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Inclusion and the 'Arts of Resistance'. How Do Roma Migrants Develop Autonomy in the Context of Inclusion Policies?

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Abstract

During the last 20 years, processes of social, spatial or economic exclusion suffered by a growing number of people identified as Roma in Europe were progressively investigated and better documented, as, for instance, legal (or para-legal) measures implemented against Roma migrants living in precarious settlements in Western Europe. Over the same period, international or European institutions, national authorities and many NGOs significantly developed local or regional initiatives for Roma inclusion. From ethnographic investigations conducted during several years in two French cities which have implemented social support and housing projects toward Roma immigrants families (Bulgarian in one case, Romanian in the other), this article firstly aims to highlight the effects of the contradictions and paradoxes characterizing the launch and running of many inclusion policies which, like exclusion policies, are frequently based on stereotypical conceptions of Roma as well as of social integration. Reversing the point of view, we will secondly light the way the target families of these projects may nevertheless succeed to preserve leeway and to develop different forms of local insertion, using (or not) resources provided by public policies as well as personal and family resources. In so doing, this paper proposes to address the role and value of informality and productive misunderstandings in these dynamics of emancipation and *effective integration* taking place in a strongly binding context.

Keywords: policies of inclusion, autonomy of migration, exclusion, resistance.

September 17, 2008, in the Paris area, near the suburban railway station Massy-Palaiseau. A hundred people including about 30 children are gathered on a parking lot, surrounded by a large group of police. These families have been living there for a few days, most of them under igloo tents. They arrived after being evicted from the shelters they had built in the woods a few hundred meters away, along the A10 highway. A few days later, the scene is being re-enacted with the same actors – except for the few families who decided in the meantime to try and find a better place somewhere else. Access to the car park is closed. Social workers have started carrying out quick 'social diagnoses' to identify the most 'vulnerable' individuals, essentially pregnant women or those accompanied by children under one year of age. Finally, fifteen people are selected and driven by minibus to the nearest support center in Palaiseau city, before being accommodated at the State's expense in hotels located either in the same district (Essonne) or more than 40 kilometers away. About half an hour later, the rest of the group which is still being detained in the parking lot by the police start to move as an officer cries: 'to the station!' The police cordon is gradually reconfigured to form a corridor leading to the platform. Hesitating to proceed, some adults start asking: 'to go where?' The question remains without answer. Officers tirelessly repeat that everyone has to go forward and wait for the next RER train. Destination? Corbeil, via Juvisy. It does not matter in the end. The goal is for the crowd to leave Massy and its surroundings. The goal is to evacuate the group. A train enters the station. It stops a little longer than expected, long enough to 'convince' those who are still offering resistance to get on. However, the police are also participating in the journey and the group will be forbidden to get off before the terminus. The few who try to escape are quickly caught. Upon arrival in Corbeil, the whole group is directed to the local Red Cross and the police disappear. Three hours later, the families have all left Corbeil for Gare du Nord in Paris. Within a few weeks of the event, most of the evacuees had rebuilt a shantytown about 40 kilometers away from Massy. Although they kept on going through similar kinds of evictions, they never gave up, and continued to come back and resettle nearby. Others returned to Massy where they are still living today.

1. Introduction: Critical Ethnography of Public Policies

In the early 1990s, as the Roma issue was emerging at the European level (see: for example Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Olivera, 2011a, Legros and Rossetto, 2012; Vermeersch, 2012), public policies targeting groups identified as 'Roma' started to multiply in France, both locally and nationally, initiating a dynamic which is still ongoing today. As illustrated in the case described above, these policies are usually aimed at keeping away people considered as undesirable immigrants (most of them from Romania and Bulgaria, see: Nacu, 2010; Olivera 2011b; Legros and Vitale, 2011; Cousin and Legros, 2014). However, 'inclusion projects' and 'contractual integration' are also occasionally offered to Roma migrants (Legros, 2010; Clavé-Mercier, 2014; Olivera, 2014; Lurbe i Puerto, 2015). Confronted with these practices of either exclusion or selective inclusion, migrants generally do not protest. Apart from taking part in a few events organized by local NGOs or support committees, they do not oppose the police or social services, nor do they require any form of political

or cultural 'recognition'. Neither do they contest the categories that authorities have been utilizing for more than 20 years to objectify them and justify institutional practices. However, as is apparent, these families do manage to stay, retaining, and even in many cases increasing, the resources and the flexibility they have to strengthen their social and territorial ties.

In this context, this paper is written to describe the way in which those families not only succeed in consolidating their presence but also secure their local integration and autonomy under unfavorable circumstances. Beyond the skills migrants can deploy, or the set of urban, economic and relational resources they manage to tap in to, we argue it is also worth looking at the subjective and collective foundations of what we decided to call their 'non-resistant resistance'; that is, a resistance that never presents as such – 'without protest and without organization' (Scott, 1987). To this end, we examine how 'beneficiaries of integration/relocation projects' adapt to the injunctions and constraints of public hospitality institutions, taking into account that inclusion policies themselves involve forms of domination. Indeed, since the pioneering work of James Scott on the 'weapons of the weak' and infrapolitics (Scott, 1985; 1990), the various ways in which 'subalterns' happen to adjust to repressive policies, the competencies this requires and the forms it takes, are now better documented (for a recent review about 'subaltern resistance', see: Chandra, 2015). However, especially in Europe, the set of answers that people targeted by 'integration' or 'inclusion' policies come up with remains to be understood.

The set of data we use is based on ethnographic material gathered in the field in two different French cities within two 'integration projects' of five and eight years duration, respectively, specifically implemented for Roma migrants living in shantytowns.[1] Conducted between 2009 and 2015, the first of these projects includes 100 Romanian families, mainly from the regions of Arad and Alba in Romania. The second one, which started in 2010 and is still ongoing today, involves about 60 Bulgarian families from the Pazardzhik region. Over the projects' lifespan we conducted intensive field research with Roma families (both in France and in their countries of origin, using their native languages – Romanian, Bulgarian and/or Romani as appropriate). We also carried out daily observations and interviews with social workers as well as with political and institutional stakeholders.

In order to guarantee anonymity to the actors involved in these sensitive projects, the names of persons or localities involved will not be mentioned throughout the paper. For any given situation, necessary contextual elements will be provided but pseudonyms will be used. Beyond being motivated by ethical considerations, this choice is made even more relevant by the existence of strong similarities between our fieldwork areas, however diverse local situations and project 'beneficiaries' can be.

This text also draws on the work carried out by the European Urba-rom[2] Observatory. It specifically leverages collaborative research developed under the

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[1] For more information about these two projects (especially their history, design, implementation, as well as on the actors who were involved), see: Clavé-Mercier, 2014, and Olivera, 2016b, which further detail the work we used to develop the analyses presented in this paper.

[2] http://urbarom.hypotheses.org/

MARGIN project[3] framework (2015-2018, coord. O. Legros, T. Vitale and C. Bergeon). Spanning a range of 20 cities in France, Italy and Spain, this program aimed at analyzing the social effects of anti-poverty policies on Roma migrants, mainly from Romania. In connection with the various works that have been conducted within Urba-rom since 2010, this paper uses a constructivist approach of 'public problems' (Gusfield, 1981) to develop analyses of public policies directed at so-called 'Roma' or 'Gypsy' groups grounded on critical ethnography (May, 1997). Rather than trying to establish a relationship between these policies and naturalized or essentialized definitions of the 'Roma identity', we question the logics and functions of categories used to define these populations and the socio-political interests that motivate these categorizations. In other words, we assume there is no causal link between any supposed singularities of the 'Roma identity' and the policies of exclusion or inclusion that are carried out in Europe today. Indeed, as numerous ethnographic studies have shown in the field of anthropology over the last 30 years, the social and cultural diversity of people who either call themselves or are called Roma/Gypsies is overwhelming.[4] As a result, it seems impossible (if not dangerous) to try and reduce it to a few traits and patterns which would justify the ways in which public authorities have been treating them as a homogenous whole (Asséo, 2004).

While trying to better understand and document the 'non-resistant resistance' deployed by Roma migrants, this article aims at highlighting the many contradictions, paradoxes and consequences of 'inclusion policies' in France. We will first show how, beyond their local specificities, these projects are based on stereotypical definitions of concepts such as 'Roma', 'inclusion' and 'social integration'. Interactions based on these stereotypes may lead to misunderstandings between migrant families, public authorities and social workers. Conversely, we will then see how project 'beneficiaries' may nevertheless succeed in increasing their autonomy while using public, as well as personal and family resources to develop new forms of local integration despite, and sometimes *thanks to*, the misunderstandings with which they are confronted. Looking at the various relations between migrants, social workers, elected officials, institution representatives, etc. makes it possible to measure the weight of equivocity in the production of social relationships (Sahlins, 1985). In the second part of this paper, we show how such an ethnography of misunderstanding is fundamentally empirical. Indeed, far from resorting to notions such as 'the unsaid' or 'representations', it involves first and foremost *situations*, uses, practices and conversations in context. This thick description (Geertz, 1973) of interactions allows us to restore individuals' status as subjects while highlighting the genesis, functioning and value of misunderstandings in a highly constraining context marked by strong power asymmetries.

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[3] MARGIN ('MARGinalisation/INclusion: les effets à moyen et à long terme des politiques de régulation de la pauvreté étrangère sur les populations-cibles: le cas des migrants dits 'roms' dans les villes d'Europe occidentale - France, Italie, Espagne') is a collaborative research project funded by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) and carried by CNRS unities CEE (Paris), Citeres (Tours) and Migrinter (Poitiers).

[4] See Stewart and Williams, 2011; and for the Romanian situation: Olivera, 2010.

2. The logics of inclusion. Exclusion and inclusion policies: two sides of the same coin?

It may be easy to think of inclusion policies as the opposite of exclusionary policies. However, studying the design, development and implementation of 'integration projects' led us to observe that they are usually based on the same conceptual framework as exclusion policies and concretely happens to *work* in the very same way. Indeed, both of them are motivated (or justified) by a stereotyped perception of 'Roma' and, hand in hand with this, a phantasmagoric conception of social integration or 'inclusion'.

Moreover, it seems difficult to understand the ins and outs of 'inclusive policies' in France without taking into account the policies that *at the same time* aim at keeping Roma migrants away, either by expelling them from the territory or by denying them the rights attached to it.

A very clear illustration of this can be found in various initiatives aimed at solving, in 1990, the brand new 'Roma/Gypsy issue.' The shantytown of Nanterre stands as a typical case. After a few months, the place was evacuated, some inhabitants sent back to Romania with some money, while others were dispatched to 'holiday villages' far from Paris to be 'accompanied' and 'integrated.' However, many were not taken care of at all and ended up rebuilding a new slum nearby. Interestingly, all the 'tools' used by public authorities to solve the 'Roma issue' during the following 25 years are already represented here: the evacuation of settlements, expulsion to the country of origin, selective public hospitality, and ignoring many families.

While Romanian and Bulgarian immigration became more significant in the early 2000s, the term 'Rom' began to permeate political, media and associative discourses in France (Cousin, 2009; Olivera, 2009). Beyond the French case, the 'Roma issue' became increasingly important at the European level following the fall of communist regimes, the development of emigration from the former socialist republics, the neoliberal (re)ordering that followed and the ensuing ethnicization of socio-economic questions (Nacu, 2006; Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Olivera, 2012). The word 'Rom' progressively became used to refer to the 'largest European minority', the alterity of which seemed to be both ethnocultural (far-off extra-European origins) and socio-economic (trans-historical marginality). It also took place at a time marked by the dismantling of welfare states, by the all-pervading concept of 'economic crisis', as well as by an emphasis on 'immigration problems' and 'insecurity' (Weil, 1995). In this context, social cohesion in Eastern European new democracies – but also in the cosmopolitan metropolises of Western Europe – seemed particularly threatened by the 'Roma issue' (Stewart, 2012; Van Baar, 2014; Fassin et al., 2014; Picker, 2017). The Roma became a symbol in Europe of the 'fear of small numbers' that would threaten nation-states in a globalized age (Appadurai, 2007).

Whether coordinated or spontaneous, local or national, the set of exclusionary policies directed towards 'Roma migrants' can be regarded as the emerging element of a discrete but sustained re-ordering of urban and socio-economic margins. Focused on 'illegitimate populations', this dynamic reactivates ethnic categorization that has been deeply rooted in both national imaginaries and administrative practices for more than a century in Europe (Asséo, 2003). 'Gypsies' thus slowly became 'Roma', but the

stereotyped and unequivocal definition of the 'imaginary community' thus created was never really questioned. Perceived as culturally, socially and economically too far from Modernity, this 'population' was considered as being hardly 'integrable' by liberal democracies. Interestingly, it is at this very point that we can see how discourses justifying exclusion converge with those which promote inclusion. Indeed, both tend to agree on the need to implement *specific policies* adapted to the particular nature of this unusual 'population.'

As exclusion policies directed at Roma migrants were put in place during the 1990s, the first 'integration projects' were launched in a more scattered and less visible way. After the holiday village experience that took place in Nanterre, some localities started to create temporary accommodation structures for Roma people living in 'illegal settlements', with more or less selective conditions. Over fifteen years, a few districts or municipalities launched integration projects that combined temporary family housing and social support. At that time, the question of public hospitality for 'Roma migrants' was mainly left to the initiative of local authorities. These projects happened to be very diverse in terms of size and housing modes. In many ways the products of local *bricolages*, they were supported by representatives of public authorities and set up by local NGOs as well as by informal volunteers or professional networks (Legros, 2010; Benarrosh-Orsoni, 2011; Clavé-Mercier, 2014; Lurbe i Puerto, 2014; Olivera, 2016).

It was only in the years 2007-2008 that the state began to promote national standards for these kind of projects, relying on Préfectures and 'Préfets' (local representatives of the state) which would at that time take on important financial and operational roles. Implemented initially in the administrative district of Seine-Saint-Denis, a popular suburb close to Paris hosting numerous slums and squats, these standardized projects were gradually designated with the label '*villages d'insertion*' ('integration villages'). Standard dimensions were predefined by authorities for these '*villages*' supposed to accommodate fifteen families or a maximum of about 80 people each, regardless of how many people were actually living in the slums. Beneficiaries were selected on the basis of a 'social diagnosis' aimed at distinguishing between good candidates for integration, 'the integrable ones' (a minority), and 'others' (the vast majority). These '*villages*' were guarded day and night, with visits being rigorously supervised. During the four or five years they would usually spend at the site, 'beneficiaries' were subjected to ongoing assessments of their 'progress' on the path to 'integration', some of them being excluded over time because they did not fit evaluation criteria. These operations offer a good illustration of the 'chosen immigration' policies that have now been dominating public debates in France (and beyond) for more than fifteen years (Spire, 2005; Noiriel, 2006). They also epitomize the 'fight against poverty' and its underlying assumptions that the poor are responsible for their situation (Wacquant, 2009) and that they have to demonstrate that they 'want to integrate.' In other words, those projects represent a form of social intervention dominated by a security discourse and are thus perfectly embedded within forms of neoliberal governance. In this light, public policies operate with twofold goals: exclusion of the majority, combined with the strictly controlled inclusion of a minority.

One of the two projects studied in this paper was launched by a green left-wing municipality close to Paris and originally presented itself as a 'courageous alternative'

to the '*villages d'insertion*' model. There was no selection of beneficiaries during the launch of the project which in the end involved about a hundred families (more than 350 people). Far from the dominant 'republican integration' ideals, the initiative partly originated from local representatives' desires to build on 'community work' and promote the 'Roma culture.' Originally based in a more or less implicit way on multicultural logic, the project was inspired by ideas of 'minority empowerment' and the 'inclusion of minorities' mobilized by European institutions and NGOs involved in the 'Roma issue' (Craig and Mayo, 1995). However, these ambitions gradually faded away and ended up disappearing completely from local political discourse (Olivera, 2016), whilst the project quickly reintegrated the frameworks of national/state thinking and their normative definition of social integration. Located about 600 kilometers away, the other project we investigated also distinguished itself from typical '*villages d'insertion*' by the absence of pre-established lists of 'beneficiaries' and a lack of quotas for defining the maximum places available. Officially, any 'household' meeting the selection criteria could enter the program. However, evidence shows the fluctuating and opaque nature of these criteria which were constantly manipulated to achieve 'good results' and make sure that the number of project 'beneficiaries' could be kept under check (Clavé-Mercier, 2014).

Therefore, however implicit or euphemized they were, we uncovered during our fieldwork many commonalities between these two 'alternative projects' and the more conventional logic characteristic of '*villages d'insertion*', especially in the way 'social integration' ended up being defined in both cases as a unilinear and normative process. The two projects differentiated in terms of ideological 'moods', vocabularies, political justifications or material forms. But they both treated their 'beneficiaries' first and foremost as *objects* to be taken care of and 'repaired', as opposed to *subjects* endowed with a capacity for action and with the ability to pursue their own projects. Just as distance-keeping policies would spur territorial self-expulsions, 'inclusion' projects would also, more or less explicitly depending on the location, result in 'beneficiaries' self-excluding from their peer groups, local ties, and the social life these factors had nurtured.

Roma identity as a problem

Indeed, the idea that 'beneficiaries' should be re-educated and transformed is based on the assumption that 'Roma identity' is the reason why those families have become 'marginal.' This conception not only turns out to be very widespread among politicians, social workers and NGOs but it also permeates European society at all levels. Deeply rooted in phantasmagorical perceptions of 'Roma people' as a homogenous and problematic 'minority', it motivates, as we have seen, both exclusion *and* inclusion policies. The main difference is that – on the one hand – Roma have to be excluded because they are seen as responsible for their marginality, whereas on the other hand they are looked at as victims and therefore have to be included (Agarin, 2014). In any case, as we will see, the very idea of a 'Roma identity' happens to be very 'problematic' (Clavé-Mercier, 2017).

We will thus briefly focus on a set of cultural and social stereotypes affecting Roma which were both conveyed *and* reasserted by these projects, including the

following three which happen to be particularly recurring: Roma are nomads; they have always lived in a precarious or marginal state; they belong to closed communities, tribes or clans.

Indeed, Roma migrants are often perceived as members of a 'European minority marginalized for several centuries,' deprived of any means of action, or even in this specific case, of any 'migratory project.' In this perspective, their mobility is above all seen as the product of historical hazards, hence the frequent recourse to the notion of 'nomadism' (cf. the recurring use of words such as 'flight', 'exile' or 'wandering' to characterize their mobility). Deeply rooted in national imaginaries since the nineteenth century (Asséo, 2007; 2010), this ethnic reading of Roma/Gypsy mobilities seems to be unwavering. Numerous administrative documents that have tried to provide some kind of framework for 'integration projects' mention, for instance, 'help with sedentarization' as a significant necessity, although the intended beneficiaries may have never lived anywhere than in a house or apartment before ending up in the slums.

Spontaneously linked to nomadic (or diasporic) cultures, Roma are not considered 'natives' of the country they come from, and their forms of international mobility are generally disconnected from global migratory dynamics in Europe. Therefore, the fact that beneficiary families within the 'integration projects' usually maintain ties with their country of origin and return there either occasionally or regularly (for summer holidays, Easter, Christmas or family events) is not taken into account by authorities. These links with the native country seem more difficult to accept than with other (non-Roma) precarious immigrants who are already suspected of not having a real 'will to integrate.' Since Roma are neither 'from here' nor 'from out there', their movements are seen as tricks designed to conceal if not suspicious activities then at least unstable and problematic 'ways of life.'

At the same time, 'Roma migrants' are very often perceived of as not 'using well' the projects dedicated to them: they are frequently thought to defeat the measures that are put in place 'to help them.' This seems all the more difficult to understand as they are perceived as the most precarious among the precarious. However, these interpretations are based on a vast ignorance of these families' personal stories, although most of them have already been the object of one or more 'social diagnoses' before *and* during each project. Of course, migrants have had to sustain difficult living conditions in squats or slums, sometimes for many years. However, prior to this, their biographies reveal that they experienced residential stability and local integration over several generations in one village or neighborhood. They also went through many other experiences: wage labor for many (especially those over 40 who lived under Communist regimes), and previous international mobility experiences for some. Therefore, the way they experience and see the world is far from being limited to slum borders or to 'integration projects.' Above all, these places are seen as inevitable but *temporary* stages. When social workers ask migrants to develop a brand new 'life project' as a condition for being granted public hospitality, migrants can only 'accept' this without being able to really comply with it. Indeed, this injunction does not take into account their past, and even denies it, as well as their already existing projects, their status as a person, their capabilities (Sen,

1985) and their place in various social networks, between here and there, and even their material precariousness.

While institutional actors may mistakenly believe in slum dwellers' long-term marginality and anomie, another source of misunderstanding revolves around the notion of 'Roma community.' As migrants happen to be living collectively in squats or shantytowns, they are considered a close 'community' supposedly sharing a common language, history, and 'culture.' According to this view, such community life relies on specific ways of managing internal conflicts and even on alternative or secret political organizations, all of which jeopardizes the ambitions of integration projects to be ultimately 'empowering individuals' (Clavé-Mercier, 2018). Very often, even while denouncing these 'tribal practices' institutional actors paradoxically try to identify 'leaders' or 'spokespeople' to simplify communication with beneficiaries when they realize that the 'community' is not as tightly knit as they thought.

Indeed, while there are of course relationships of mutual help between some individuals or families, it is very hard to detect any form of collective solidarity on a large scale. It often appears that 'beneficiaries' spend much time denigrating their neighbors (or even competitors in the project), denouncing their 'bad life' and calling them dirty, twisted or dishonest 'Gypsies'- *țigani*. In the end, social workers and institutional actors have the most difficulty grasping the contours of the 'community' from which individuals and households would have to be extracted in order to make them 'autonomous.' In many regards, when confronted with the discourse of migrant families, the fabric of this imagined community tends to unravel at the seams (Clavé-Mercier, 2014: 387-400; Olivera, 2016).

In this context, we aim to evaluate the discrepancy between the ways Roma migrants are considered and how they tend to view themselves. Indeed, it is possible to better understand the reasons why migrants can only acknowledge this gap once we know the misunderstanding stands as the very *raison d'être* of integration projects and of the ways they are implemented. In fact, migrants do not try to directly oppose or contest the misconceptions most institutional actors or social workers may have about their past, present (and future) lives. The following part of this article highlights how migrants operating under many constraints turn this misunderstanding into a tool for emancipation. In other words, we will see how these families strive to 'domesticate inclusion' after having 'thwarted exclusion' for several years.

3. *Developing leeway in the face of institutional inclusion*

As we have seen, inclusion and exclusion projects alike treat Roma migrants as a problem. As soon as the latter's 'identity' is perceived as being the cause of the issues they experience or cause, re-education becomes the public action number-one priority. In a nutshell, following this rationale 'integrating Roma' implies *de-gypsyfying* them. Migrants are thus approached and treated as objects, more or less reluctant to be transformed. They are thus never seen as subjects endowed with their own stories, logics, strategies or resources. However, even if institutions and NGOs are obsessed with 'Roma', those who happen to be designated such may not really care, nor do they challenge this categorization. They do not directly attempt to develop any counter-narrative nor to dispel the misunderstanding. Nevertheless, they do not remain

passive. On the basis of our analyses, given both the social integration logic implemented in these projects and the gap between the ways Roma are seen and the way in which they live, space remains for migrants to develop flexible ways to operate in a highly constrained and normative context.

Which practices do these migrants use to occasionally escape or completely avoid the numerous pitfalls created by power asymmetries with project actors? After first reviewing various *hidden forms of resistance*, we then examine how migrants tend to *negotiate* with social workers and finally investigate the different ways they assert their opposition by living a *double life*. Questioning these practices makes it possible to better understand the 'hidden transcript' that 'beneficiaries' deliver behind the scenes; that is, following James Scott's analyzes, all the 'discourse, gesture, speech and practices that are ordinarily excluded from the public transcript of subordinates by the exercise of power' (Scott, 1990: 27).

Playing the game of institutions while keeping a low profile

Speech and discursive practices appear to be an implicit but important lever that migrants can harness to gain flexibility. As shown by James Scott in his work about the 'weapons of the weak' (1985) and their 'arts of resistance' (1990), speech like rumor and gossip, can be considered in a domination context as a practice of daily resistance, even if this is never explicitly presented nor considered as means of reacting to external injunctions. Indeed, those types of discourses are much present in the daily lives of 'beneficiaries', but are also found amongst social workers who perceive part of them.

One of the projects illustrates this process well. After a few months, the municipality decided to set up a position of 'manager' whose remit it was to 'accompany families' and help them with the maintenance tasks on the site, be these clearing sanitary and paths, managing waste, etcetera. Veronica and Radu are a Romanian Roma couple. They are not beneficiaries of the project but are known to the elected official in charge of it. As the notion of 'community work' played at the time a major role in the project's overall rationale, they were chosen to be the managers. Their being Roma lay at the heart of the decision. Indeed, institutional actors believed that sharing a supposed common language and identity with 'beneficiaries' would 'facilitate the task'. Veronica and Radu were also implicitly given the position of role models. As for Veronica, beyond being perfectly fluent in French, she played an active role in civil society as both a school assistant in an NGO and as a participant at events on 'Roma culture'. As a result, she also had a good command of the vocabulary used in NGOs, and discourses about 'Roma identity' held no secrets to her either. For both the elected representatives and for Gérard (the newly appointed project manager), Veronica and Radu represented the perfect couple and corresponded in every way to the integration model migrants are expected to follow. However, daily relations between the couple and beneficiary families quickly became difficult. The latter did not understand why 'other Romanians' should be telling them what to do, and on top of that, get paid for it.

As it is often the case with professionals involved in integration projects, the relationships between beneficiaries 'that Veronica and Radu appreciated' and 'those

they disliked' also shifted. This situation was exacerbated by the internal political games that occurred amongst families but whose internal logic could not be grasped, either by municipal officials or by Veronica and Radu. In this context, rumors rapidly spread concerning a supposed adulterous relationship between Veronica and the project manager, Gérard. These continued to circulate as Veronica twice gave birth to 'blonde' children over the lifetime of the project. This widely used discursive register was aimed at mocking the 'deceived' husband, Radu. The latter appeared to be easy prey. First, his command of the French language was much poorer than his wife's. He also seemed to take his role of caretaker-manager of the site very seriously, while Veronica seemed to be the one 'wearing the pants' in the partnership. Families therefore mocked his appetite for 'power', pointing to the fact that 'he wants to be the chief' while not even being a leader 'at home'. This way rumors were used also made it possible to totally desacralize Gérard's status as project manager and complain about him. They criticized his tendency to organize endless meetings, speak in complicated ways, serve families with speeches 'that have no purpose' and denounced him for having 'lust' as his main driver in life. Moreover, beneficiaries mocked Veronica's managerial status which initially was presented as a reward for perfect integration, but was finally looked upon as a perk in a trivial sex story. Therefore, as we can see, the acts and discourses of these three individuals, supposedly legitimized by their dominant status, were reduced to nothing, systematically framed as being driven by purely personal (and intimate) interests and ultimately made objects of ridicule.

By criticizing them or constantly making comments about their action or personal motivation, migrants placed social workers and institutions at a distance. However, gossip also serves another important function for migrants. Inside the group the process creates connivance and consolidates social relations. It is also useful for the group's relations with the outside, making it possible for them to shield themselves from domination, without compromising their 'loyalty.' Indeed, rumors belong to nobody and anyone can participate in them without ever being incriminated since it is always a question of what has 'already been heard.' Therefore, feeding gossip and rumors by repeating them in an innocent way allows beneficiaries to take part in an invisible form of protest.

Other more personal, situational and concealed ways of gaining flexibility within project constraints are also used by migrants. Ranging from silence to small lies or omissions about issues such as their housing in the country of origin, these tactics allow beneficiaries to be obedient and even actively submissive to institutional actors and their rules. Such positions very much involve keeping a 'low profile' by clearly playing the institutional game, without explicitly opposing its numerous injunctions.

Negotiating

Another method used by migrants to gain more leeway is to engage in direct negotiations with project actors to combine some of their personal priorities with those of the institutions. However, this cannot be done with all subjects, nor can it take place between any social worker and any migrant as this partly depends on personal affinities and compatibilities. Finally, these negotiations also rely on how migrants perceive the logics and functioning of each 'integration project'.

Let us take the case of Vasilka. A 40-year-old woman, she split up five years ago from the father of her children who at the time of the research were themselves married and parents. Mitko, her new 'boyfriend', was working as a minibus driver between his home country and Portugal. He sent her money every month and the couple met from time to time, sometimes just for a few hours 'to drink a coffee' or 'for the night.' Vasilka had been living in the shantytown for four years and no longer had a home in her country of origin. All her hopes are now based in France, it seems. When asked why she did not plan to marry or live with her 'boyfriend', she replied 'for shame', and that in the eyes of her children she 'could not do that.' In 2012, Vasilka was relocated to emergency accommodation. At the time, she used to beg every day in front of a neighborhood shop she had chosen because there was a flower shop nearby: 'I love you flowers very much', she said, while her face lit up. The rest of her life at that time did not make her so happy. She was clearly suffering from the close proximity of a migrant woman from her village. Vasilka thought the other woman considered her a 'servant', probably because of her status as a divorced woman. She also complained about her children, grandchildren and 'boyfriend' being so far away. However, her loneliness was partly compensated for by the relations she entertained with 'French friends' she had made while she was begging, as well as with other migrants from her village, some of whom lived in her building.

When she was selected to be part of the integration project, Vasilka was at first delighted by this possibility to get rid of the fear with which she was living, as she thought she could be expelled from France at any time. When the time came to evacuate the building and the question of rehousing was raised, social workers looked at her 'family profile' and, seeing she was alone and childless, allocated her a certain type of dwelling managed by another NGO. When the social worker working on the project, Milena, told her about the accommodation she had been allocated, Vasilka immediately rejected the proposal. Indeed, these 'insertion housings' were intended for single adults and came with the interdiction that they could be used to host anyone overnight, to avoid any risk of 'overoccupation.' Vasilka voiced her aversion to being relocated on these grounds, especially to Milena, who amongst all the social workers was the one she had the most affinity with. Negotiations began, which ended up favorably as Vasilka was finally relocated in a 'standard-type' studio flat.

At the same time, she found a job as a housekeeper in a hotel chain and her employment contract quickly became a long-term contract. While she was happy indeed to have got this job, Vasilka was nevertheless disappointed not to be working full time. She worked overtime every chance she could, while keeping detailed records of this. However, she quickly realized that she was not being paid as much as she should have been, and that most of her overtime was not taken into account. In contrast to the impact she was able to achieve at the time of her housing problem, Vasilka did not attempt to complain to project actors about this injustice at her workplace. She seemed to deal with it, and accept the logic of the project which enjoined 'beneficiaries' to be satisfied with their jobs without 'rocking the boat.' Vasilka adopted the same behavior when her boyfriend Mitko was imprisoned: she refused to tell project professionals about the situation. On the one hand, she wanted to get in touch with him, and help and support him in his detention, but she did not know how to proceed. On the other hand, she did not wish to seek advice from social

workers lest it was turned against her and jeopardized her own support within the project, as if somehow she could be contaminated by the stigma that affected Mitko.

Therefore, she decided to cope with the situation. She wanted to be able to be there for her man during the time he was imprisoned without 'asking too much.' This did not mean she was satisfied with what was 'generously granted' her by public authorities. This rather meant she did not want to risk losing the fragile benefits, in many ways unsatisfactory, which this 'help' had yielded her by soliciting the help of social workers about potentially sensitive issues. Vasilka's experience of social support thus demonstrated that she had strongly incorporated the injunctions and expectations at the core of integration projects. She tried to respond in the best way possible, strategically considering and adjusting the level of autonomy she could grant herself according to each person and timeframe.

As it may appear, negotiating possibilities and their effectiveness thus very much rely on how migrants perceive the projects. They also vary depending on the level of collusion with professionals working on a project and how heterogeneous the latter appear to be. Sometimes, negotiations are carried out as a team. This is particularly the case when migrants try to convince social workers to accommodate three generations in premises designed for nuclear families, or to allow them to temporarily go back to their country of origin for family or economic reasons, although this is officially prohibited or frowned upon. Very often, these negotiations are calculated and pragmatic. Depending on each situation and who sits around the table, migrants know perfectly well what they can or cannot negotiate. Our observations showed that the scope of negotiations frequently increase, especially as social workers often operate under pressure and find themselves obliged to obtain 'results' in adverse institutional and financial circumstances. Arrangements between social workers and 'beneficiaries' thus become a way for both of them to remain autonomous and flexible, while sometimes drastically reducing the asymmetry of their relationship.

Leading a double life

'Beneficiaries' can thus try to maintain their personal and existential priorities, either *thanks to* their participation in projects, or *in spite of* it. Sometimes, they even do so without taking into account the project constraints in any way. Some people organize their daily lives in very compartmentalised ways, clearly distinguishing the project rationale from their own logic. They end up living a 'double life' while complying with institutional and personal requirements.

This is the case of Elena, for instance, who had been rehoused in emergency circumstances for security reasons (the insalubrity of the former squat) with her family and former village neighbors in a building requisitioned by the city. However, the dozen migrants who had been relocated did not receive at the same time any kind of residency permit, nor did they benefit from any kind of real social support. These 'beneficiaries' were clearly neglected by institutions and NGOs, whereas everyone had initially agreed on the necessity of this relocation. As a result, they lived for more than a year in an administrative no-man's land. Aware of the rehousing operation, the prefecture made sure the length of their stay on French territory would not be controlled, but they did not issue authorizations for work either. However, sometime

after Elena had been resettled, mediators and elected representatives realized that she was subletting parts of the building where she was living to other families. Elena's 'double life' – being relocated while making extra financial returns from available resources – involved accessing a combination of opportunities which arose from the fuzzy institutional circumstances of her relocation. This may also be understood as a way for her to react to a double bind. Indeed, on the one hand Elena was obliged to pay fixed charges on the building she had been relocated to (monthly rent, electricity, insurance, etc.) On the other hand, she was being denied a work permit or social rights. Navigating this situation required her to develop informal economic strategies, without, of course, informing the social workers involved in the project.

The 'double lives' led by migrants are motivated by several necessities. On the one hand, migrants try to combine the 'good life' (understood subjectively; cf. Butler, 2012) and 'what really matters' (Kleinman, 2008) with the requirements of public hospitality projects. On the other hand, they strive to respond to the paradoxical injunctions characteristic of the projects themselves. Therefore, without being overtly opposed to any type of institutional requirements or constraints, project 'beneficiaries' do not remain passive recipients. Although they do not reveal in "public transcripts" (Scott, 1990) the various ways they have to actually show some resistance, analysing the means by which they still manage to gain some leeway makes it very clear that either constrained or voluntary, their "adhesion to the project" can never total.

4. Conclusion

The visions of 'inclusion' and 'autonomy' promoted within these public hospitality projects are driven above all by the ambition to re-educate precarious migrants, keep close control of them and fight uncontrolled urban development. Whether they occasionally manipulate the rhetoric of 'empowerment' (Calvès, 2009) and 'cultural recognition' or, on a more frequent basis, explicitly resort to a security and (re)educational discourse, the situation is left unchanged. Just as much as exclusionary policies, the inclusion projects that we studied are motivated by an *a priori* (albeit often contradictory and vague) definition of the problematic population that is to be 'integrated': the Roma. In this context, as we have seen, what is at stake for migrants is *preserving* their autonomy and freedom while navigating uncertain and difficult environments. Faced with many contradictory injunctions, and refusing to see them as subjects in their own right, the level of flexibility available to migrants can only be maintained and developed by playing on misunderstandings, in several ways. Conversely, in all aspects of their logic and operational modalities, these projects directed at 'Roma migrants' are intended to 'remove misunderstandings.'

'The will to suppress misunderstanding, to solve it by referring to a rule, is always the moment when domination emerges. It will continue as long as the dominated ones cannot be heard in the idiom of the dominants and as long as they cannot speak from a place that is not recognized to them, up to the point when the interaction will turn into a strictly political conflict' – claim C. and V. Servais (Servais, 2009).

However, this desire for clarification and unilateral re-ordering is hampered by individual strategies and collective identities that prove to be so fluid and shifting that

'Roma people' can hardly be identified or objectified. Moreover, most 'beneficiaries' accept these misunderstandings and never try to dissipate them. In doing so, they evade univocal domination and avoid political conflict.

Using this perspective, our fieldwork allowed us to underline the role and value of informality and 'productive misunderstandings' in the case of *effective integration* processes taking place in strongly binding contexts. Indeed, migrants do manage to consolidate their administrative situations, as well as achieve local integration in terms of housing, economic activities, etc. They do it in their own ways, which correspond to more flexible and pragmatic integration modalities based on daily sociability in-and-out social grouping. Therefore, these modalities turn out to be very different from the integration models promoted by the projects. Pointing to an ideal society that does not exist outside the closed spheres of the upper-middle classes, the general rhetoric of 'inclusion' is probably not conducive to a better understanding of migrants' *actual* integration dynamics. However, this article argues that these dynamics can be made much more intelligible by a proper ethnography of misunderstandings. By documenting the complex and ambiguous interactions at play in a comprehensive approach, and without seeking to dispel the equivocity once and for all, the latter proves instrumental in highlighting a range of personal and collective strategies that normative and functionalist approaches often tend to reduce to 'informality.' It also cast a fresh look at migrants' logic and behaviors, turning what is usually disregarded as disenchantment or signals of deviance into authentic forms of emancipation and autonomy.

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