IN VARIETATE CONCORDIA?

ROMA IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION IN EU IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: Over the past twenty years, the concept of 'integration' has informed much of the political and social science research on both immigrant settlement and the accommodation of national minorities in Western countries. Heated debates have spurred over whether cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious minorities are integrating 'enough' (even though according to the definition of the Glossary of the Bouchard-Taylor Report of 2008, integration is supposed to be 'a two-way process'), over how integration varies across immigrant/national minority groups, and whether the concept of 'integration' is too state-centered to be of much scientific use.

Where the effort towards developing a high level of economic integration, collective identity and shared values has gone the furthest and has been most formalized –the European Union– it has become clear that existing frameworks for immigration and minority policies are not viable. The expulsion of Roma from a number of European countries and the forced return of refugees that Europe has witnessed in recent years have not only raised bitter disputes in Brussels, but also marked a significant shift in discourse in minority politics, widening the integration and immigration debate from the classic issue of securing peace within national borders, to perspectives of general human rights, minority rights and non-discrimination. While this paper is limited, in scope and ambition, at drawing an overview of how the current debates on multiculturalism, integration and cultural diversity apply to the 'Roma issue', it aims at laying the theoretical foundation for further empirical comparative research on modes and models of integration practices at the sub-national level, which are particularly salient in Europe's diverse social and political landscape.

Keywords: Integration Policy, Roma, Multiculturalism, Diversity, European Identity.

Introduction

Historically, minorities have been seen as both obstacles to nation and state building and as anomalies in international relations. Together with sovereignty and exclusive territoriality, citizenship marks the specificity of the modern state—a specificity that typically demands absolute and exclusive loyalty to the state. The intrinsic incompatibility of an international political system founded on the concept of Westphalian sovereignty with minority rights has thus resulted in preventing that national, ethnic, linguistic or cultural minorities enjoy ethical recognition in the writing of Europe's history (Malloy 2010: 6).

Since the beginning of the 1970s, however, and even more so after the end of the Cold War, multiculturalism emerged as a field that acknowledged minorities and ethnic communities, as well as their claims for recognition and representation, particularly in Europe (Sleeter & Grant 2011)[1]. This has in turn been followed, in the last decade, by a political drawback on 'immigration multiculturalism' with criticism rising on different fronts: on the one hand growing xenophobic and populist movements and political parties, coupled with declining welfare states and with the (perceived) security crisis, have laid the ideological background of the condemnation of immigration; on the other hand there has been no shortage of failures and pitfalls in the implementation of multicultural identity policies. This does not mean, though, that the backslash against multiculturalism has resulted in less multiculturalist programs in terms of state policies. As a research by Banting and Kymlicka on OECD countries' multicultural policies shows (Banting & Kymlicka 2010), "most countries that adopted multicultural approaches in the later part of the twentieth century have maintained their programs in the first decade of the new century; and a significant number of countries have added new ones. In much of Europe, multicultural policies are not in general retreat. As a result, the turn to civic integration is often being layered on top of existing multicultural programs leading to a blended approach to diversity."

Meanwhile, policies have been followed by a burgeoning academic interest and significant

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[1] Multicultural education as it emerged in the early 1970s was defined as "education policies and practices that recognize, accept, and affirm human differences and similarities related to gender, race, disability, class, and (increasingly) sexual orientation" (Sleeter & Grant 2011: 150). It the late 1970s and 1980s, the same authors coined the term "multicultural social justice education" as an approach focused on equity and power relations.

resources allocated to accompany the increasing relevance of migration and integration policies to the EU agenda. The last few decades have seen the creation of a number of institutes, think tanks, networks, research efforts, studies and publications such as the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX); the European Commission's website on Integration, the Ljubljana Guidelines on Diverse Societies (OSCE November 2012), the Oxford Diversity Project; the Netherland Institute for Social Research's 'Measuring and monitoring immigrant integration in Europe'; the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford (COMPAS); reports on citizenship policy-making by the European University Institute (EUDO CITIZENSHIP) and various Framework Programmes such as EUMAGINE, GRITIM, and EDUMIGROM, just to name a few.

However, as it is a relatively new, even if rapidly evolving, branch of social research, many issues still remain understudied, ranging from a (lack of) agreement on the meaning of core concepts such 'minority', 'integration' and 'identity' to the usage of standard indicators to measure them, let alone the political desirability of integration itself (as opposed to minority assimilation or to 'containment' and marginalization, that Frédérique Ast (Ast 2011) has called two different forms of addressing difference with the 'politics of indifference'). Therefore as the phenomenon of increasingly multicultural (or 'diverse', depending on the school of thought, a difference in terminology and conceptualization that I will address later) societies is here to stay, research on the topic of integration and on the 'management' (or accommodation) of cultural diversity are much needed, and entail a re-visitation of both legal standards (anti-discrimination law, human rights, and citizenship laws) and policy measures on matters such as minorities' access to, and enjoyment of, rights.

Against this background, I will focus on a particularly visible case of 'problematic' (mis)-management of an (often, but not necessarily) immigrant minority, that of the Roma, who seem to lay at the very bottom of the current social stratification (in Western Europe as well as in CEE countries), and will attempt to locate the issue within two of the main debates in the minority rights field: the national minorities vs. immigrant groups discourse (Kymlicka 1995; Cohen-Almagor 2000: chapter V), and the integration vs. national cultural autonomy debate (Malik 2009; Nimni 2010; Gutmann 1994). To both resume and sum up, while, in the past decades, an emerging Roma anti-discrimination law has, to some extent, succeeded in asserting itself as a legitimate body of jurisprudence, providing an important legal tool for discriminated members of Roma communities to voice their rights, I argue that some redefinitions in integration policy in general, and in the framing of the 'Roma

issue' in particular, need to occur, in order to move towards a more predictable, and hopefully just, system.

Multiculturalism, diversity and the Roma: one minority or many?

Kymlicka's distinction between two kind of collective rights –internal restrictions and external protections– and his multiculturalism theory leave out minorities that do not neatly fit one of the two categories of 'national minorities' or 'immigrants', and that do not necessarily subscribe to one codified culture or religion of reference. While relevant, and indeed compelling, to political theory and minority rights in general, such an approach does not offer a model, or indeed even address the issue, of groups such as the Roma, which is currently Europe's largest minority (leaving it at "the situation of gypsies in Europe is exceptional because their homeland is everywhere and nowhere")[2].

In this sense, the concept of 'diversity' and of 'super-diversity' introduced in 2007 by Steven Vertovec (Vertovec 2007) and which is slowly replacing (or complementing?) that of 'multiculturalism' in the recent literature is a helpful tool for studies of migration and integration, because it avoids the dangers of characterizing multiculturalism as ethnic affiliation, while addressing the challenge of increasing complexity and multifaceted identities (Berg & Sigona 2013)[3]. Particularly in the case of second or third generation immigrants, for instance, where the boundaries among ethnicities tend to become blurred by intermarriage and common cultural traits, self-identification becomes the most relevant marker for belonging, and might involve a multiplicity of identities depending on the context. Diversity might therefore be useful as it shifts the focus from *entities* to *relations*, allowing to explore diversity within the majority population as well (of course not all minorities are the same, but not all majorities are the same, either, nor does the national majority necessarily correspond to the local ones).

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[2] The Roma are indeed recognized as a national minority in some Eastern European countries, but for the purpose of this paper the focus is on those Western European countries that find themselves at the receiving end of the recent and ongoing migration processes.

[3] According to Berg and Sigona, diversity can be seen as a narrative and counter-narrative, as a social fact, and as a policy. They point at how the concept of diversity has some dangers of its own: particularly, it tends to be more individualistic than multiculturalism, which makes it more difficult to organize activists around this concept. By calling into question the ontology of ethnic categories such as the ones that served for previous anti-racist and multicultural policies, it risks creating somewhat of an 'equivalence of differences'.

These theoretical and legal 'blind spots' represent an increasingly relevant issue in the articulation of a European integration and cultural identity framework not only for the minorities in question, but also for society as a whole, as the level of a country's legitimacy and quality of democracy has increasingly come to be seen in the past decades as being deeply intertwined, and overlapping with, the ways in which it treats, and represents, its most disadvantaged and 'culturally foreign' citizens. Falling out of the typical 'multicultural' scheme and of the mainstream political agenda, these anomalous minorities – demographically on the rise, and socio-economically increasingly marginalized and underprivileged– find themselves in a particularly vulnerable situation, as they risk not only not being included (socially nor politically), but not even having an identity *alternative to the majority* to oppose to mainstream society and which would/might entitle them to cultural rights and special protections.

The other main debate that has dominated much of the literature, and politics, on minority rights, is that of integration vs. national cultural autonomy: is it really necessary and/or desirable for societies to be 'integrated'? Proponents of a higher level of autonomy and decentralization argue that context-specific integration policies are more effective than a 'one size fits all' national strategy, while opponents contest that sub-national policy differentiation carry the danger of potential structural discrimination, and that formulation of a coherent national strategy can be hindered by a variety of diverse local integration policies.

According to the motto of the European Union, *United in Diversity*, Europeans have come together "to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions and languages."[4] But what if we settled for less unity and more diversity, allowing the more 'problematic' minorities a higher degree of non-territorial autonomy in order to avoid unpopular assimilation policies while not having to re-work the whole institutional apparatus, let alone deal with public opinion and voters, to accommodate such minorities in the mainstream public arena (the wrinkle is, this presupposes some sort or homogenous minority that can rally around some religious, linguistic, cultural or identity issue)?

In the European context the minorities that are perceived as being the culturally "furthest away" from mainstream society—third-country nationals, Muslims, and even more strongly

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[4] See the European Union website, http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/motto/index_en.htm.

so, the Roma— are increasingly described in terms of not (only, nor necessarily) economic exclusion but of cultural and social exclusion (which is not to negate that the two very often go hand in hand). The proposed measures to address such 'super-diversity' have varied and vary widely, and can oscillate between opposite and at times contradictory extremes: while recent EU directives have put a strong emphasis on the non-ethnicization of integration measures (starting from the Copenaghen criteria, and followed by the Equal Treatment Act of 2008, the Anti-Discrimination directive of 2009, and so forth), on the other hand most initiatives assume that social inclusion can be pursued alongside promoting the cultural identity of the Roma minority (such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the National Roma Integration Strategies called for in 2011 and submitted in 2012, Opportunities for Roma Inclusion drafted by the UNDP in June 2012, etc.). My suggestion is that this (maybe just apparent?) contradiction between social inclusion efforts on the one side and minority identity promotion (where the minority identity differs sufficiently from that of the majority to create tensions) on the other deserves a bit more analysis that it has attracted so far, without glossing over some important differences that exist also between and within Roma groups. Paradoxically, the problem with the European strategies for Roma integration is that they should be sensitive to both the existence of a cultural Roma identity, but also open to the possibility that there might not be such a thing as a cultural Roma identity (an approach that, with some caveats, goes for second generation immigrants as well[5]). The multiculturalism literature could and should thus also be usefully employed to analyze between-group diversity (Eisenberg & Spinner-Halev 2005).

(In)Equality and integration
As previously mentioned, since the end of the second world war, and increasingly over the past decades, political scientists have been paying more attention to issues of (in)equality tied to governments' welfare policies and their impact on specific forms and instances of inequality domains, particularly with respect to historically discriminated groups such as ethnic minorities and women. On the one hand there has been, and there continues to be,

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[5] ‚Second generation immigrants' is actually a misnomer, as it refers to a population that is born and raised in a country without necessarily having any special tie to another one, a part from that passed on or ‚inherited' by one's parents. But as most European countries do not recognized *ius soli*, this population finds itself a juridical (and often identity) limbo.

much talk about the importance of the reduction of social and economic inequalities and of the inclusion of marginalized and excluded groups ('target' to which the EU will dedicate 20% of the whole ESF budget for the next programming period 2014-2020), but there has also been a significant increase in populist, nationalist and racist discourse in many European countries in the last 6-7 years, which has worsened with the economic crisis[6]. This shift in political discourse towards explicitly racist and exclusionary ideas has often been accompanied by a fear that the model of 'social (i.e. welfare) Europe' that has brought increasing social protection and guarantees in the second half of the twentieth century is now being threatened by dispossessed marginalized minorities: in the eyes of those who to talk about an 'abuse' of the welfare state[7] by certain social groups (regardless of whether such groups are identified in terms of ethnicity, class, or nationality) the underlying assumption is that the beneficiaries of certain social policies have not 'earned' or do not deserve help from the state either because they are not contributing enough to society and are incapable of improving their own situation (therefore policies aiming to achieve equality with measures such as affirmative action and minority quotas are challenged as 'unfair' because they appear to favor some over others), or because they are not seen as belonging to 'society' in the first place. The first view is linked to what has been labeled 'the culture of poverty' (Stewart 2012), which blames the poor (or certain poor belonging to the most marginalized strata of the community in question, at least) for their own condition, claiming the pointlessness of intervening in any way because the beneficiaries would not be able to 'appreciate' a higher standard of life (or take advantage of opportunities) anyways, and evokes Jeff McMahan's 'native potential account' of fortune (McMahan 1996). On the other hand, the view that certain groups (immigrants, the Roma, Muslims, etc.) are 'intruders' that are 'unfit' for society has to do with the idea of belonging to an exclusive, closed national community as a necessary feature for rights that are not automatically

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[6] As a study of the Democracy Forum of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance has pointed out (IDEA 2011: 36), democratization opens up both a space for increased respect for minority rights and a forum where intolerance and hatred can come into play.

[7] These include not only the voters of extreme right parties. The Czech Social Democratic Party, for example, ran a campaign in Most in 2010 with the slogan 'Why should I regret being the majority nationality in my homeland? One state, one set of rules!'. See www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_1905. Accessed 7 December 2013.

granted by simply being human or residing in a country—in other words, the belief that inequality in itself is not a good enough reason for redistribution.

In March 2013 Romanian media published a wave of articles on the decision of some EU member states to oppose Romania's accession to Schengen for reasons related mostly to the failure in meeting the conditions for optimal fighting of crime and corruption (Mailat 2013; Corpa 2013). The articles emphasized Romania's 'image deficit' outside its borders, associated with the Roma population: "Once again Romania was held behind the Schengen space door, once again the image issue was raised, a problem that this ethnic group [the Roma] creates for most Romanian citizens around Europe"[8]. About one year earlier, in February 2012, French president Francois Hollande addressed the issue of the Romanian Roma living in 'ad hoc' camps in France with the following statement: "The origin of the problem, that is to say the movement of a population that is nowhere accepted and lives in abject conditions, is that we did not establish a European regulation to keep that population where it *ought* to live, in Romania" (Canal+ 12 February 2012). Michael Stewart, anthropology professor at the University College of London, picked up this speech in a recent book on populism, racism and egalitarian discourse to observe how, even amongst the supposedly socialist and egalitarian European left, the notion that amongst European citizens some should be 'less equal' than others — namely, that the free movement of persons principle should not apply to Romania's Roma population — has become an 'acceptable' position, taken for granted by a great number of people. Manuel Valls' statement that "Roma immigrants are inherently different and cannot be integrated" (Valls 2013)[9] reinforces such views. It is not a statement of fact, it is the declaration of an ideology, but one that seems to gather consensus behind the institutionalization of second-order citizenship via cultural arguments.

In a climate of rising intolerance and deepening poverty, the situation of the Roma[10], which constitute the largest, most disadvantaged and most discriminated against minority in

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[8] See www.bihon.ro/romi-de-romania-sau-tigani-nomazi/1264703. Accessed 10 December 2013.

[9] See French minister Valls' defense call for Roma expulsions at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24273380. Accessed 25 September 2013.

[10] The term 'Roma' is here used as what has become in recent years a generally accepted, if unsadisfactory, umbrella term that includes different groups of Roma, Sinti and Travellers. The issue of self-identification vs. external identification as belonging to the Roma community remains a (re)current and to some extents an inavoidable one, in which socio-economic factors often play as important a role (if not more) than ethnicity: any non-ethnic Roma living in the Pata-Rat slum in Romania, for instance, will be automatically identified as a

Europe, has therefore come to the forefront of political attention for both policy makers in Brussels, as well as for national populist parties looking for an easy scapegoat towards which to channel the frustration of potential voters. Against this background, the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies called on all Member States of the European Union to develop a 'targeted' and 'integrated' approach to Roma inclusion, and to submit their strategies by the end of 2011 (all strategies were eventually submitted by March 2012, and assessed based on whether, and to what extent, they complied with the pre-given guidelines by July 2012).

It is of course too early to attempt any kind of assessment on whether, why, and what has worked or not in the implementation phase of a number of projects (some of which are still running, some of which never took off, and others that have succeeded in improving some local situations, but are too often not sustainable in the long term) that, emerging from policies adopted in the past decade aimed at bettering the situation of the Roma population, have been adapted, twitched and/or inserted in the National Roma Integration Strategies; but some educated guesses can be made.

What I suggest here is that there are two fundamental problems undermining the publicly declared and widely advertised integration efforts (that are indeed very much worthy of being pursued) and a number of genuine good intentions and efforts in this direction: firstly, that the 'Roma issue' is still regarded, thought of, and consequently dealt with (both at the European and at national levels) as an ethnic one, while it is by and large a socio-economic one. Of course ethnic 'othering' takes varied forms and manifestations, and certainly ethnic 'otherness' has provided and continues to provide the basis for being singled out for differential treatment and for being confined to follow distinct paths in society. And indeed, any serious attempt to fight against the rising marginalization of Roma communities must include an antidiscrimination dimension. But academic scholars as well as policy makers (including European Commission desk officers and European Parliament members) often talk about social inclusion, integration and affirmative action for Roma as strictly benefiting the minority community (not seldom with a coating of a somewhat mild, contemporary version of a 'white man's burden' approach, which portrays rowdy, primitive Roma that cannot cognitively or behaviorally cope with civilization or 'normal' institutions), without taking into consideration the benefit for the majority of the yet so

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'gypsy' from the non-Roma community residing outside the slum, regardless of skin color, ethnicity or family ties.

often cited diversity. And not only from an economic point of view[11] or a security perspective: genuine integration puts individuals and communities in contact with people who come to this cooperative venture for *mutual advantage* that is society, to put it with Rawls (1971: 347-348), with very different experiences and viewpoints and expectations from life, which might well help us rethink some of our dysfunctional socio-economic structures, and why we are seeing such an increasingly and worrisome widening of gap between rich and poor to begin with (and not only limited to marginalized or minority groups).

Secondly, one major challenge to achieving significant and lasting results from European and national policies alike is that, with few exceptions, a sectorial, fragmented approach is generally adopted, that rarely takes into account and addresses in a systematic way the complexity and multiplicity of distinct factors that produce such diverse situations of exclusion and/or facilitate processes of social inclusion. These can be related to the macro-economic situation of the environment in which Roma live; to the economic resources available in their direct vicinity; to the institutional frameworks and legal and regulatory mechanisms; to the quality and availability of public services; and to the existence or lack of an organized civil society, as well as the proximity or distance (not only physical but also relational and linguistic) to the majority population, the existence or non-existence of other ethnic minorities in their direct surroundings, etc.

One feature that has made things more complicated, if ever more relevant, in the current welfare and political representation debates, is that 'integration' has become a catch-all expression, rendering it a potentially empty box that can lead to confusion or, worse, irrelevance. The Ministry of Justice in Hungary, for instance, proposed on March 29th (2013) to the Parliament to draft legislation changing Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, in short leaving an open door to legalize school segregation under the cloak of 'social inclusion', which would also provide a legal pathway to discrimination[12]. On the other hand, however, the unavoidability of the 'multicultural' or 'diversity' and 'integration' discourse also means that virtually every country nowadays has a ministry or inter-ministerial department dedicated exclusively to egalitarian issues and to the domain of distributive justice, albeit under different nomenclatures.

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[11] See de Laat 2010; The World Bank 2012, http://go.worldbank.org/Z553E4WTC0. Accessed 10 January 2014.

[12] The law is available, in Hungarian, at http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A0300125.TV.

In sum, there is little doubt that issues of cultural diversity, inclusion, minorities and equality need to be dealt with in modern democracies—both socially and politically. But a question that keeps coming up is which way is the best way to go about promoting equality, and whether inclusion and not 'containment' of minorities (which is what most right parties advocate for, typically turning what is a social issue into a securitization discourse) is desirable to begin with.

	Equality	Inequality
Unity	Integration	Assimilation
Diversity	Autonomy	Segregation

Table 1. *Source: Marko* (1995)

It is typical in everyday's implementation of welfare policies for nation states to expect that foreign nationals and/or marginalized communities to pass some sort of 'test' or fulfill certain requirements in order to prove that they can contribute to society and thus be granted citizenship/social welfare, and *then* have access to rights. However, the issue of inclusion and of distributive justice tied to citizenship creates an intrinsically vicious circle: if someone does not hold equal status to begin with, how can society expect him or her to contribute to the community via the cooperation process? And if integration is seen as a one-way way avenue in which Roma (or immigrants, or any other minority for that matter) are asked to 'adapt' to the existing system which in turn does not have to adjust in any way to (or even acknowledge) the diversity of needs of the population it is supposed to be catering to, what is the difference, other than in the wording, between integration and assimilation?[13]

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[13] The definition of integration given by the Center on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, goes as follows: "Integration is a two way process requiring motivation by migrants and opportunities provided by the host society". See Spencer 2006, http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=1443. Accessed 20 December 2013.

Inclusion and exclusion: typology and peculiarities of the Roma integration regimes

Historically, in both the theory and practice of minority and diversity management, the emphasis has always been put on the right of minorities *not to be excluded*, as opposed to their right *to be included*. There is a significant difference between the two, and the shift towards a proactive approach in direction of the latter, suggesting that minorities should not only enjoy the legal right to effectively participate in the overall governance of the state, but that they should also be *encouraged* to do so (through quotas, institutional reform, universal access to programs, social assistance benefits unattached to obligations and responsibilities to the state, etc.) marks one of the most important shifts in political representation and justice of the last half century (Evans 1998: 42-49; Barata 2000). In 1955, the official English translation of the Dutch 'apartheid' was dubbed not as 'segregation', but as 'separate development' (Dubow 1992: 209-237).

Nowadays even the most rabid supporters of a nationalist, anti-immigration discourse would be uncomfortable using the same terminology. Overall, the picture that emerges from the last decades of institutional and political developments (despite the abovementioned persistence and in certain instances worsening of racism) is that, as stressed in the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (OSCE 2012: 3), "States have a practical interest in ensuring equal opportunities to participate, since low participation by excluded or marginalized groups tend to bring direct and indirect costs to society as a result of reduced contributions to the common good and the increased costs associated with putting policies in place to address the numerous consequences of exclusion."

In regard to the overall Roma situation as concerns both social alienation and material deprivation (the housing and infrastructure conditions, occupancy, education and health), it has become clear that to overcome the complex network of causes and effects which links social exclusion and poverty it is not enough provide declarations of supposed legal equality nor to focus on isolated aspects of marginalization, if measures keep being adopted outside of an integrated, strategic, sustainable and inclusive framework. The housing infrastructure and the living conditions, for instance, have a direct effect upon the health and hygiene of the respective population; in turn the (perceived) hygiene level becomes one of the discriminating factors against the Roma by medical personnel, which is why a high

percentage of the Roma in this situation end up not benefiting from medical assistance services[14].

Unfortunately the expression 'integrated', by its repeated use without a clear definition, risks entering the wooden language that usually accompanies discourses about Roma policies, as that of 'equality', remaining a fashionable term, used on paper but with few applications in concrete cases and actual policies. Indeed, while a number of recent EU documents regarding Roma policies –including the National Roma Integration Strategies – explicitly mention the need of adopting an integrated approach, the measures continue to be designed with a sectorial thinking, besides which there are no efforts to correlate actions in several areas or to strategically prioritize actions in complementary sectors.

One reason for policy makers being somewhat doubtful and reluctant towards an integrated approach is that it requires a lengthy and not always straightforward process, since strategically formulating solutions for interconnected problems requires a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of the social, economic and discriminatory issues that affect Roma communities, as well as of their relationship with the majority population in the specific situation, and adopting a more complex and time-consuming analysis for interconnected problems (which usually fuel each other within a vicious circle)[15]. Also, crucially, it means revisiting the 'cultural diversity' issue in ways that challenges stereotypes of nomadic life, incompatible lifestyles, and so on.

At a time when the so-called 'good practices' are the one of the principal sources of technical knowledge in these areas, it is worth emphasizing that not all recipes are adequate for all contexts, and those actors (both public authorities and private organizations) responsible for the design and/or implementation of inclusion measures may find inspiration but also confusion in these 'good practices' if no effort is made to deepen the understanding of the structural conditions that allow and facilitate virtuous processes. For example, an employment project that is based on the oversight of the economic-productive fabric of a particular locality, including awareness-raising measures for businessmen, vocational and in-company professional training for Roma, etc. will be of little use in rural environments where no opportunity exists in the services sector. Similarly, an inclusive and intercultural education initiative will have little practical use in the context of a segregated

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[14] For more details, see The Roma centre for health policies–SASTIPEN 2010.

[15] See Spolu International Foundation 2000 at

http://www.agentiaimpreuna.ro/files/publicatii/Iesirea_din_cercul_vicios.pdf. Accessed November 2013.

environment in which a high percentage of Roma kids do not attend school. On a more general level, the ten 'Common Basic Principles'[16] that are at the core of the National Roma Integration Strategies require an understanding from the perspective of the distinct realities on the ground, or they risk being misinterpreted. For instance, how can the principle of 'explicit but not exclusive targeting' be implemented, or have any relevance whatsoever, in a segregated Roma settlement in which social and economic dynamics are utterly disconnected from the broader social fabric?

Ways forward: framing tentative hypothesis

The theoretical and policy literature on social integration issues has developed rapidly in the past years, attracting an ever-growing body of scholars and producing innovative and compelling studies. However there are still major gaps, both in the conceptualization and the empirics, in part due to the moving target at hand, and to limitations in official data and difficulty of data collection.

If integration processes and outcomes have become a recognized field of social and political studies, numerous factors, ranging from reasons for migration to conditions in the host society have been found to impact on integration processes. Legal rights seem to be a pre-requisite of integration but not a sufficient condition, the range of causal factors leading to hostile attitudes from majority populations are not clearly established.

Stemming from these broader debates, the goal of the research I aim to conduct is to investigate, identify, and attempt to make sense of the underlying causes of variation of different levels of (un)-success in the integration attempts of the Western European countries that have experienced/are experiencing migration fluxes of what have been labeled 'extreme' cases of super-diversity, i.e. culturally different, and particularly the Roma community. Is it a matter of 'incompatibility of lifestyles' of this specific minority with the majority (which majority?) population, as France's Minister of the Interior Valls has suggested, or rather an issue of legislation and minority rights? Or does it depend on policy

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[16] In January 2011, the European Commission offered a support in this direction to the Member States with its 'Guidance Note on the Implementation of Integrated housing interventions in favor of marginalized communities under the European Regional Development Funds', which suggests applying these new provisions "in favor of marginalized communities, including marginalized Roma communities". See the European Commission Communications (2010 and 2011) at www.dgjust.ec.eu/roma and http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF. Both accessed 20 December 2013.

implementation, historical legacies, institutionalized discrimination, class relationships and power distribution, or a combination of some or all of the above?

Within the 'old liberal Europe' significant differences can be observed between, and strikingly within, countries. However, comparative studies aiming at analyzing immigrant integration policies so far have, with few exceptions, focused exclusively on the national level (Manatshal 2011: 3). As the phenomenon of Roma integration is multi-dimensional, changes over time, differs from region to region within countries, and varies depending on the differences within the Roma community, it seems worthy, and possibly more conducive to an understanding of 'integration' also on a conceptual level, to map the variation in the implementation of the Roma integration policies at the sub-national level.

More specifically, I would like to put forward the hypothesis that the integration[17] of the Roma communities at a local level is dependent upon three main factors: 1) the existence, and level of openness/closeness, of a collective sub-national identity (which might or might not overlap with that the nation-state); 2) who are the actors in charge of implementing the European directives on inclusion and anti-discrimination, and particularly the National Strategies for Roma Integration, and handling the related EU structural funds tied to these strategies; 3) the relationship between the immigrant and non-immigrant Roma minorities (where present).

While the 'measuring' of these variables and an assessment of the 'degree of integration' is anything but obvious, some steps forward have been made by Koopmans' attempt to assess two dimensions (individual equality and cultural difference) of integration policy, as well as by Brubakers' classification of 'types of membership' and citizenship, and Manatschal's study of sub-national variation of integration policies in Switzerland (Koopmans 2010: 1-26; Brubaker 1989; Manatschal 2011).

Despite all the controversial political debates, to the best of my knowledge there is currently no study that analyzes attitudes and integration policies towards Roma groups on a sub-national level. An analysis of local integration strategies in selected areas of recent relevant immigration (in Spain and Italy, with a special focus on areas with strong regional identities) along the lines Manatschal's typology, followed by a qualitative investigation of the most relevant cases, to be carried out through interviews with minority and non-minority representatives who featured in the decision-making process and implementation

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[17] Where the concept of integration does not exclude a high level of autonomy for the minority, if the dimension of individual equality is upheld.

of the National Roma Integration Strategies, could therefore contribute to set the foundations for evidence-based management and policy making on issues regarding diversity in Western European societies, or at least to open a conversation in that direction. Beyond observing how different custom-tailored policies correspond to the varying realities (not only in terms of ethnicity but also addressing migration issues, identity and belonging), a comparative assessment of cultural management practices coupled with an attempt of putting the human element at the centre of identity politics can help us move away from both a counterproductive minority nationalism discourse, as well as from ethnicized national policies for 'second class citizens'.

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