinking water. He has a bar. People play rami there. The bar has a slot machine, a television, an electricity generator, all of which make it the center of social life. Commercial activity is controlled by the mother, who does not hesitate to ask premium prices. The same family controls the transport of persons and goods between Romania and France.

### **3.3.3 Plans, expectations, dreams**

It seems to us excessive, in the case of this group, to speak of economic strategies. Daily survival dictates their economic behavior. The singer seems to have a definite plan (to sing in a restaurant), half of the men would like to work in the building trades and on construction sites. The women say they want a regular job they do every day and not an intermittent activity. The kind of work evoked involves

services to individuals, housework, child minding or elder care, but also trade. Two men talked about wanting money, cars, houses, but not about a specific professional activity.

## **3.4 Housing**

### **3.4.1 Present housing conditions. House, neighborhood, locality**

The survey conditions were upset by an explosion, which makes it relatively difficult to describe the housing conditions. The first interviews were conducted in Wissous until the evacuation in October 2013, and then in Vigneux, 12 kilometers away and in Champlan, 3 kilometers from Wissous. We can already note that this group moves about in the relatively homogenous space of Essonne, a department in the second *couronne*, or concentric circle of suburbs, around (south) Paris, on the borderline between the city and agricultural lands. It is usual to characterize this zone by its sparse construction (residential zone) and its middle-class residents.

In Wissous, the platz was set up on in abandoned field in the middle of agricultural land, with no close neighbors. At the end of a lane, a circular space on the left is occupied by the family of the head of the platz.



*Key:*

*Family of head of platz (Red)*

*Other Carazimari families (Black)*

*Rudari families (Blue)*

*Family T (Black and red)*

In early October 2013 the shantytown was evacuated. The eviction was carried out by the police following a District Court decision in response to a complaint by the landowner. A few days earlier the inhabitants had tried to

avoid the planned evacuation by moving a few meters from the platz. They hoped in so doing to delay the evacuation procedure by several months. The town mayor immediately used his administrative powers to block the manoeuvre, and they were expelled from the new spot by municipal decree.

Eight families left for Vigneux 12 kilometers away. The head of the platz returned to Romania before coming back and setting up a platz in the woods at Champlan, 3 km from Wissosus. Other families moved into a squat in Orly a few kilometers away and, finally, half of the families moved to Noisy-le-Grand, where Roma from the same village live.

The shacks, built by the household heads, typically have one room about 10m<sup>2</sup>. They use salvaged materials (pallet stock, sheet metal, old windows). Particular attention is paid to furnishings, for example rugs on the wall. There is a wood-burning stove, often a big bed and a gas cooker. One person who bought a shack said they paid 100 Euros for it. There is no electricity except on occasion via gas-driven generators. The comfort of the shacks improves with the length of stay. For instance, in Vigneux, on the recently installed platz, the shacks did not have windows and the door was a sheet of plastic.

In both Wissous and Vigneux, the women complained particularly about access to water. In Wissous women had to carry water in plastic jugs from a fire hydrant several hundred meters away. A few months before the evacuation, the mayor had turned off this water source, obliging the women to go more than two kilometers to another hydrant. The situation was even worse in Vigneux. The women have to buy bottled water for drinking. Washing and cooking are done with dirty water from the Seine.

More generally, the interviewees say they felt a shock when they arrived in a shantytown for the first time: “It’s hell, it’s the Sahara Desert”. In Vigneux they complain about the mud (the grounds were flooded during the interviews), the cold and the isolation. In exchange they claim they feel safe because they live together.

#### **3.4.2 Background of housing conditions in Romania**

The interviewees live in rural villages laid out in a checkerboard pattern. Everyone has full ownership of their houses, which are small and surrounded by a yard. All of the houses have electricity, and water is usually provided by an outdoor fountain. Only one family has an indoor bathroom. The families talk about generational crowding connected with a financially precarious situation. The houses are not on the outskirts of the villages but mixed in with the other houses of Romanians as well as Roma.

#### **3.4.3 History of housing in migration**

As far as we know this group initially settled in as a Roma platz in 2005 near the Massy railroad tracks, around two poles with two platz heads from the same family. Formerly the group as a whole had lived on a platz with Romanians from Oas. Then the Roma formed their own platz on the other side of the tracks. In 2007, after the evacuation of some one hundred personnes, one of the poles regrouped in a parking lot owned by the public works company Eiffage and located beside a motorway, while the other pole settled in a woods alongside another motorway, described in the documentary *Le Bateau en Carton*, shown in 2010. After another evacuation the two

platz regrouped with the same people, one in a field on the outskirts of town and the other next to a motorway. In 2009–2010, several fires forced the inhabitants to move their platz. It was at this time, in April 2012, that one of the groups moved to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, then Orly, and the other to Wissous, where we met them.

**Between 2005 and today, there have been, for these two initial groups, a total of six expulsions and three fires!**

#### **3.4.4 Plans, investments, housing expectations**

Those we interviewed had absolutely no intention of investing in France, but they would nevertheless like access to stable housing in a rented apartment, for instance. They seem to think that the offer will necessarily come from a public agency. In the course of their migration, in Germany or Spain, they had access to apartments. Housing in a shantytown is largely an option of last resort, but sometimes its community nature makes the material conditions tolerable. The model of the “integration village” was sometimes mentioned by interviewees as a solution adapted to their needs. Their ideal is to expand their house in Romania and to settle their children nearby in good conditions. The ideal house size depends on the size of the household: their dream would be between 5 and 7 rooms.

### **3.5 School**

The majority of the parents’ (over 35) and grandparents’ generations attended school for about eight grades, i.e. elementary school and part of junior high. The two women who had no schooling explained that they had had to help their mother raise their younger brothers and sisters. None of the interviewees nor any member of their direct family went on to highschool (*lycée*).

In the following generation, which grew up in migration, we see interruptions in schooling owing to parents traveling back and forth between France and Romania, which prevented the children going to school in either place. For the young men we met in France, school learning was therefore reduced. Alternatively, the children who stayed in Romania were able to go to school and then get professional training (e.g.



in mechanics). The two girls who were twenty had little or no schooling. The reason they gave was the need to earn a living or to marry young. More broadly, several persons said there was no need for women to go to school.

In the end, the data on the children present in the group in France show the following picture. For the Wissous shantytown, intervention by a local NGO enabled 13 children to enroll in school in 2012 despite, the interviewees say, the mayor's opposition. Evacuation of the shantytown in October 2013 put an end to the process. Today the children no longer go to school. We noticed that parents want their younger children to get a good education with a view to a successful career. We were struck by the discrepancy between these hopes and the educational trajectory of the older children.

## **3.6 Family history**

### **3.6.1 Family social history**

Family memory is based essentially on economic activities. In this sense, we refer back to section 3.3.1. It seems important to present here the first findings of the research conducted in the departmental archives of Craiova (Directia Judeteana a Arhivelor Nationale Dolj). They tend to show that these families worked before 1948 in the Segarcea crown domain. The documents mention three hundred families described as "emancipated peasants" living here. This qualification is applied to the Romani families, and the family names coincide with those of the ethnographic survey. Future investigations should make it possible to validate this genealogy.

Here is an example of two pages from work histories:

I.M./13

Nr. 2553  
1945 Decembrie 12

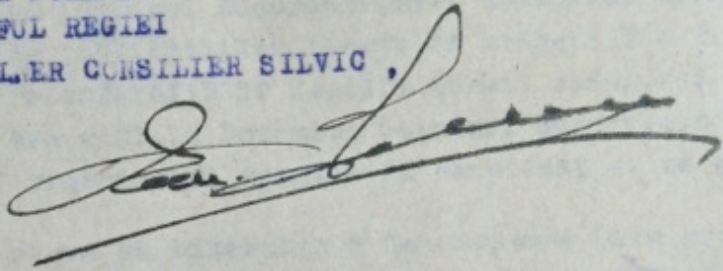
DOMNULUI PRIMAR AL COMUNEI

SEGARCEA-DOLJ

Am onoare a vă depune în dublu exemplar un contract de învoială agricolă încheiat cu țigani din Comuna Segarcea pentru munci agricole cu măsura pentru anul 1946 la Secția Segarcea, rugându-vă să binevoiți a dispune autentificarea lui din care un exemplar ni se va restitui.-

Cu stimă.-

SEFUL REGIEI  
INGLER CONSILIER SILVIC



1945 letter concerning use of gypsy labor

Christiana 75

Subsemnării vătafii și muncitorii noștri țigani  
 am primit din Administrația Domeniului Coroanei  
 Segarua în Contul muncilor angajate a am angajat  
 cu contractul de învoia agricole № . . . din Dec. 1944  
 pe exercitiul 1945 din febrile sume de bani ce sunt trecute  
 în dreptul numelui deoarece din noi în prezența Christiana

№ Seriat	Semnătura Contractantilor	Suma primita Lei	№ Seriat
1	Constantin Gheorghu	1400	63
2	Safta St. Coest.	2400	63
3	Maria St. Coest.	2400	63
4	Tinca St. Coest.	2400	64
5	Leucuta St. Coest.	2400	64
6	Joni Alexandru	1400	64
7	Ghyke Manole	1400	65
8	Leana St. Manole	2400	65
9	Vadura Milan	1400	65
10	Joița Vadura	2400	66
11	Tumbluc Sten	1400	66
12	Nicolai Pătru	1400	66
13	Jancu Pătru	1400	67
14	Fima Jancu	2400	67
15	Grimpus Jancu	1400	67
16	Mrsu Jorita	1400	68
17	Gița Mrsu	2400	68
18	Jentica Stoiica	1400	68
19	Comen Vadura	1400	69
20	Ghyke J. Vadura	1400	69
21	Gheorghu Pătru	1400	69
22	Leonia Ghyke	2400	70
23	David Pătru	1400	70
	de raportat	41.200	

LE NATIONALE ♦ DOLJ

List of salaries paid to gypsy laborers



The Segarcea crown domain was constituted by the law of 9 June 1844 for an area of 11,800 hectares. The “gypsies” are listed under the heading “emancipated farm workers”. The records of work contracts drawn up between estate managers from 1844 to 1948 and the bosses overseeing the brigades of emancipated farm workers (men and women) include lists of names with the amounts paid each worker. Other documents referring to the same individuals use the category “gypsy” directly. The tables list together amounts paid to Hungarians, Romanians and Gypsies. The first run through shows that the global population census does not provide complete information.



*Caption: Modernization of the domain, in particular the introduction of mechanized labor, was carried out by the same organization into “artels”.*

*Source: photos by W. Meissner (domeniul Coroanei Segarcea) (Geheugenvan Nederland), coordinated by the National Library of the Netherlands.*

*<http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?/en/zoekresultaten/pagina/1/Segarcea/%28Segarcea%29/&colcount=0&wst=Segarcea>. Above: photo of model farms with combine harvester.*

To complete this initial picture, we would need to map the localization, identify the *artels* and their chiefs, and establish lists of names. Then we would have to examine the effects of the transfer of the Crown domain to State supervision after 1948.



## **3.7 Languages**

### **3.7.1 Linguistic competences and language biography**

All of those interviewed speak Romanes as their native language. They also all speak Romanian, which some consider as a household language and others learned at school or with neighbors. In the two cases of mixed marriage, one woman interviewed said that these children only speak Romanian and the other that they also speak Romanes.

One interviewee said he speaks the Ursari dialect.

### **3.7.2 Attitudes about Roma and other languages**

The interviewees have a weak grasp of French. This is experienced as a problem in everyday life. The adults who speak French learned it on the street. The parents invest in their children's competence in French (via school or French playmates). The interviewees as a whole see the fact that Romanes is learned and spoken well by non-Roma people as positive.

### **3.7.3 Communication in the migration experience**

Interpretation features in many ways. Those interviewed mentioned the official interpreters (at the police station) or those with associations. Exchanges are held in Romanian. They also mentioned an interpreter from the platz or a member of the family who accompanies them to hospital appointments

### **3.7.4 Communication technologies and transnational experiences**

The internet is specifically used by two 20- and 24-year old brothers: they use YouTube, have a Facebook address and play games on their Smartphone. Internet use is inexistent among the other interviewees. All of those interviewed have one or more telephones with pre-paid cards, which they use only for phoning or texting.

Text messages are generally written in Romanian, one person claims to write in Romani.

Telephone remains the normal means of contact between family, friends and work colleagues.

## **3.8 Health**

### **3.8.1 Health care access**

All of those interviewed contrasted the free hospital care in France (State-funded medical aid, free emergency care in public hospitals) with what they describe as the generalized corruption of the Romanian health-care system. Yet vaccination for children was declared to be general and up to date in both Romania and France. The interviewees were proud of having healthy teeth free of decay and did not have many health complaints despite the difficult living conditions in the camp.

### **3.8.2 Lifestyles and un/healthy habits. Use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs**

All of those interviewed said they have smoked since the age of eight or ten. Both men and women smoke on average a pack a day. Tobacco dependency conflicts with the frugality required by their Pentacostal Church.

## **3.9 Social and political relationships**

### **3.9.1 Relations with institutions**

Essential relations with the police go through the head of the platz, who possesses a real administrative culture. Most relations with the local political system go through activists: ASEFRR (the Essonne association for solidarity with Romanian and Roma families) has communist and Catholic members. The other association, Intermedes, comes from the social work sector. It is run by volunteers and ensures a minimal presence.

Relations with public institutions, the hospital and the school are conducted directly and on an individual basis.

### 3.9.2 Political organization and participation

This group does not participate in local French political struggles. Even to regularize papers or to be rehoused. We can relate one anecdote: Marine LePen came to the outskirts of the platz in Wissous in 2012 to denounce the presence of Roma in France in general ... and was greeted with total indifference on the part of the inhabitants.

### 3.9.3 Internal community politics

Community organization is limited to recognizing the authority of each nuclear family. The only authority the head of the platz exercises is over the organization of the site, and he is by no means to be confused with a community leader in the full sense of the term.

### 3.9.4 Social networks and ethnic borders

Those interviewed define themselves as belonging to a specific group: they are Caramizari Roma who speak the Usari dialect. The other Roma call them Roma or gypsies, depending on the linguistic usage, just like the Romanians. One interviewee added that these Romanian friends do not call her Tigana but use her *romano lap*. A few people make distinctions among Roma from their Romanian villages: Nemtoaia (one informant says that their women wear pieces of gold in their hair), Tinichigii, Lautari, Ursari and Bolozari, Laieti as well as Caldarari, Spoitori, Rudari and Tismanari (who no longer speak Romanes).

The woman from Bacau evoked the presence in her platz of Badanari, Zavragi, and Modorani. For Caracal, the interviewee spoke of Argintaris, Ciobotaris, Ursaris, Costoraris, Rudaris and Zlataris. He gave details: Zavragis make rings; Badanaris make brushes and their wives tell fortunes; the Modorani tend to steal, according to the interviewee; he pointed out that, in Romania, certain groups now have more money than others.



It is striking to see the wealth of subdivisions mentioned by the interviewees from a small territory.

Relations with French people are good on the whole, and all of those interviewed said that the French are “better”, “more polite” (less racist) than Romanians. All appreciated the fact that it isn’t necessary to pay extra to obtain a service in the administrations, the school or the hospital, and everyone cites the corruption prevailing in Romania for every act of everyday life; the French police are feared but are considered to be less brutal; if you are capable of explaining yourself, they will listen, whereas in Romania one interviewee was beaten, and corruption is widespread.

Formerly in Romania one saw relations between Roma and Romanians constructed from childhood (godparents, friends and professional relations). These relations were connected with the agrarian life of the whole village. As the agrarian system has deteriorated, these relations have either disappeared or become conflict ridden. The younger generation speaks of institutional discrimination but this does not make them question their network of Romanian relations.

One particular case of conflicting relations was observed by the group interviewed. Those with sedentarized Travelers in family camps close to those of the Roma. According to Roma witnesses, following the theft of a TV, the Travelers carried out aggressive reprisals. Armed, they surrounded the Roma and made them lie down while they searched the shacks. The Roma suspected the Travelers of being responsible for a fire.

### **3.10 Ideologies**

#### **3.10.1 Family religious background**

All of those interviewed come from Orthodox families. Most of those thirty and over converted to the Pentacostal Church some time in Romania and practice a mixture of Orthodoxy and Pentacostalism. For instance, all had had their children baptized in

the Orthodox Church in the presence of godparents, unlike the Pentacostalists, who do not practice infant baptism. The major Orthodox holidays are celebrated: Easter, Christmas, Saint George, Saint Peter, Marian feast days. Everyone believes in God, those over thirty read the Bible and most do not make a distinction between the religions of the Book; “there is only one God”, one woman said.

Only the oldest project themselves into the meaning of dreams, the younger people do not understand the question. But none of those interviewed had any special knowledge about understanding dreams; isolated images were proposed by two women: dreaming of a ring means death, fish represent money, etc. A single woman claimed to have special innate powers (cursing or healing). She was the only one who knew any stories, but she tells them in Romanes. The others said they were too young to know tales.

### **3.10.2 Being Roma: values, norms, constructs of difference**

For all of those interviewed, being Roma is self-evident! It is a priority to marry, if possible a Romni. Recomposed families and mixed marriages are not stigmatized. The majority says that one has to adapt to modern ways. No one in the group has a fear of losing their Romani identity. For everyone, their identity is based on using the Romani language. A gadgi woman who marries a Roma and speaks Romanes becomes a true Romni. Only one woman talked about identity, which she formulated in these terms: “I would prefer to live in a country of Romani people without gadge because they are my people”.

Fortune telling has totally disappeared. It was mentioned only once, concerning former generations. Begging was never practiced in Romania. It is an opportunity that arose from economic necessity in migration. And the women say they were ashamed at first.

There is no opposition between being Roma and being Romanian. Holidays and funerals are not considered to be specifically Roma but normal in Romania. They are common to the people of the home village, Roma or non-Roma. It is hard to

distinguish in the interviews between the moral ideal of the “true Roma” and the religious ideal affirmed by all of the interviewees, whether Orthodox or Evangelical. Speaking the Romani language and ensuring its transmission in the home from infancy is the foundation of their identity.

### **3.10.3 Gender ideologies**

For men and women alike, the role of the wife is first of all to raise her children, to take care of the house, to keep up relations with family and neighbors, to help her parents when they get old. “I get along well with everyone”, several women told us. In principle, the men are supposed to earn money for the household. The majority of the women take an interest in their children’s education. Two women complained of not knowing French well because they would like to have regular contact with the teachers. For the men and women alike, the ideal of making a home is not incompatible with the hope that their children, including daughters, will have a good occupation.

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