

Social mobility and educational attainment among Romanian Rroma

Academic researches suggests that Rroma face challenges of overcoming poverty, improving access to education, increasing employability and improving health. This thesis describes a qualitative investigation into the role of education to ensuring upward mobility for Rroma.

Using a purposive sample, the research analysed the ethnic make-up of Rroma individuals and found that contrary to uninformed perceptions, Rroma community is immensely diverse and can be described through two generic types: a Traditional Gypsies type and a Modern Rroma type. The Traditional Gypsies type would generally describe the Gypsies who at individual or collective level still preserve in their day to day life a collection of Gypsy ethnic practices. By contrast, the Modern Rroma type would refer to those Rroma who having began recently or generations back a process of ethnic transition and/or assimilation into the wider Romanian community now share only a few traditional ethnic practices.

Next, the research classified occupations encountered, analysed whether intra-generational and inter-generational social mobility occurs and found that Rroma community experiences a dynamic pattern of multi-directional and multi-speed social mobility as well as a distinct process of ethnic transition. Ethnic transition describes the process through which respondents shed ethnic practices and move away from distinct Gypsy ethnic identities towards “symbolic” identities.

Thirdly, the research analysed the impact of education on social trajectories and found that contrary to uninformed prejudice, a majority of Rroma tend to hold education in high esteem and that they do benefit socially from it. Far from questioning its relevance or fearing it, formal education is accepted and aspired to by Traditional Gypsies who understand its potential impact upon their living standard. Modern Rroma too, value education though their ideal attainment levels tend to be higher than those of Traditional Gypsies. The gap between abstract preferences and real school participation is maintained less by discrimination alone but by a rational choice evaluation through a cost (including discrimination) benefit analysis.

Formal education is essential for Rroma's social mobility though Traditional Gypsies necessitate lesser levels than Modern Rroma who, to compete in the *Gadje* world, require the same amount of education for comparative occupation levels as other members of the wider community.

Educational Attainment and Social Mobility among Romanian Roma
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Social mobility and educational attainment among Romanian Roma

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Chapter I Introduction

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Introduction

Romania is the country with the largest Rroma/Gypsy¹ community anywhere in the world, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the whole population. Out of an overall population of 22,408,393 (Romanian National Census, 2002) estimates of the Rroma numbers vary between 439,723 (Romanian National Census, 2002), 1,410,000 (Clarke, 1998) and 1,800,000 – 2,500,000 (Liégeois and Gheorghe, 1995), as statistics provided by the governments and Rroma development organisations regarding the Rroma are notoriously unreliable. A further aspect complicating the ‘counting of Gypsies’ is that the determinants of what makes a ‘true Gypsy identity’ are variable from group to group and from individual to individual and changing in time, making the Rroma, a complex and malleable ethnic identity, difficult to register in conventional demographic terms (Acton 1974, Waterson 1986, Green 1991). Whichever figure is accurate, the Romanian Rroma is possibly the largest Rroma community within Europe and probably the world (Figure 1.1).

A report by the United Nations Development Programme on the current socio-economic situation of the Romanian Rroma, published in 2002, entitled *Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, identified that: ‘The challenges for the Rroma minority are: overcoming poverty, improving access to education and developing marketable skills’.

¹ Rom, Rroma, Romany and Romanyia should not be confused with the country of Romania or the city of Rome. The names have distinct etymological origins and are not related. Throughout the following pages, I shall use both these terms as deemed appropriate in the respective context. When the respondents identified themselves as Gypsies, I shall refer to them that way. Similarly, when a text or piece of legislation or an interviewee uses the word Rroma I shall employ that term. For a wider discussion on the etymological origins of the word Rroma please see Appendix I.

	Rroma/Gypsy in Europe	
	(approximate	numbers)
State	minimum	maximum
Albania	90,000	100,000
Austria	20,000	25,000
Belarus	10,000	15,000
Belgium	10,000	15,000
Bosnia-	40,000	50,000
Bulgaria	700,000	800,000
Croatia	30,000	40,000
Cyprus	500	1,000
Czech Republic	250,000	300,000
Denmark	1,500	2,000
Estonia	1,000	1,500
Finland	7,000	9,000
France	280,000	340,000
Germany	110,000	130,000
Greece	160,000	200,000
Hungary	550,000	600,000
Ireland	22,000	28,000
Italy	90,000	110,000
Latvia	2,000	3,500
Lithuania	3,000	4,000
Luxembourg	100	150
Macedonia	220,000	260,000
Moldova	20,000	25,000
Netherlands	35,000	40,000
Norway	500	1,000
Poland	40,000	50,000
Portugal	40,000	50,000
Romania	1,800,000	2,500,000
Russia	220,000	400,000
Serbia-Montenegro	400,000	450,000
Slovak Republic	480,000	520,000
Slovenia	8,000	10,000
Spain	650,000	800,000
Switzerland	30,000	35,000
Turkey*	300,000	500,000
Ukraine	50,000	60,000
United Kingdom	90,000	120,000

Figure 1.1 Approximate numbers of European Rroma, Regional Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme, Bratislava, 2002. * The most recent estimates for Turkey are up to 5 million, but much depends on whether groups such as Dom, Lom, Beash etc who deny Romani identity are included in the ‘Gypsy’ figure.

The authors of the report, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organisation, undertook the first comprehensive quantitative survey of the Roma communities in five Central and East European countries: Bulgaria (997 respondents), Czech Republic (1006 respondents), Hungary (1000 respondents), Romania (1001 respondents) and Slovakia (1030) with the aim of providing answers to a number of crucial questions such as ‘Why do most attempts to integrate Roma communities into the mainstream societies fail?’ and ‘What are the causes of the problems faced by marginalised communities and by Roma in particular?’.

It is important to mention however that the report’s methodology and its findings received criticism that the sample clusters at the lowest level were largely selected by local non-Gypsy officials from among poor persons who they thought had the reputation of being Gypsies though many denied it. It is argued that the report might have overestimated the proportion of deprivation and disadvantage in the ethnic Romani communities it purported to examine. The report’s critics also argue that, whilst the report acknowledges discrimination and persecution as a possible cause of disadvantage, it suggests that they are the outcome of rational actions, and so remedies must be sought in changing the victims. It is further argued that the report does not examine the difference between poor Gypsies and those who are more economically successful, and its explanations of Gypsy deprivation are therefore fundamentally flawed.²

This survey’s major findings were in several main areas of interest such as employment, household income and education although the survey also investigated Roma’s health, political participation and social exclusion. Under the first area of interest, the survey found that ‘unemployment figures were lower than what was anticipated. Indeed, Roma unemployment figures for the five countries observed averaged 40%, ranging from 64% in Slovakia to 24% in Romania, contradicting the frequently reported estimates of nearly 100%. The informal sector was found to provide important income generation opportunities and in Romania was found to be a key factor in the low Roma unemployment rate’ (UNDP, 2002).

² See Professor Thomas Acton’s Romany Studies Seminar - London School of Economics, October 2004

An important finding, and one that I will return to later, was that ‘Survey respondents did not consider traditional skills to be marketable in the global economy and therefore these skills should not be seen as potential solutions to unemployment’(UNDP, 2002).

The most important reasons for not finding a job were described by the survey respondents as ‘ethnic background’, followed by ‘overall depressed national economy’ and their own ‘inadequate skills’. This latter reference to the respondents’ perception of the inadequacy of their own skills is linked to the above suggestion that ‘traditional Rroma skills should not be seen as potential solutions for employment’. This is important because, as the thesis will show later, the incidence of poverty and unemployment does indeed appear to be higher among precisely the Rroma segment where the reliance on traditional skills is most pronounced but, as I will argue, this might not be because of the lack of marketability for the traditional Rroma skills. The report concluded that ‘Whilst discrimination in the labour market might be certainly present, it cannot be regarded as the only reason why Rroma have difficulties in finding employment. Low skills and education levels suggest that hiring decisions by rational employers in competitive markets are unlikely to favour Rroma. However, the variety of interpretations of causes of unemployment also reflects the cyclical nature of Rroma employment problems: lower competitiveness in the market today is often due to discriminatory practices and limited access to education in the past.’ (UNDP, 2002)

In the area of household income, the survey found that Rroma poverty tends to be more apparent in the rural areas than in the urban areas, which means that Rroma in the rural areas are ‘double-losers’ as they lack the social safety nets available to urban dwellers but at the same time they do not have access to means of subsistence agriculture. An important indicator of poverty level is the reliance of the respective community or individuals on state benefits and here the UNDP report found that a high proportion of the Rroma (in some cases as high as 70%) derive their main income from state benefits, including child allowances, pensions, disability benefits and so forth. The limited amount of marketable skills reduces Rroma’s versatility in the local economies and in turn increases their dependency on the state support systems and charitable projects. A vicious

circle is thus created, one that widens the gap between Rroma and the majority non-Rroma populations, the *Gadje*³, with damaging social and political consequences (UNDP, 2002).

Further evidence of the relative dimension of Rroma poverty is obtained by comparing levels of overall stated expenditures of Rroma households (18 Euros) with Romania's average household expenditures (62 Euros) and gross national wage level (165 Euros). In terms of the main sources of income relied upon by Rroma in Romania, the informal sector contributed 41% of the overall community's resources compared with 12 % generated by employment in the formal sector and 26% generated from state benefits. Of the overall amount generated by state benefits, Romanian Rroma claim 10.5% as pensions, 16% as child support allowances, 7% as social assistance and only 2% as unemployment benefit. The reliance on state benefits as a main or significant source of income will be revisited in Chapter V: Social Trajectories. Whilst accurate data on sources of household income and expenditure disaggregated by ethnicity are scarce, a World Bank (2001) analysis of Rroma in Central and Eastern Europe identified that the Rroma poverty level, expressed as the average shortfall below the poverty line, in Romania is 33.2% compared with the country's overall figure of 7.9%. The Rroma community's poverty level appears even more concerning when compared with the poverty level for other ethnic groups. For example, for the Hungarians the figure stood at 6.7% (WB, 2001).

The intra-community percentage of individuals living beneath the poverty line was further underlined by the survey's finding that 78.8% of the entire Rroma community lives below the poverty line, more than twice the percentage of the Romanian population as a whole (including other minorities) which stands at 30.8%. By comparison, other *Gadje* communities register less than half of their populations living below the poverty line e.g. 29.7% for the Romanians and 28.4% for the Hungarians (WB, 2001).

Related to the above figure on the percentage of household income generated via child support allowances, the incidence of child under-nourishment is also concerning as 21.5% of Rroma

³ Whenever in my view, the use of a word in Romany or Romanian will seem more appropriate, I will use the word in the respective language, in italicised format and will provide an explanation of its meaning in the Appendix: Glossary of terms.

children go hungry for 1-2 days a year, 38% are going hungry 1-2 days a month and 41% are constantly starving. These figures indicating the percentage of children living in families facing different levels of starvation can be a proxy for the magnitude of the under-nourishment risk they face and the subsequent impact on Roma children’s health and well being (UNDP, 2002).

Under the Education area of investigation the UNDP report found that ‘Roma education levels are dramatically low’ and described that Roma populations are generally characterised by primary and incomplete primary education profiles and only 7% of the respondents completed secondary or post-secondary schooling (UNDP, 2002) .

The survey found that the major impediment to access to education for Roma is poverty, as in most poor families Roma parents cannot afford to provide their children with some of the basic items necessary for school, such as uniforms, manuals, stationery, etc. Poverty also makes it more likely that Roma children often go to school hungry, which makes learning more difficult. In some cases inadequate clothing and weak command of the Romanian language can act as a barrier to Roma children attending school and being able to interact and socialise with the *Gadje* children, thus further enforcing their exclusion and segregation. Living in inadequate accommodation and being unable to receive help for their homework from their poorly educated parents also reinforces the disadvantages encountered by Roma children in formal education. In addition to poverty, perception of discriminatory practices, early marriages and births and geographical isolation were also among the most quoted reasons for Roma’s general low education level. According to the same report, 43% of the entire Roma population over 16 years of age have incomplete or no education at all whilst only 36% have completed primary education.

The UNDP’s figures are supported by those put forward in 2003 by the Romanian Commission for National Statistics in collaboration with the Romanian Council for National Minorities. This found that out of a population of 1, 010,646 persons declared as Roma:

26.8%	did not have any studies or did not answer
37.5%	had primary studies or did not answer
35.6%	had secondary studies
33.7%	had Gymnasium studies
3.9%	had Lyceum studies

0.7%	had post-Lyceum studies
0.1%	had tertiary studies

Roma disadvantage in the educational domain is not however a modern occurrence nor does it appear to be solely a temporary deterioration, as according to Pons (1995, quoting Trond Gillbert) the Roma's scarce representation in universities and lyceums (high schools) goes further back, beyond Romania's current transition period. According to Pons (1995) in 1956 an estimated 37.7% of Roma over the age of 8 were illiterate compared to 10.9% of the Romanians, 3.1% of the Hungarians and Jews and 1.1% of the Saxons of the same age.

Some progress was made and a decade later in 1966 almost all Roma had accessed basic primary education in Socialist Romania⁴. Social engineering policies used the education system as a powerful tool and school was compulsory for all citizens irrespective of their ethnic background. Accordingly, the Roma community too registered a significant increase in exposure to formal, full-time education which eventually saw the emergence of a Roma educated class (Pons 1995, Tanaka 1995, Gheorghe 1997).

The authors of the UNDP (2002) report suggest that 'the discrimination in access to education is both a consequence of exclusion as well as its primary cause and that removing income-related barriers to education could be another high-impact policy in this area.' However, and with direct relevance for my research, the UNDP report finds that discrimination is an important but not the sole nor even the major cause for Roma exclusion from both the education system and the labour market, and that the reasons for under-representation in both are much more complex and multi-dimensional than they are often perceived to be. Finding explanations for the causes listed above should be considered collectively rather than individually. The socio-economic and political marginalisation of the Roma can be traced back to the 15th century (Kogalniceanu 1837, Kogalniceanu 1891, von Wislocki 1890, Potra 1939, Panaitescu 1941, de Vaux 1970, Panaitescu 1990, Crowe 1997, Stahl 1999) and its emergence coincides with the formation of the European

⁴ The Romanian socialist period began on the 30 December 1947 with the abolition of the monarchy and the exile of King Michael and ended with the Revolution of 25 December 1989 and the execution of Dictator Ceausescu.

nation states⁵. Thus the current pattern of relations between Roma and the *Gadje* communities cannot be associated solely with the recent period of transition from the centralised state economy to the free market nor can they be confined to Central and Eastern Europe let alone to Romania (Acton 1981, Ficowski 1990, Pons 1995, Gheorghe 1991, Charlemagne 1994, Cherata 1997, Barany 1998).

Roma integration with the wider *Gadje* communities has been affected by differences in social structures, life styles and modes of production of the two types of communities and by their evolution at various speeds (Acton 1974, Zamfir & Zamfir 1993, Okely 1983, Fonseca 2000, Godwin 2001). As I will show later, differences between these structures on their own might not have generated social and economic marginalisation. For example, the Roma communities interacted traditionally with the *Gadje* through a symbiotic type of relationship (Okely 1983) whereby one community (the Roma) interacts on a frequent basis with another community (the *Gadje*) by providing a range of services and goods without which the latter cannot function effectively and only for as long as these services are required, but without integrating with the community, thus remaining distinctly independent (Hancock 1987, Fraser 1992, Guy 2001).

The majority of these services have been non-agricultural but they were integral to the agricultural systems of the regions where the Roma lived. The seasonal character of agricultural production and Roma's traditional geographical mobility further reinforced the symbiotic nature of interaction between the two types of communities. However, with the rapid industrialisation and the consequent decrease of the role of the agricultural sector in Eastern European economies, the need for Roma's traditional services⁶ and goods decreased and along with it, Roma's livelihoods. Without means of production such as land of their own, and lacking the skills to diversify their economic services, Roma were reduced to providing cheap labour for the expanding industrial complexes (Puxon & Kenrick 1972, Zamfir & Zamfir 1993, Achim 1998).

⁵ These paragraphs are not intended to provide the reader with a summary of Roma's historical background. For a list of suggested reading on the history and culture of Roma community, the reader is offered in the Appendix: Bibliography - a reference list of authors on these topics.

With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the subsequent freeze of state-sponsored heavy industrialisation, the demand for cheap labour (and as we will see later in the text, the availability of state subsidised accommodation, education and medical care too) disappeared and the Roma were again the first to be negatively affected (Pons 1995, Gheorghe 1997, Zamfir & Zamfir 1993, Achim 1998).

Today, it is generally accepted therefore that in Romania the Roma community does experience poverty and social exclusion and academics have advanced a number of explanations for understanding the roots and causes for their marginalisation, in particular for the very low educational attainment level.

1. Nomadic way of life made formal education difficult to pursue and irrelevant

One view is that, due to the Gypsies' traditional nomadic and semi-nomadic life-style, there is an inherent incompatibility between the demands of a formal, settled education system and the conditions dictated by the Roma's ancestral way of life (Pons 1995, Fraser 1992, Liégeois 2001). It is argued that the semi-nomadic lifestyle involving the entire family's long seasonal journeys, often on ad-hoc routes, as well as the collection of values held in high esteem by Roma such as that placed on closely knit family relationships and the emphasis on freedom and flexibility, are difficult to reconcile with regular school attendance and the rigour of homework preparation, exams and classroom participation (Sandford 1975, Puxon 1987, Achim 1998, Liégeois 1992).

These authors are however in agreement that currently only a small fraction of the Roma community carries on a nomadic life-style. Thus, if true, this explanation would only address the small nomadic element of the community. As I will show later, although I was constantly on the look out for these fully nomadic communities, I have not been able to locate a single one. Rather, most of the travelling Roma communities fell into the semi-nomadic⁷ category, a type of seasonal summer travelling when schools are closed.

⁶ A wider discussion on Roma's traditional occupations, their origins and modern day equivalents will be provided in Chapter III: Traditional and Modern Dimensions

⁷ See Chapter III for a wider discussion on current patterns of Roma nomadism.

2. Declining value of traditional fields in modern economies and Rroma's lack of education and the absence of human capital relevant to the modern economy.

Other academics and writers go further in suggesting that, in the context of modernising industrialised economies, traditional Gypsy skills such as artisanship in copper, tin, silver and wood to name only a few are no longer in demand and that the traditional labour-intensive coppersmithing and the small scale family based unit of artisan production cannot compete or even generate a viable and sustainable income earning strategy (Achim 1998, Fraser 1992, Pons 1995, Cherata 1997). The UNDP (2002) report too supports this possible explanation and brings forward the common perception of the Rroma themselves that their traditional skills have little marketability in the modern global marketplace. Whilst this might hold true for some of the traditional Gypsy skills⁸ such as down feather collection and brick making which in the context of an industrialised economy might have limited marketability, for others like coppersmith and jewellery making, the market might actually be in the process of expanding.

3. This was compounded by Rroma distrust of the Gadge world especially of school education and preference for traditional modes of education

The UNDP report, as well as a number of other sources, suggests that the compounding effect of generations of discrimination and marginalisation have resulted in the Rroma distrusting the concept and the institutions of formal settled education. (Liégeois 1998, Pons 1995, Bobu 2002). Instead, it is suggested that alternative methods of teaching ought to be explored, including teaching in Romany and/or in Rroma specific schools (Zamfir and Zamfir 1993, UNDP 2002).

4. Poverty and disadvantaged social origins

One of the classic themes in the sociology of education is the importance of disadvantaged social origins, particularly the role of material deprivation, in explaining underachievement in education (Halsey, Heath and Ridge, 1980). In this way disadvantage is perpetuated from generation to generation, leading to a cycle of poverty (Heath, 1981). These explanations are likely to operate as forcefully among the Rroma as they do in mainstream society (Acton, 1997; Hancock, 1987).

⁸ See Chapter IV Rroma social class structures for a discussion of traditional Gypsy skills encountered by me during the field research.

5. Strong boundaries reinforced by discrimination on the part of the Gadjie world

Finally, there is now in the informed literature virtually unanimous acceptance that the majority of the Roma community does experience a degree of discrimination and racist attitudes from the wider *Gadjie* community and that in turn, perceiving this discrimination, Roma's boundaries with the outside world tend to be reinforced making access to education even more of a challenge (Acton 1974, Acton 1981, Andereck 1992, Hancock 1994, UNDP 2002). Clearly (and rightly) parents are reluctant to send their children to an institution where they themselves feel discriminated against.

Aims of the thesis

The aims of the thesis, therefore, are to explore the role of education on the Roma's current social position. Given the importance demonstrated by mainstream literature of the importance of social origins, we focus on the social mobility of Roma. That is to say, we look at the factors that perpetuate Roma disadvantage or indeed that lead to social descent between generations, and we contrast this with factors leading to upward mobility and to escape from disadvantaged social origins. We follow two phases of investigation, descriptive and explanatory.

Descriptive: Firstly, the thesis will adopt a descriptive approach and will seek to understand the role that education plays in maintaining Gypsy disadvantage or in promoting upward social mobility. This will be done firstly through the observation of the various occupational levels attained by my sample, seeking thus to understand the extent to which the Roma community in Romania is indeed socio-economically diverse. The thesis will present two specifically adopted occupational schema across which the variety of occupations encountered will be positioned. The analysis of the various occupational levels experienced by the respondents will in turn shed light on the existence of social mobility and the direction (ascending, stable or descending) and speed (intra-generationally and/or inter-generationally) of the existing social trajectories.

Secondly, under the descriptive approach, the thesis will shed light on the role played by educational attainment in the observed social trajectories. The respondents' current occupational

levels as well as the pattern of intra-generational social movement will be observed in the context of the respondent's level of educational attainment.

Explanatory: Under this approach the thesis will seek an understanding as to why Rroma chose not to invest in education. As the data regarding Rroma under-representation in the educational domain are beyond doubt, and academic research continues to confirm that education does assist Rroma to progress socially, why then are the Rroma persistently under-represented in schools and why is their education level so far below the national average? In line with the existing academic research referred to above, this thesis will seek to find an explanation to these sociological puzzles by exploring several possible reasons: the Rroma's semi-nomadic way of life, poverty and economic disadvantage, their fear of the potential diluting impact on individual ethnic identity and on the community's ethnic homogeneity, distrust or failure to perceive its value and potential benefits in the contemporary labour market, anticipated discrimination in schools.

In exploring these issues it is important to distinguish traditional from modern ways of life and the thesis will pursue its explanatory approach in the context of two different sub-groups of the Rroma community, namely those pursuing traditional Rroma ways of life and economic activities and those leading a more settled and sedentary way of life within the mainstream Romanian economy.

The Rroma Social Diversity Model

I hypothesise that due to the significantly different social and historical circumstances affecting Rroma throughout their history and especially the two life-styles adopted, that is nomadic or settled, two parallel social systems emerged. On one hand, the nomadic Gypsies continued to enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the *Gadje*. Their wellbeing, right of passage and personal security depended upon their ability to address the needs of the *Gadje* community. Once the local market became saturated with their products and their skills were no longer required, their presence in the respective area was no longer necessary or tolerated. This type of relationship

assisted the Gypsies to preserve their language (*Romany*), their social structures (the *Neam*⁹, *Shatra*, *Natsya*, *Bulibasha*) and their customs (*the Marime Code*, *the Criss*). Whilst the economic wellbeing of the nomadic Gypsies depended to a large extent upon the *Gadje*'s needs and good will, their cultural heritage was preserved through limited interaction with external values and concepts of the *Gadje* world.

The nomadic Gypsies' traditions were so well preserved that eventually, even when many of them settled down or adopted a semi-nomadic life-style, the symbiotic nature of their interaction with *Gadje* continued and they were thus able to protect their ancestral traditions and cultural heritage. I shall generically refer to these groups of Roma as the **Traditional Gypsies**.

By contrast, some Roma were forcibly settled on the *Boyars*' estates, learned to work the land and to care for the flocks thus beginning to live the life of Romanian farm labourers. These were the first *Vatrashi*. Through the very nature of collective farm work, the interaction of these *Vatrashi* with the *Gadje* was more intense than that of the nomadic Gypsies. The *Vatrashi* were gradually becoming agricultural workers and farmers within their own right and like the Romanian peasants themselves they were dependant upon the landowners for better living conditions and privileges (Kogalniceanu, 1837; Chelcea, 1944; Achim, 1998; Cherata, 1997). Through their regular interaction with the *Gadje*, generation after generation, the traditional Gypsy reluctance to integrate with the *Gadje* began to dissipate and the *Vatrasi* began to gradually abandon their traditional skills, their customary clothes and language (Pons, 1995).

Ultimately, the *Vatrashi*'s ancient Gypsy social structures began to erode: the authority of their leaders, the *Bulibashas*, began to dissipate and the *Crisinitori* rulings in domestic disputes began to lose relevance in an increasingly mixed society. The distrust historically shown by the Roma to the *Gadje* institutions including educational ones became relaxed and with more accessible schooling provisions, the Roma began to depart from their once assigned role as unskilled farm labourers and penetrate various other occupational structures. These processes converged towards the creation of a distinct group of Gypsies: increasingly similar in their way of life to the

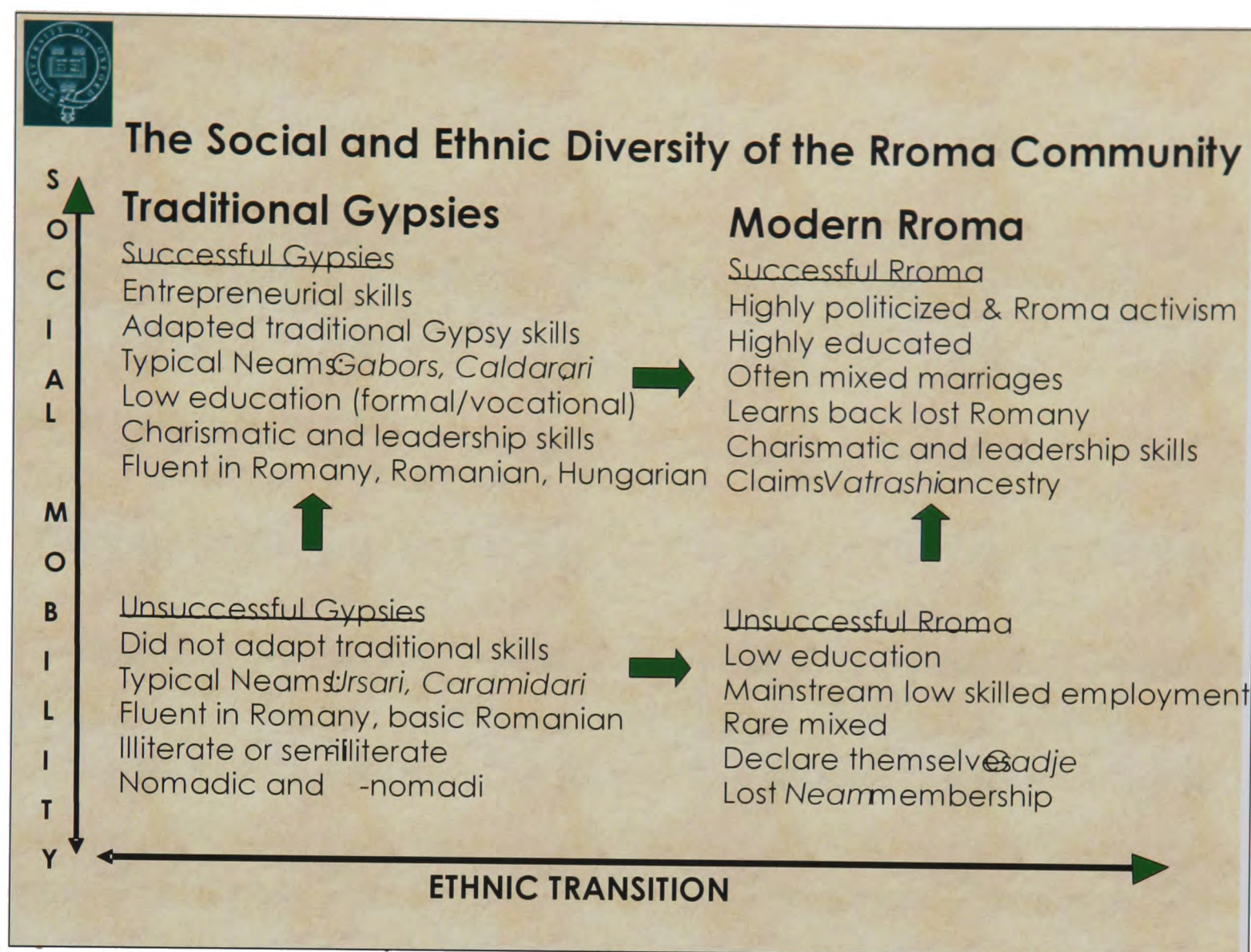
⁹ See Chapter III Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma dimension where I will introduce a brief account of the role and significance of *Neams* in the Roma contemporary development. For a wider discussion on *Neams*,

Gadje but still ethnically and racially distinct. Gradually, the social organisation of the modern Gypsies began to reflect that of the *Gadje*, with distinct strata of social positioning determined by occupational attainment, educational attainment, cultural and social capital, etc. I shall refer to this group as the **Modern Rroma**.

To illustrate my hypothesis proposing the existence of two parallel social systems, I have created a model illustrating the social diversity of the Rroma community (Figure 1.2). According to this model, the two social intra-ethnic subgroups of the Traditional Gypsies and Modern Rroma are distinct although co-existing and occasionally overlapping. At the lower strata of the Traditional Rroma I expected to find individuals or groups of individuals still living a fully nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle. In view of their nomadism and different cultural background, I expected their access to education and subsequent educational attainment to be limited and most of them, in particular the elderly and the women, to be illiterate, fluent in Romany and with only a basic knowledge of Romanian. The review of related literature led me to expect that the traditional *Neams* in this category are those holding traditional Gypsy skills of limited demand in the modern labour market: the *Ursari*, the *Caramidari*, the *Fulgari*.

At the outset of my research I anticipated that these *Neams* maintained their traditional isolation from *Gadje* but failed to adapt their skills to the new demands of the modernising society and were thus forced to survive from a narrowing and increasingly unprofitable market niche, which would leave them increasingly vulnerable in the absence of the formal educational qualifications needed in the modern economy.

including their origins and historical background see Fraser 1992 and Achim 1998.



characteristic of all Romanian Gypsies. But the Traditional-Modern distinction is heavily defended by members of the *Caldarari*, *Gabors*, who by defining themselves as traditional are then able to represent their ethnic variations as older, more authentic than those of other Roma/Gypsy ethnic groups.

At the top of the Traditional Gypsy hierarchy I placed those individuals or families whose skills continued to be demanded by the modernising market and/or who were entrepreneurial enough to identify new lucrative niches in the market. I anticipated that the level of education among these groups might be equally low but I expected them to be fluent in Romany, Romanian and/or Hungarian or German depending on the geographical areas where they live. Traditional *Neams* in this category could be the *Lautari*, the *Florari* and the *Caldarari*.

On the other side of the Roma Social Diversity Model I have placed the Modern Roma whom I expected to have a different social pattern. At the bottom of the spectrum I placed Roma who have often lost their membership to a particular *Neam* and were thus deprived of the traditional support that the Roma families normally provide to their kin. With their links with the traditional

Rroma communities all but severed and not fully accepted by the mainstream Romanian community either, these Rroma would be in a social, economic and ethnic no-man's land. With a poor education level, poor career prospects, and limited social capital some of these Rroma would often be keen to pass themselves as Romanians in order to join the mainstream low skilled labour market. I expected their style of living to be predominantly settled and I also envisaged that they would be keen to enter mixed marriages, often perceived as an engine for social advance. I anticipated this lower quadrant of the Modern Rroma segment to be fluent in Romanian and with limited knowledge of Romany.

I further hypothesise that at the top of the group of modern Rroma are the successful Rroma activists and politicians, highly educated, highly politicised and beaming with charisma and confidence. They would be occupying important positions such as Rroma experts and consultants, directors of internationally funded Rroma NGOs, members of the Romanian Parliament, professors and lawyers. In addition, they would be fluent in Romanian plus one or two other languages of international circulation (usually English or French) and as the second or third generation of Rroma who lost the use of Romany. I expected that most of them would trace their descent to the *Vatrasi* and to be keen to distance themselves from the Gypsy term preferring to be referred to as Rroma.

The Rroma Social Diversity Model is not designed to be taken as a statement that the individuals belonging to one ethnic segment (Gypsy or Rroma) or social level (Lower or Upper) are more privileged and enjoying a higher standard of living than those belonging to another segment, nor that these two parallel segments operate independently and in isolation from each other. Similarly and equally important, the model does not suggest an 'evolutionist' pattern according to which, the individuals located in one particular segment are more 'advanced' ethnically or socially than those located in another segment. As my research results will show, there is evidence that social movement of ethnic transition occurs in both directions.

Indeed, some of the successful Traditional Gypsies might enjoy a standard of living superior to many modern Rroma and/or Romanians. Equally, I expected that the two segments would often operate in geographical juxtaposition with elements of the two communities inhabiting the same area and interacting frequently with each other. The social movements determining the positioning of each individual in either of these two parallel segments could be of social mobility on a vertical line involving ascending or descendent social trajectories. At the same time the boundaries between these two ethnic segments could be porous and allow for a fair amount of movement in the horizontal plane, involving ethnic transition trajectories. The horizontal ethnic transition movements might assist an individual to transgress from the Traditional Gypsy segment of the community to the Modern Rroma segment and vice-versa.

The Rroma Social Diversity model explained above will assist me in analysing the socio-economic and ethnic dimensions of my respondents and thus position them in the various quadrants making up the model. Once the existence of various socio-economic strata and doubly-segmented community is confirmed, and having analysed the various social trajectories taking place between these strata and segments, I will pursue my final research question and investigate whether the pattern of social trajectories observed among the two segments of the Rroma community is being impacted upon by the various education levels attained by its members. In particular, I expect that the role of education, and the motivations for pursuing education, will be very different in the two segments. My working assumption is that the explanation for Rroma disadvantage, particularly in the educational field, will vary across the two segments with distrust of *Gadje* institutions and failure to perceive the relevance of education being more widespread in the traditional segment, and poverty and perceived discrimination being a more important source of educational disadvantage in the modern segment.

A particularly useful perspective on the vertical and social mobility is provided by Sorokin who asserts that our society is a mobile society *par excellence* as individuals and social objects shift from one position to another in vertical and horizontal plans thus making our industrialised western societies a dynamic environment (Sorokin [1920]1964, [1927] 1998). Comparative studies of social mobility have shown consistently that industrial societies in general are

characterised by high rates of downward as well as upward mobility (Lipset and Bendix 1959). Other sociologists too observed and described the social processes through which individuals shift their positions in vertical and horizontal plans and focussed either on the direction (upwards or downwards) or the distance (long distance or short distance) travelled by individuals and groups along their respective social trajectories (Lipset and Bendix 1967, Hope (ed) 1972, Goldthorpe 1974, Heath 1981, Bertaux and Thompson 1997).

Regarded as a luminary of modern sociology and the epitome of professional sociology (Tiryakian 2005) Pitirim Sorokin provided in his ground breaking books *Social and cultural mobility* ([1920] 1964) and *Social mobility - early sociology of class* ([1927]1998) a theoretical framework for the investigation of the vertical mobility of individuals and social objects. Specifically, Sorokin describes the social mobility as the transition of individuals or social objects or values (anything that has been created or modified by human activity) from one social position to another one. Sorokin goes on to distinguish two planes in which social transition can take place: vertical and horizontal.

By vertical mobility, Sorokin refers to the transition of an individual or social object from one social stratum to another one. As explanation, he offers the concepts of *social climbing or ascending* and *social sinking or descending*. The ascending social movements refer to individuals (or groups) who, having started from an inferior social stratum, infiltrate a higher social stratum. Correspondingly, the social movement of individuals or groups from one higher social stratum to a lower one is a movement of social sinking or descending without affecting the overall composition of the respective social strata. By contrast, Sorokin identifies situations where due to specific economic or political circumstances the whole group of individuals descends from a higher strata to a lower one and he terms them *social currents*. Sorokin uses the analogy of an individual falling of a ship to describe the social descent of individuals and the sinking of the whole ship with everybody on board to describe the social descending current. (1964, 1998)

Through horizontal social transition, Sorokin describes the social movement of individuals or social object from one social position to another one situated in the same plan or at the same level. Here Sorokin uses the examples of individuals shifting from the Baptist to Methodist religious groups, from a citizenship to another one or from one family to another one through divorces and re-marriage. This latter social movement from a citizenship to another will bear particular significance for my research as I will seek to observe and demonstrate the existence of movements in the horizontal plane from one ethnic group towards another. Whilst not specifically referring to the ethnic characteristics of individuals or groups, Sorokin provides us with the clearest theoretical framework for the analysis of social transition from one ethnic position to another one. He begins the observation of the various planes in which horizontal movement can take place with the movement of individuals from one territory to another and he postulates that the mobility of present modern societies manifests itself through an intensive and increasing territorial circulation from one region to another one and from one country to another one. As the populations become more and more migratory Sorokin argues that phrases such as ‘dear mother home’ and ‘beloved birthplace’ are losing their resonance and are gradually replaced by modern versions of *ubi bene ibi patria*. A similar type of horizontal social mobility observed by Sorokin is regarding the circulation of social things and values including spiritual values as they are continuously modified by conscious and/or unconscious human activity. Together, the territorial migration of individuals and the shifting in value of social things and concepts determine a highly horizontally mobile society.

Most significant for my research, Sorokin identifies the ‘influence of mobility on the longevity and continuity of the culture complex’ ([1927] 1998). By this he means the combination of social and cultural characteristics which in their totality make up the ‘cultural face’ of a society or give to it its social individuality. Sorokin explains that when we think of the Greek or Hindu cultures we do not think of any specific traits but of the totality of all important cultural characteristics in their specific combination. Significant for my research, Sorokin argues that as long as a culture complex exists, we can say that the respective society exists too. As such, Sorokin poses the question, how does the social horizontal mobility of a society affects its culture complex and the

answer he provides is that the longevity and consistency of a culture complex disintegrates and with it the existence of that society or institution (Sorokin [1927] 1998).

With respect with individuals, Sorokin argues that the increase in social mobility means a dispersion of the people of a definite community through different localities and the infiltration of a community by people recruited from other places with other cultural standards. This facilitates the disintegration of the initial culture complex and the transformation of a specific local culture into a kind of a mixture of the components of different cultural traits. As a result, Sorokin continues, the local type of cultural complex is likely to disappear and to be superseded by an incongruous mixture of all kinds of culture which cannot have any style or individuality.

Sorokin is clear that he does not regard such trends to be either permanent or eternal and that once the point of saturation reached, the process will stop and may be superseded by the opposite trend ([1920] 1964). Nonetheless, in Sorokin's view, the net result is likely to be the disintegration of the cultural style of the group and the disruption of its continuity and as we will see throughout the following text, Sorokin's predictions have a clear resonance in the case of Rroma society which as we will see, is a very socially dynamic society. Its socially mobile members end up belonging to different social groups and shift from one position to another one thus loosening their ties with their original posts and diffusing their solidarity with other members of the former group. The individuals are now no longer tied with the former members of the social group and he now faces face-to-face contacts and 'lives together' with other members of other social groups.

Still in the case of the Rroma, it may be difficult to see how Sorokin's prediction that the trend towards loosening of the cultural complex might be superseded at some point in the future in other words how would an entire social group embark upon a social trajectory in the opposite direction. At the individual level however, my research will show evidence that such reverse of trend can and it does take place. As I will show through real life case studies, Rroma individuals can move back from one cultural complex to another one by re-tightening the cultural links with their parents' cultural group by adopting cultural characteristics specific to that group.

My research started from the assumption that Sorokin's cultural elements forming cultural complexes can be juxtaposed with ethnic practices determinant of the membership to a particular ethnic group. I further replaced Sorokin's observation of a community penetrated by individuals from other cultural complexes (see above) by focussing instead on individuals themselves who undertake the social journey from one cultural complex (ethnic group) to another one. Finally, I expanded on Sorokin's 'material and spiritual values' by identifying a number of cultural characteristics essential to the make-up of the ethnic group under discussion here: the Roma.

Thesis Plan

Following the Introduction, the thesis will present the methodology adopted for the research. In 'Chapter II: Methodology' I will present the options considered for the research and provide a rationale for the choice of research technique ultimately adopted. I will explain here that in view of the specific population upon which my research focuses, as well as the limited resources available to me as an independent researcher, the option of a large questionnaire based survey did not appear feasible. Instead, with a view to maximising the amount and quality of data generated, I have opted for an in-depth qualitative style research using an open-ended interview schedule focussed on a limited sample of seventy respondents. The research sample has been purposefully selected to include respondents from both ethnic segments and from all four quadrants of the Roma Social Diversity Model.

I have pursued this by conducting an in-depth qualitative study based on open interviewing and direct observation of a sample of Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma and their respective communities. The qualitative study was carried out during two field trips to Romania totalling six months of field research. During this period I identified and observed several different Roma communities located at considerable distance from each other in two of Romania's traditional provinces: Transylvania and Wallachia. The observational study will seek evidence of the multiple economic and social stratification of the Gypsies. Once the social stratification of the Roma is

established, I will seek to identify the norms, values and concepts that act as determinants of position within the social stratification of the traditional and modern Gypsy communities.

‘Chapter III: Traditional Gypsies / Modern Rroma Dimensions’ will describe the findings of the ethnographic element of my research and will analyse in detail the elements making up the ethnic identity of my respondents, describing the life-styles and specificities observed among various ethnic-subgroups (*Neams*) and individuals. In describing these various dimensions, the chapter will describe the respondents’ location on the traditional-modern dimension of the Social Diversity Model and will explore the ethnic diversity observed among the Rroma community.

‘Chapter IV: Social Structures’ will continue the reporting of the findings of the ethnographic element of my research and will describe the nature of the Rroma’s social stratification within the traditional and modern segments respectively. Here, I will introduce a specially-created schema, the Traditional Gypsies Occupational Schema (GOS) for understanding occupational stratification with the traditional segment, alongside the standard Modern Romanian Occupational Schema (ROS) derived from official Romanian sources for classifying occupational levels within the modern segment. I will explain in this chapter the rationale for social measurement using two different schemas with different numbers of horizontal levels and, again, I will position my respondents in the Rroma Social Diversity Model according to their location in the two occupational schemas.

‘Chapter V: Social trajectories and education impact – an overview’ will explore firstly the presence of vertical and horizontal social movements and will thus confirm the existence of a multi-directional pattern of social mobility among the Romanian Rroma. The reader will be familiarised here with a dynamic environment in which, depending on a number of factors, respondents experience combinations of ascending, stable and descending intra-generational and inter-generational social trajectories.

In this chapter I will also describe the current Romanian educational system, in particular the various stages of study available to Romanians whether *Gadje* or Rroma. The description of the

Romanian educational system will facilitate a better understanding of the educational routes available to Rroma. The overview will also aid the reader to locate the respondents' reported educational attainment on the full educational spectrum available to the entire Romanian society. In doing this, I do not intend to invite comparisons between the respondents' education attainment and that of the wider Romanian society; rather my aim is to observe the Rroma educational choices in the context of what is formally available to them as Romanian citizens. The potential trajectories described here will also include the horizontal trajectory of ethnic transition from the Traditional Gypsy segment to the Modern Rroma segment, a process through which respondents shed in the course of their lives or between two generations the various practices making up their ethnic identity.

'Chapter VI: Case studies – Traditional Gypsies' will follow up with concrete case studies selected to reflect some of the most significant types of social movements identified and the role of education in these movements. I will concentrate on those types of social trajectories identified among the Traditional Gypsies and I will analyse the key social processes involved, including the role of education and attitudes towards formal education. The respondents' social trajectories will be analysed using their own recollections and perceptions of their experiences. I will argue that though apparently more sheltered from the changing circumstances affecting the *Gadje* economy, and as such less dependant on formal types of modern education, the Traditional Gypsies are in fact very vulnerable to such changes and are negatively affected by lack of adequate education.

'Chapter VII: Case studies – Modern Rroma' will adopt the same approach as chapter VI and will analyse the main types of social trajectories encountered among the Modern Rroma and the social processes involved in these trajectories. As in the previous chapter, the analysis will rely on respondents' own perceptions and accounts and on my additional observations undertaken during the field research. Here I will present a summary of my findings on the topic of social mobility and educational attainment in the Modern Rroma environment and I will explore the way in which education shapes the social trajectories of Rroma in the modern economy and will explore the reasons for their low educational attainment.

‘Chapter VIII: Conclusions’ will summarise the finding of my research providing explanations based on the data collected on the social stratification of the Rroma community and the pattern of social trajectories observed. This chapter will also summarise my understanding of the role played by education in determining the course and speed of some specific trajectories and in specific cases its role in preventing downwards trajectories thus ensuring social stability.

At the same time by aiding upwards and/or stable social trajectories, the formal education has been found to safeguard not endanger the preservation of the Rroma cultural heritage, which is increasingly eroded by the gradual disappearance of various ethnic practices making up the Traditional Gypsy way of life.

Chapter II Methodology

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Introduction

At a very early stage in my research it became apparent that in order to investigate the social mobility of the Romanian Rroma community I had to be able to tap into the knowledge and life experiences of as large a number of Rroma individuals as possible.

The initial stages of my research focused thus on establishing contact with individuals in the Rroma community or outside the Rroma community who could act as gate-keepers to the communities where my intended respondents lived and to secure access to a number of Rroma communities as widely distributed as possible in two of Romania's provinces: Transylvania and Wallachia. My intention was to reach communities with sedentary and nomadic life styles in both provinces. Finally, I was aware of the existence of two distinct ethnic segments within the larger Rroma community: those embracing a traditional Rroma life style and those with a more integrated or assimilated life style akin to that of the surrounding *Gadje* community.

Preliminary field research visit to Romania (8 October 2002 -22 October 2002)

In October 2002 I undertook a preliminary visit of three weeks to Romania, with the aim of establishing contact with a number of potential gate-keepers in both provinces and securing their assistance for my subsequent field research. An internet search revealed the existence of approximately 300 Romanian Rroma non-governmental organisations, several Romanian political parties and a large number of Romanian academics and sociologists involved in promoting education among Rroma and with raising the Rroma's standard of living.

In addition to this abundance of potential contacts, I discovered the existence of numerous Romanian government Rroma advisors and local authority Rroma counsellors. The existence of this myriad of community and voluntary organisations was due to a rapid expansion of the civil

society in the Romanian society following the demise of the communist regime in 1989 (Acton 1979, Gheorghe 1997).

After further investigation involving correspondence, telephone calling and ‘word of mouth research’ and based on their perceived reliability, number of years since their establishment and reputation, my list of potential contacts was reduced to 30 agencies and individuals with possible access to a wide variety of community types and locations. Most of these gate-keepers were located typically among the ‘assimilated’ category of the Roma community though three of them were traditional Roma and two were Romanians working for Roma NGOs or employing large numbers of Roma workers.

The first visit to Romania was scheduled to start shortly after the beginning of the new academic year in Romania (15 September) and took me to two of Romania’s most populated centres Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca. These areas contain the largest Roma communities in Romania and I was hopeful that in these areas I would be able to contact and interview sufficient respondents.

During this visit I flew firstly to Bucharest where I already had three confirmed appointments. Two of them were with gate-keepers: Mr Voicu Mădălin, one of the two Roma members of the Romanian Parliament, Mr Costel Bercus, the Director of ‘Romani Criss’, one of the largest Roma NGO focussing on monitoring and promoting Roma human rights and a third one with Professor Ioan Mărginean, an experienced Romanian sociologist and Director of the Bucharest Institute for the Quality of Life. In addition to the already confirmed appointments, I intended to meet several other influential members of the Roma community (see Appendix).

In Cluj too, I had a couple of confirmed appointments with influential individuals in the Roma community among them, Mr Florin Moisa, Manager of the Centre for Roma Communities Resources and Mr Adrian Moldovan, Director of the ‘Ramses Dej’ Foundation for the Social Development of Roma. During the meetings with the gate-keepers I explained in detail the purpose of my presence in Romania, the nature of my research, my affiliation with the University of Oxford not the Romanian Government, and I highlighted the relevance of my future findings to the social and economic standing of the Roma community.

The role of the gate-keepers in Bucharest and Cluj was crucial in securing my access to as many interviewees as possible and in addition, I also intended to conduct 10 pilot interviews in each region. These interviews were to be used to further calibrate my questionnaire and to draw valuable practical lessons from direct interaction with Roma.

Research sample

The traditional Roma communities and families are strongly patriarchal in their internal organisation. This is reflected firstly by a clear and rigid allocation of status to the various members of the family according to their gender and age. Status dictates an equally clear and rigid allocation of responsibilities in the daily activities be they part of the income generating process or simply as part of the rules governing inter and intra-family interactions (Achim 1998, Okely 1982, Cherata 1989, Kiss 1990, Kenrick 1993). The degree of patriarchy does however vary between different Romani communities, and the degree and mode of power exercised by women varies: a high degree of role-segregation is also common - but sometimes this less not more than in surrounding societies e.g. ability of males to cook (Acton, Caffrey and Mundy 1997).

As I will explain later in the text in the paragraphs dealing with the ethnographic aspects of my research, these rules appear to be stricter when referring to the Gypsy women than when dealing with the men. Specific rules govern most aspects of Gypsy women's life including their roles and responsibilities within the household, their dress, within and outside the household and with whom they can interact (Fraser 1992, Mayall 1988). It would therefore have been very difficult for me, a young male researcher, to secure consistent access to a number of female Roma respondents. Interviews last sometimes in excess of two hours and it would have been very difficult to obtain permission from the men and the village elders to speak in private to their wives or daughters for such a long time. Thus my sample had to be made up only by Roma men.

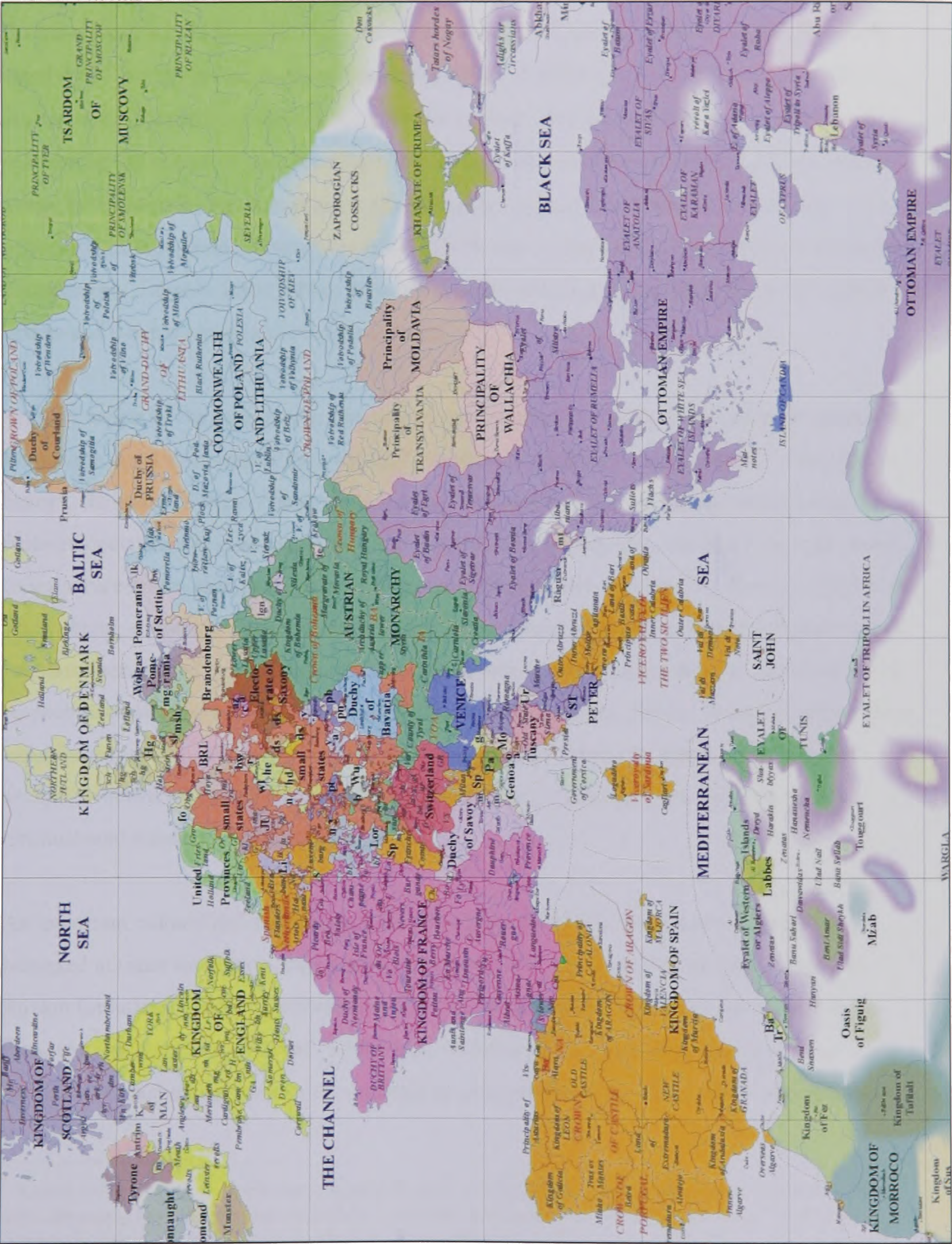


Figure II.1: Political map of Europe 1785

In addition, and as will be expanded upon later in the text, though there are significant exceptions, Roma women are traditionally expected to stay home and raise the children, assist the elderly members of the family and in general take care of the domestic chores¹. The limited level of educational attainment prevalent among Roma women² also dictated that for the purpose of researching the impact of educational attainment upon Roma's social mobility, I had to focus primarily on interviewing Roma men. Occasionally however, I was able to use the rare opportunities to interview formally or informally Roma women and to observe them within their communities. Lessons learned from these limited opportunities will be highlighted throughout the text as and when the respective cases occurred.

Another aspect of the sample selection was the geographical location. Historically, Romania has been made up of three main Principalities: Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia. Throughout history, the status of these Principalities varied. At times they enjoyed either vassal status, de facto independence or quasi autonomy. For long periods of time they belonged, or were vassal, to separate empires such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Russian Empire, etc. The cultural, economic and administrative make-up of these predominantly Romanian provinces has thus been shaped by the respective cultural, economic and administrative background of the respective empires to which they belonged (Giurescu & Giurescu, 1975). Transylvania therefore, experienced various influences from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to which it belonged for several centuries whilst Wallachia and Moldavia had been distinctly impacted upon by the Ottoman and Russian Empires (Figure II.1).

An important cultural difference among the three principalities is religion as these regions belonged at times to empires whose predominant religion was Russian Orthodox, Islam and Roman Catholicism and/or Lutheranism. The official languages adopted by the state in these three empires were also different. Differences between these three former masters of the Romanian Principalities can also be identified in administration, judiciary, military organisation,

¹ Acton (1979) writing on gender issues suggest those communities that define themselves as 'traditional' far more commonly have defined and established outside-the home economic activities for women, while the 'housewife' role is commoner in more adapted communities outside the former 'socialist' bloc. He argues that the push towards proletarianisation of women in the former state socialist regimes may also have led to resistance which presented itself as 'traditional'.

² See United Nations Human Development Report: The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, 2002

education *etc.* Two of the Romanian Principalities, Moldova and Wallachia, united in 1859 to form the nucleus of the Kingdom of Romania and were later joined in 1918 by Transylvania. With the addition of Bessarabia in 1920, the Romanians and other ethnic minorities were finally united within the borders of what is today modern Romania (Figure II.2).

With a view to these regional cultural distinctions I aimed to draw the sample from two distinct Romanian provinces. Ideally, the research should have covered all three provinces yet the limitation of funds and time dictated that only two of these provinces could be researched: Wallachia and Transylvania. Furthermore, it is in Transylvania and Wallachia where the most varied and numerous ethnic communities live³. Due to the time and material limitations affecting my research, I decided to set the size of the sample to 60 respondents matching the above categories and carefully selected as evenly as possible from the four main quartiles of the Roma Social Diversity Model described in Chapter I. That is, the sample selected was a purposive rather than a random sample.

As proposed in Chapter 1 - Introduction through the Roma Social Diversity Model introduced there, the two social systems of the traditional and modern Roma are distinct, co-exist and occasionally overlap. My sample of respondents was designed as a purposive sample rather than a representative one as the respondents were hand picked to match specific cultural, socio-economic, regional, gender and age characteristics thus to represent each of the four quadrants of the Model. Whilst I did not intend my sample as a numerical representation of the overall Roma community, I did nonetheless hope that the carefully selected respondents would - through their collective accounts - shed light on the research questions and illustrate the diversity of all the categories and typologies of Romanian Roma.

Data collection methods

As the main research tools, I have chosen to use an open ended semi-structured interview technique and direct observation and visual documentation. The option of using a structured questionnaire with my particular population i.e. a hard to access group, was not available to me

³ See National Census - Romania 2002

thus I opted for the open-ended interview. The particular focus of my research i.e. working with a population hard to reach on account of their specific culture and geographical location presented me from the outset with two main types of issues with potential impact on the outcomes of the overall research (Liebsson 1985, Patai 1987):

a) issues of access: these issues were related to the difficulties of accessing individuals located at all levels in the GOS/ROS and across both of the ethnic segments: Traditional and Modern. To exemplify some of these difficulties, potential respondents located at the lower levels of the Traditional Gypsies segment were in majority either semi-nomadic without known fixed address and their routes were often decided ad-hoc or not shared with members outside their *Shatra*. As it turned out, I was eventually able to locate some of these respondents (Figure II.3) basing my searches on word-of-mouth information from villagers and on the pure chance of coming across them during my travels. To be prepared for such instances, throughout my fields research I always travelled ‘full equipped and ready’ with charged batteries for my tape-recorder and photo-camera, blank interview schedules, gifts and awards for some of the respondents, the village elders and children (see below section: Gifts and Awards), water and dry food (should the waiting for an interview or the driving back to the base take long hours) and even protective (clothing should adverse weather conditions require it).



Figure II.3 Semi-nomadic *Shatra* in Transylvania located through word-of-mouth and random search May 2003

Similarly, accessing the lower levels on the Modern segment presented me with access difficulties in view of these respondents living in ghettos, shantytowns (Figure II.4) where entering without previous arrangement and/or a local guide or gatekeeper I could have been regarded as an unwelcome intruder or even worse as a government or police investigator. In either case not only

would the accuracy of my research have been compromised but I could have also placed myself in potentially risky situations. As in the case of the semi-nomadic Traditional Gypsies there were specific equipment arrangements and logistics to be put in place.



Figure II.4 Modern Rroma settlement in Central Transylvania located through Gatekeepers
April 2003

By contrast, accessing higher levels Gypsies and Rroma presented me with fewer logistical problems but nonetheless difficulties of access to closed traditional communities of the *Caldarari* and the *Gabori* which historically tend to be inward looking and self-isolated from the *Gadje* world. In addition, without prior contact and proper introduction from a Gatekeeper, such communities would have very little incentive to allow a *Gadje* researcher to spend many hours in their midst and ask a seemingly large number of personal questions. Similar difficulties of access faced me even when reaching higher levels of the Rroma segment such as legislators, professional artists, successful entrepreneurs, senior executives and so forth. In some of these cases, the potential respondents were either too busy to allocate me a minimum of two hours required by a standard interview, keen to preserve their privacy or simply had no reason to interrupt their daily routines to spare me the required hours so I was not able to interview them.

b) my concern to investigate mechanisms and motivations i.e. to explore mobility strategies from the respondent's point of view: these issues presented me with difficulties because it involved researching the respondent's views and own motivations for choosing a particular combination of social mobility strategies rather than me exploring exogenous factors that might have facilitated the respective social movement. This approach required specific techniques of generating as detailed and as accurately as possible explanations from the respondents (Burgess 1982, burgess 1985, Bertaux & Thomson 1997). In turn, this involved generating a wealth of

personal data regarding the respondents' life experiences, my understanding of their sets of values and priorities in life, and very personal circumstances. Some of these personal circumstances referred to income earning strategies, tax avoidance devices which often bordered illegality, family arrangements and much more. As in the case of the previous type of issues, my potential respondents had no incentive to share with me such sensitive data let alone allow me to record it with a view to later sharing with large audiences. To counter their reluctance to engage with my research I had to do my utmost to gain their confidence and trust by using Gatekeepers known and respected in the communities and using the wholehearted introductions and support of the established community leaders such as elderly, *Bulibashas*, social workers, *the King*, politicians etc. Parallel with this, it was very important to emphasise my neutrality by using my Oxford 'credentials' such as wearing clothes with the Oxford logo, using my Oxford student card and support letters from my supervisor, etc.

At the same time as doing my utmost to ensure respondents' cooperation, I had to ensure to the best of my abilities that the information presented by respondents was not deliberately or unintentionally distorted. To this end I had to rely almost entirely on triangulation thus corroborating in as much as possible the data received directly from the respondents with data generated by additional methods: observation, photography, parallel interviewing on similar topic, documents and related legislation search, etc. In this respect the open-ended interview technique appeared particularly useful as the respondent were to be allowed to talk until he exhausts the respective topic which makes the corroboration with other data relatively easier than when using a set of response choices. What it also appealed to me was the option of using my discretion to insist as much as necessary upon a particular topic of discussion and the flexibility to avoid other questions deemed irrelevant in the particular context. The length and the speed of response could also provide me with important hints as to the accuracy of the respective response and to gauge the intensity of the respondent's feelings and familiarity with the respective topic (Forcese & Richer 1973, Jaber 1997, Holstein 1995). Finally culturally specific and uncomfortable situations could be better negotiated with a flexible approach rather than through a rigid questionnaire structure (Jaber 1997, Holstein 1995)

Interviews with individuals however tend to present a fragmented view of the group, they are not perfectly compatible with the objective of grouping the interaction networks, friendship patterns,

and so forth which characterise it (Forcese & Richer 1973, Hallowell, Lawton & Susan 2005) and to augment data obtained through this technique I also decided to employ the observational method. The observational modes of data collection are ideally suited for in-depth descriptive investigations of unit, whether individuals or groups. They often permit degree of insight that would otherwise be lacking were it not for the intensity of observational investigation (Forcese & Richer 1973). As it turned out, continuous observation and active immersion in the Roma communities with various life styles generated invaluable data. Whether a nomadic Gypsy camp on the outskirts of a Transylvanian village or the make shift shantytown on the side of a municipal rubbish dumping area, whether a Gypsy virtual ghetto in the capital city or the Romanian Parliament's buildings, my visits to these places were documented with hundreds of detailed photographs, a small selection of which will be presented as visual aids.

As with the interview tapes, these photographs evidencing my field research were coded and grouped under specific headings, available upon request for scrutiny and further research. Throughout my research I have adhered to the code of ethics governing the sociological research which dictated that the subjects of photographic evidence should be asked for their permission prior to their photographs being taken. In practice, this meant that the formal and informal interviewees were all asked for and gave their permission but it would have been impractical to request the collective permission of entire villages, camps or communities thus the large groups photographs were taken as and when the opportunity arose and the circumstances allowed it due to consideration being shown to the villagers willingness to permit such photography.

I also opted for non-participant observation method, involving observation without hiding my identity. According to this method, the groups are told of the researcher's observational interest and access is sought on this basis. The problem still remaining is that the group knows that it is being observed and may change its behaviour accordingly. One way to cut down on this effect is to describe the research as generally as possible. In this way, the group is unsure of the researcher interest and cannot react (Forcese & Richer 1973, Hallowell, Lawton & Susan 2005). Following extended visits, the interest of my communities in myself and my research faded away and I was eventually able to meander freely through Gipsy villages and camps without having to justify my presence. The respondents were interviewed and observed as much as possible within

their own environment allowing me to collect data simultaneously through a variety of techniques such as questioning, direct observation, photography, note taking and recording.

The ethnographically rich aspects of sociological qualitative research can be better obtained, I believe, through a combination of investigative tools rather than reliance on a single one. This approach to qualitative research involving a combination of different data collection methods or triangulation, has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. Triangulation⁴ also serves to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen. (Holstein 1995, Denzin 2003, Hallowell, Lawton & Susan 2005)

For example, a respondent might be inclined to present himself verbally as economically disadvantaged because he feels that presenting himself as such is likely to either maximise a potential material benefit or will shelter him from potential negative consequences of his material wellbeing. Alternatively, he could exaggerate his economic position with the intention of gaining a higher status in the eyes of the researcher. By relying on his response alone, the researcher could be misled along the way intended by the respondent. By corroborating however evidence provided by the other research techniques such as direct observation and photography, a different picture might emerge. The quality of the respondent's clothes or his jewellery, the backdrop of his large house and previous interviews suggesting an affluent area might indicate the reality contrary to his statement, closer to the factual reality, contrary to his statement.

Observation of the respondent's natural environment and informal discussions were carried out with *Gadje* involved in various roles with the Roma community. This group was not specifically selected but they were however identified from among those with either a significant role or experience in the Roma community. They were predominantly *Gadje* social workers working with Roma, Roma professional women working for the Romanian government or Romanian

⁴ Among the sociologists who pioneered triangulation Denzin and Lincoln argue that the use of multiple methods reflects on attempts to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. 'Objective reality can never be captured but the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood then as a strategy that adds rigour breadth, richness and depth to any inquiry. Once the interviews completed, triangulation surfaces as a critical element in the practice of social science, adding one layer of data to another to build a 'confirmatory' edifice.' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000)

academic institutions, Romanian teachers of Roma children, etc. These informal discussions were not as accurately recorded as the formal interviews but they were nonetheless able to provide valuable background information. As in the cases of my sporadic discussions with Roma women, throughout the following text, I will refer to the interviews with *Gadje* as and when relevant to the research.

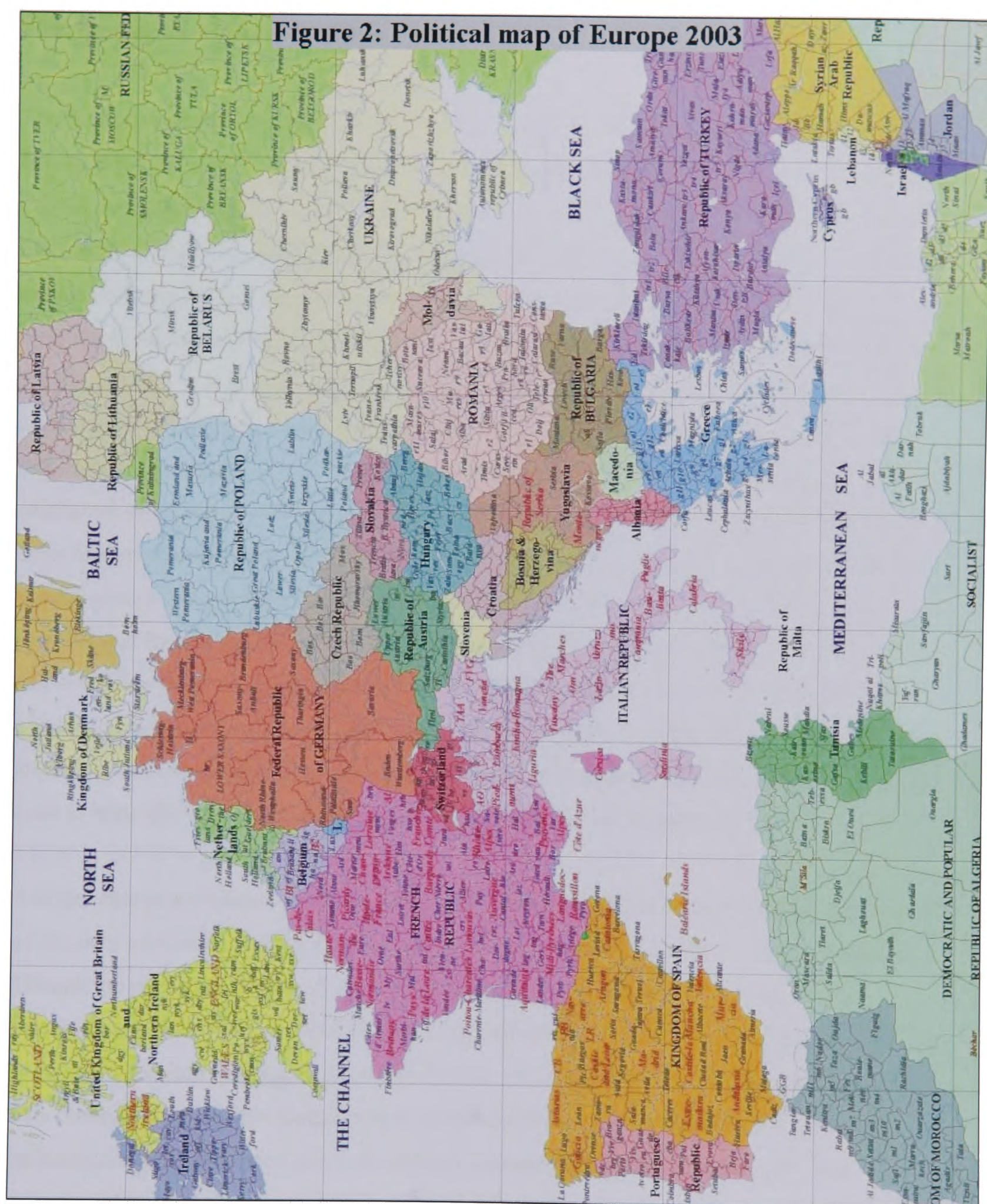


Figure II.2: Political map of Europe 2003

Pilot Interviews (1st Round) - England

The field research began in effect in the UK with four pilot interviews conducted with Romanian Rroma living in London. My preliminary investigations revealed that a small Rroma community existed in London and that on Sunday it congregates around the Romanian Orthodox Church on Fleet Street. With the support of the Parish Priest who in effect became the first gate-keeper for my research population, four Rroma men matching the characteristics of the target population were identified and interviewed. These men were selected from among those recently arrived in the UK in order to ensure that their social positioning and education background has not been influenced by their stay in Britain. Equally, the first round of pilot interviews referred to the respondent's occupational attainment whilst in Romania not in the UK. The interviews were conducted following a draft interview topic schedule and lasted an average 90 min. Following these four pilot interviews, the interview topic schedule was revised and reorganized. The first notable change introduced at this stage was the adaptation of the interview language from formal to colloquial Romanian. It became apparent that the target population did not understand many of the existing questions in the style they were initially thought of. Academic language and complex grammar structures were dropped in favour of short sentences using concrete examples and basic Romanian words. Occasionally, colloquial phrases and slang terminology were also used to bring about accurate communication and to ensure respondent's relaxation.

Another change introduced at this stage was the requirement that interviews should take place out of the sight or hearing of other Rroma, be they friends or family members of the interviewees. Though the pilot interviews were conducted in a private area within the Church complex, throughout the interviews the interviewees were distinctly aware of their fellow Rroma watching them and this created a state of awareness of their role of interviewee. I had the impression that they tended to 'act' as they imagined they should do in that given situation which gave the interaction interviewee-interviewer an artificial, unwanted dynamic⁵. For the rest of the interviews I insisted that as much as possible, the discussions ought to take place in private in order to allow the interviewees to relax.

⁵ In one instance for example, one of my respondents adopted a totally different tone of voice. Speaking louder so that his friends seated further away could hear him explaining his views.

Thirdly, the recording of the pilot responses was done by hand writing which delayed the process considerably. The respondents tended to get bored and lose patience towards the end of the interview and this was reflected in their answers which became shorter and less explanatory towards the end of the discussion. I took the decision therefore that the interviews should be recorded with the aid of a tape recorder. The principles of ethics guiding sociological research required however that the respondents must be aware that their responses were being recorded and a note was made that this issue should be further investigated with a view to identifying an optimum solution. I was not sure at that stage whether the interviewees would allow me to record them; in the event however my fear turned out to be unfounded.

Finally, the pilot stage revealed that interviewees had perceived the overall research as a potentially profitable opportunity for the researcher and were alluding or directly soliciting 'their share' out of the final profit. These requests took me by surprise as, rather naively, I assumed that my genuine interest in the development and progress of the Roma community would be sufficient to guarantee an enthusiastic and unconditional response. After the initial delicate moments involving hinted, outright requests and subsequent clarifications, I took the decision to clarify my position from the outset. I was to be specific in clarifying to the interviewees that my research is not likely to materialise in any financial profit, that I did not intend to write a best selling book and that I was not generously paid by a newspaper and therefore was not in a position to offer material benefits.

Rroma Gate-keepers

In any investigation the researcher should decide who to contact firstly. Should the researcher contact the person whom they see as the most powerful in a particular setting? Should the leader of an institution or a group be the first ones to be contacted? Group leaders and the institutionally powerful are seen by some researchers as the gate-keepers who can grant access. However gate-keepers can also restrict access to researchers when they feel that the researcher's presence is counterproductive to their interests⁶. Some sociologists have conducted their entire research without securing formal access to their group (Burgess 1985, Hallowell, Lawton & Susan 2005).

⁶ I was later to experience myself such a situation. Whilst seeking access to a traditional *Caldarari* community in Transylvania, I have made the mistake of selecting a gate-keeper from outside of that community, a town hall

With valuable lessons already learned from the first round of pilot interviews, the next stage in my research was the identification of Roma community gate-keepers and securing their support for the main body of the field research in Romania. As in the hierarchical structures of most formal organisation or communities, in the Roma community too certain individuals are placed in crucial positions from which they can control access of goods, services and information to the rest of the community (Achim 1998, Fraser 1992, Liégeois & Gheorghe 1995, Okely 1982). As long as they controlled the access of the respective community to material resources, and as long as they were perceived by the rest of the community as doing a good job, they were in a position of informal but strong power. These individuals wield considerable power and status in the respective communities and I anticipated that their support for my research would be crucial.

Another way in which I regarded the participation of the Roma gate-keepers as vital was their role in advising me and sharing their own views and understanding of the issues relevant to the research topics. With rich experiences in the Roma ways of life and with positions of prestige already secured, often among both sides of the traditional and modern segments of the Roma community, these individuals could themselves be ideal respondents, representing the upper quartiles of either the traditional or modern social structures. Indeed, as it turned out, the gate-keepers who facilitated me access to their communities were able also to give me interviews themselves and in turn, the respondents they introduced to me after concluding the interview were helpful in introducing me further to other interviews in a cascade like chain. The respondent recruitment charts in Figures II.5 and Figure II.6 show this approach.

Secondly, I saw gate-keepers as invaluable in facilitating access to various communities in which they operated. Where the gate-keepers were positioned at a too senior level, removed from daily interaction with the grass-root Roma, they could facilitate contacts with other intermediate-level, lesser gate-keepers who would in turn facilitate direct access to the Roma communities. In addition to the benefits to be derived from their participation, it was important to consider the large disadvantages to be derived from not involving them. Most of the gate-keepers tended to regard the respective communities as their own 'patch'. Access to 'their' communities was

Roma official. Despite my chosen gate-keeper's known role in the respective community, our access to the village was barred by a local community dealer who had been offended for not being consulted first.

fiercely guarded. Attempt to access 'their' community without the prior consent or support of the informal community leaders could have been construed as either disrespectful or threatening.

Thirdly, the Roma gate-keepers were in a position to aid me through facilitating access to valuable back-up resources whilst in the field. Among these resources, I anticipated that the most important would be the access to computer and internet facilities, electricity power points for battery recharging, telephone connections, emergency contacts, protection, transport and so forth. Naturally, in the case of the gate-keepers of the traditional semi-nomadic Roma communities these last benefits were not to be available yet as the reality of the field research demonstrated, even the gate-keepers of the traditional Roma communities were able to provide me with access to technical infrastructures and logistic support.

An introductory letter was sent from Oxford explaining the research topic to these persons and emphasizing the non-political and non-profit making nature of the research. Special care was taken to explain the potential benefits for the Roma community should the research progress as planned. It was hoped that the particular nature of this research with possible concrete outcomes for the Roma community such as exposure of Roma issues, collection of academic evidence in support of particular development and human rights campaigns, highlighting of areas in need of government focus, etc. would assist the support of the Roma elite. (See Appendix)

This was the first aspect of the field research that did not work in practice according to the plan or the expectations. What I failed to realise was that, far from being a unique occurrence for the Roma elite, I was one of many researchers who visited the Roma community as part of their ethnographic, political, medical, developmental, artistic or sociological research. I was to be one of the many foreign researchers who intended to visit Romania's Roma armed often with good intentions, occasionally with unsustainable promises, and the Roma understandably were no longer either impressed or moved by people like me. It was going to take more than an introductory letter to arouse their interest and to enlist their co-operation.

The first sign that reaching the Roma gate-keepers would not be a straightforward matter was that out of 30 introductory letters sent out from Oxford, only 12 replies were received and none from those perceived as the most crucial for the research. Furthermore, the responses received

were far from unqualified letters of support; rather they contained lukewarm promises pending availability on a particular week or month.

The list of potential gate-keepers was thus reduced from several hundreds of potential contacts to 12 qualified offers of support. Among others, the list of confirmed gate-keepers consisted of the self styled King of the Gypsies and leader of the traditional *Caldarari* community (1), the Member of the Romanian Parliament representing the Romanian Roma community (2) and the *Lautari* in Bucharest community (3), the leaders of the *Argintari* community in Bucharest, leaders of five Roma Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) in Wallachia and Transylvania (4-8), two Roma social workers (9-10) and two Romanian academics (11-12) with extensive experience in researching, writing and teaching the Roma community in Bucharest. Encouragingly and very importantly, the confirmed gate-keepers and their respective areas of work were spread fairly uniformly across Wallachia and Transylvania.

For the next stage of the research a three week preliminary field research visit was planned, during which the connections with the would-be gate-keepers were to be firmly established. In addition to establishing contacts, the research plans were to be further refined and the interview topic guides were to be tested 'in the field'. The research plan, travel and accommodation arrangements for the main fieldwork were also to be finalized during this preliminary visit.

Pilot Interviews (2nd Round) - Romania

Despite the initial doubts, once face to face contact was established, the 12 contacts (Roma and Gadge) established proved to be helpful and keen to assist me with establishing further contacts, with facilitating my access to various communities and with providing me with advice and back up. I believe several factors were influential and helped me in establishing a positive relationship from the outset.

Firstly, it helped immensely that my mother tongue is Romanian, a language spoken fluently by most of the Romanian Roma and by all Roma activists though learning the Romani language would have undoubtedly reduced my problems of access. Quite often, the style of Romanian used was very colloquial with several words from Romany and Hungarian mixed in, the

communications were much aided by conducting the discussions in a language in which both the interviewees and the interviewer were fully conversant. I acknowledge however that conducting the interviews in Romanian might have impacted upon the interviews and that in those cases where the respondents spoke fluently Romani, using an interpreter might have improved data accuracy.

Secondly, the fact that I approached the gate-keepers as a researcher representing a Western academic establishment also aided me as it underlined my neutrality. After centuries of state sponsored persecution and discrimination against them (Achim 1998, Gheorghe 1997, Mayall 1988, Fraser 1992, Liégeois 2001), research on Roma as indeed all areas of policy, social work or direct interaction with the Roma community are often surrounded by controversy and mutual distrust between the Roma and the *Gadje* world. By contrast, Great Britain is perceived in Romania, and this perception is embraced by the Roma too, as a liberal democracy which traditionally upholds the rights of the individuals and those of ethnic minorities. In addition to this high esteem enjoyed by Britain, the University of Oxford in particular benefits from a very good reputation of academic excellence and thoroughness of its research projects, and interacting with a British researcher from Oxford conferred me in the eyes of the gate-keepers with a favourable combination of trustworthiness and curiosity. In concrete terms, it resulted in the gate-keepers appearing as keen to talk to me and share their experiences with me as I was to talk to them.

To further calibrate my questionnaire and to test in the field the relevance and/or the appropriateness of my lines of investigation, ten second stage pilot interviews were conducted with the members of the Roma elite. The ten formal interviews were conducted in addition to many hours of discussions and observation conducted in the company of the gate-keepers.

At this stage, the recording method was changed from hand writing to recording using a tape recorder, and all the respondents were asked and gave their permission to being recorded. Some of the gate-keepers suggested that whilst the recording method might be appropriate in their case 'as they are used to give interviews', the grass roots Roma might feel intimidated and uncomfortable with the presence of the electronic device. I have noted these remarks as interesting because once in the field, irrespective of their social position or education background,

my main Roma respondents were not concerned about the presence of the tape-recorder or by the digital photographic camera.

Even the most traditional of the respondents, the nomads interviewed in their tents in Transylvania, were totally relaxed about being recorded on tape. Could this apparent discrepancy between Roma elite's perceptions and the Roma grass roots reality be the first sign of an existing gap between the perceptions of the two groups? Three months spent subsequently among Roma of various backgrounds and hundreds of hours of interviewing were to provide the answer. I will expand later in the text on the use of the recorder in the field.

Main Interviews (March – June 2003)

Having succeeded in establishing contact with a good number of gate-keepers, I then proceeded to visit settled communities and nomadic families in Transylvania and Wallachia. The contacts were invaluable at this stage as the initial reaction of both the settled and nomadic communities was one of suspicion and caution. Notably, in the cases of destitute and marginalised communities, I observed a dignified reluctance to open up to me the realities of their existence and to invite me within their makeshift homes or tents. Reluctance to allow me to enter the tents could also have been due to the concern that I will not observe the Marime code (See Chapter III)

This was however only the initial reaction as gradually with persuasion from my 'guides' and after elaborate scrutiny of my 'credentials' I was allowed and even invited to look around and take photographs at will. In one case, I was asked in a very firm tone to produce my Oxford Student Card; my host, who could not read, held it upside down for several seconds after which he returned it to me with doubtful looks.

The word went around gradually that a British researcher was keen to speak to Roma and I was able to return to the previously visited villages and communities without 'escort'. Similarly,

having learned several words in Romany consisting mostly of polite introductory phrases and with increased confidence I began to approach Rroma communities on my own. This approach was however not very productive as it required an immense effort in persuading the targeted

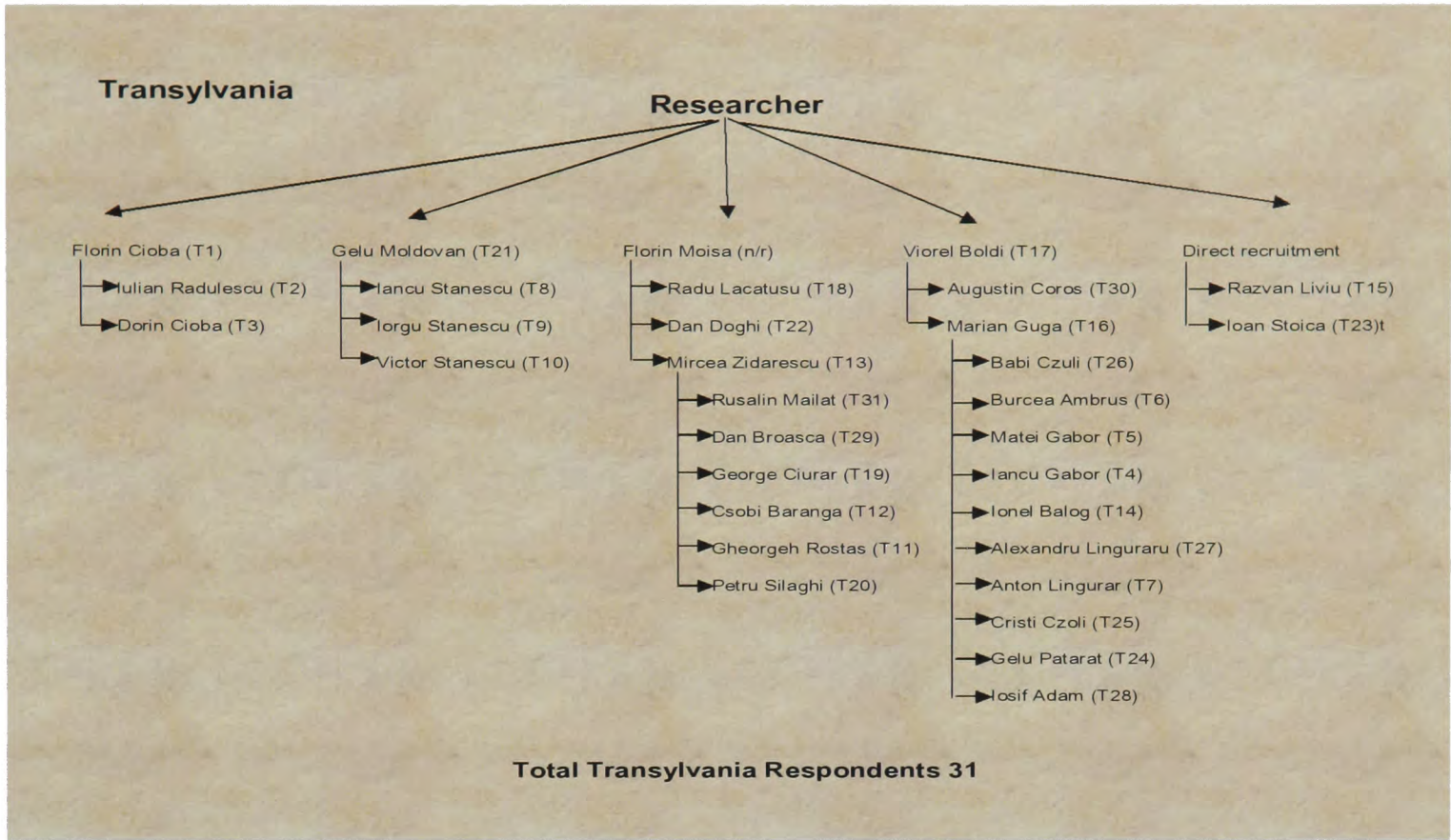


Figure II.5: Respondents recruitment chart - Transylvania

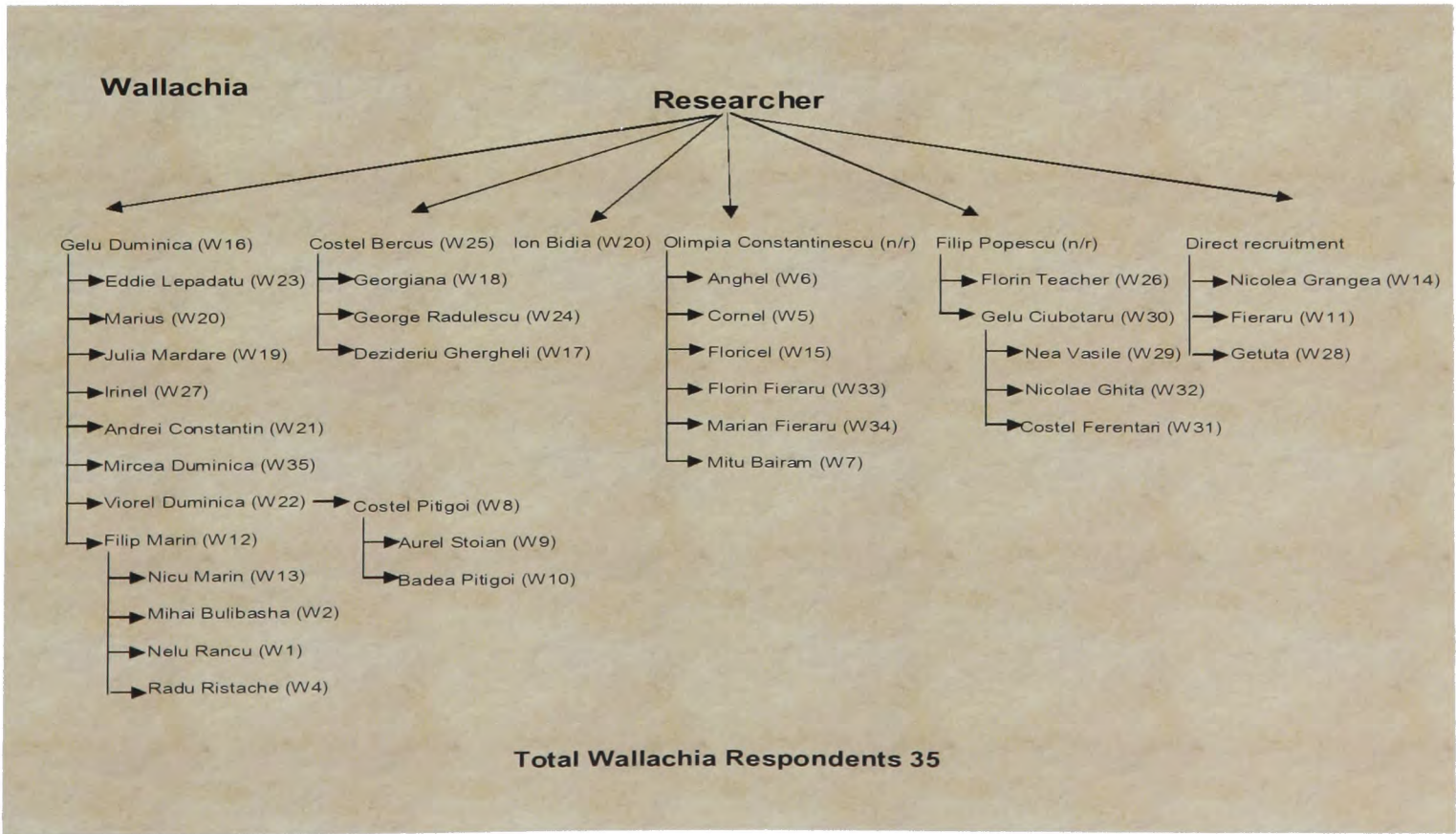


Figure II.6: Respondents recruitment chart – Wallachia

respondents of my good intentions and their safety. On one occasion, having encountered a nomadic group of three Rroma families on the outskirts of a Wallachian village, I spent approximately three hours discussing my research with the *Bulibasha* and persuading him to let me talk to himself and to his people. The time spent in their company was not at all wasted for it allowed me to observe the *Shatra's* activities as they were preparing to settle for the night.

Please note in Figure II.5 and Figure II.6 the comparatively small number of respondents recruited without Rroma gatekeepers' assistance: direct recruitment. With one single exception where the interview was held in my hotel room in the city of Cluj in Transylvania, all the other discussions with the respondents took place in the respondent's environment (home, tent, cabin or office or directly in the field). This I found beneficial as the respondents were able to relax in their own environment and feel more secure in opening up their personal views and experiences.

Throughout the interviews I had the feeling that some of the respondents were actually relishing the opportunity of sharing with an outsider issues related to their world or their life experiences. Other researches too found that participants have said that the occasion of the interview was the first time that somebody sat down to listen to them and that participating in the interview was an important experience for them (Seidman 1998).

T1	Florin	G*	T13	Mircea	G
T2	Iulian		T14	Ionel	
T3	Dorin		T15	Razvan	
T4	Iancu		T16	Marian	G
T5	Matei		T17	Viorel	G
T6	Burcea		T18	Radu	
T7	Anton		T19	George	
			T20	Petru	
			T21	Gelu	G
			T22	Dan	
T8	Iancu		T23	Ioan	
T9	Iorqu		T24	Gelu	
T10	Victor		T25	Cristi	
T11	Gheorghe		T26	Babi	
T12	Csobi		T27	Alexandru	
			T28	Iosif	
			T29	Dan	
			T30	Augustin	
			T31	Rusalin	

Figure II.7: Distribution of Transylvania respondents across the four quadrants of the Social Diversity Model. Total Transylvania Respondents = 31, G = gate-keepers

For many of my respondents, the right moment for sharing these experiences and beliefs came during the formal interviews with me or during the many hours we spent together driving through the Romanian countryside, chatting in a pub or attending various Rroma festivals. One such festival that proved particularly useful in discussing and observing unhindered the Rroma ways of life was 'The Constantin Titrus Music Festival' in Cluj, an artistic event put together by the *Ammaro Suno* Rroma Student Association from Cluj. This event was conceived as a celebration of the life and work of a locally renowned Rroma violinist and consisted of Rroma traditional dances, Rroma poetry and music and followed by a Rroma party. Another such festival was the Easter Festival in Branceni - Wallachia, an event marking the end of Lent, culminating with the ceremonial slaughter of the village pigs and followed by an all village feast. The discussions and observations conducted during these events generated invaluable data.

The informal discussions conducted outside the main interviews generated valuable information which could not have been reached through a rigidly set up and pursued research interview. Often the informal discussions proved to be more revealing and informative than the proper interviews. This phenomenon occurred with striking regularity with virtually all the interviewees irrespective of their positioning across the age, educational or socio-economic spectrum.

This presented me with unique opportunities of tapping directly into an inestimable pool of knowledge and wide ranging life experiences. I was thus immensely fortunate to hear first-hand accounts of school experiences, allegations of discriminatory employment practices, vivid descriptions of daily survival techniques, memories of missed opportunities and decision taking processes adopted for various family situations and so many more.

On the other hand however, my constant subjection as a researcher to an almost collective Rroma interpretation of the realities making up their own social environment, and my prolonged immersion in the Rroma way of life, has inevitably raised my awareness of extremely challenging situations and brought me face to face with very powerful accounts from which I found it extremely difficult to be completely detached. Equally, my personal set of beliefs about the role of education in the contemporary society together with my views on ethical interaction between various social groups placed me in danger of becoming unwarily subjective in my research (Burgess, 1985).

It is important to mention at this point that my research was not aimed at identifying human rights abuses or legal abuses affecting Roma communities or individuals. As such, whilst many of the interviewees alleged cases of terrible injustice and abuses, the position I adopted throughout my field research was one of not jeopardising my role by taking sides or investigating and lobbying on behalf of legal or political matters. That is not to say that as an individual I remained unaffected by some of the claims. In certain instances I had to report the allegations to relevant organisations (schools, housing associations, town halls) whilst in some other cases where the alleged abuses took place in the distant past I had to limit myself to expressing my disapproval or regret.

Finally, my status as a member of an ethnic group myself living among a different ethnic majority (a Romanian living in the United Kingdom) could have also impacted on the neutrality of my interpretations. As sociologist, I am readily accepting the potential subjectivism of my research and thus open myself to adequate scrutiny. As an individual with a clearly defined set of values, throughout my research I was unlikely to be a perfectly impartial and passive observer of the Roma society. Indeed, in cases where collecting data takes place within an area of social conflict such as union - management relations where researchers might find themselves at odds with the authorities (in my cases with those who discriminated against the Roma) there is the risk of bias and the question to which extent the researcher participates. [Burgess \(1985\)](#) describes the phenomenon where the researcher identifies herself with those observed and being thus in danger of introducing an element of bias as 'going native' and the more participatory and prolonged the researcher's exposure the more pronounced the phenomenon is potentially.

Ethnographic research especially often requires a long period of engagement within a community or research setting. [Hollowell \(2005\)](#) too found that long engagement with a community sometimes does make for a difficult period of disengagement when data collection and analysis phase of the research are complete. Research participants have in some cases become friends and their daily struggles have engendered new loyalties and commitments ([Hollowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2005](#)). Thus, throughout my field research and the subsequent interpretation of the data, I could have become excessively sensitized to Roma's perceptions and interpretations thus placing myself in danger of accepting as accurate data that might have been deliberately or

inadvertently distorted. I hope however that my awareness of this potential problem and my use of triangulation, has ensured that my research results are robust.

Geographical location

As noted above, I endeavoured to secure interviewees as geographically diverse as possible aiming to obtain a significant coverage of the Transylvanian and Wallachian territory. Naturally, the limited resources available to me dictated that whilst a significant geographical spread was attained, the respondents tended to be grouped around the capitals and the major conurbations in the two Romanian provinces. The greatest concentrations appeared around the cities of Bucharest in Wallachia and Cluj in Transylvania⁷.

W1	Nelu	G	W16	Gelu	G
W2	Mihai	G	W17	Dezideriu	
W3	Ion		W18	Georgian	
W4	Radu		W19	Julia	
			W20	Marius	
			W21	Andrei	
			W22	Viorel	G
			W23	Eddie	
			W24	George	
			W25	Costel	G
			W26	Florin	
			W27	Irinel	
W5	Cornel		W28	Getuta	
W6	Anghel		W29	Vasile	
W7	Mitu		W30	Gelu	
W8	Costel	G	W31	Costel	
W9	Aurel		W32	Nicolae	
W10	Badea		W33	Florin	
W11	Fieraru		W34	Marian	
W12	Filip		W35	Mircea	
W13	Nicu				
W14	Nicolae				
W15	Florice		35	Wallachia	

Figure II.8 Respondents distribution - Wallachia. Total Wallachia Respondents = 35, G = gate-keepers

⁷ See National Census – Romania 2002

This is also reflective of the geographical distribution of the Roma communities themselves in the respective areas⁸. Figure II.9 indicates the concentration of the respondents in the respective geographical locations by displaying the size of the local sample. The size of the local sample should be regarded as indicative of the number of respondents in that area only and not as reflective of the size of the population. To exemplify, whilst the size of the sample selected in Targu Bujor is as large as that of the sample in Cluj, the reader should not derive the conclusion that the size of the Roma community in Targu Bujor is as large as the one in Cluj. The size of the sample therefore is not directly proportional to the size of the local Roma community.

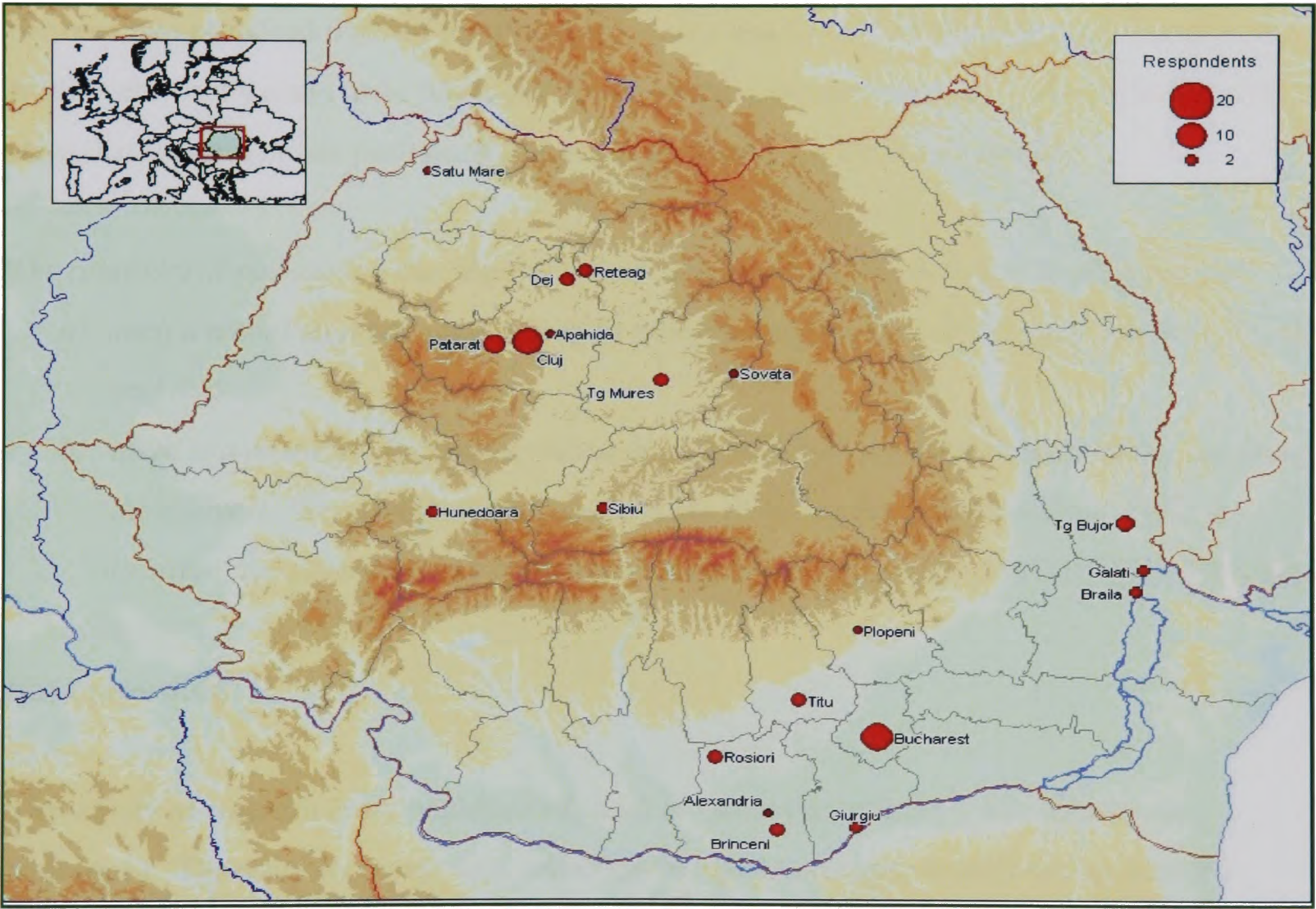


Figure II.9 Respondents geographical distribution map - Romania

To preserve the respondent’s anonymity, each individual had their name changed and has been allocated a code representing his position on the social diversity model and his geographical

⁸ It is also worth mentioning that, whilst I have recruited some of my interviewees and conducted the discussions in certain geographical locations, the geographical distribution of my respondents shows the areas these people were mostly associated with prior to the interview. For example, a respondent might have lived his entire childhood and professional life in one region (A) yet he could have moved shortly before the interview date to another region (B) where the interview took place. In these cases, I have mapped the interviewee’s location as A rather than B. Several respondents in Bucharest and Cluj did fall within this category, having lived all their lives in towns or villages far away from the place where they were interviewed.

location. As such, the Transylvanian respondents have been allocated the 'T' prefix followed by a number indicating their position on the social diversity model.

Whilst I took particular care to position the respondents as accurately as possibly on their respective social diversity models, the allocation involved a certain degree of approximation thus I am reminding the reader that their positioning is arbitrary as perceived by me at the time of interviewing and as made possible by the limited number of possibilities available: only four quadrants. Importantly, the borders between the four quadrants of the social diversity model are porous and quite often the real positioning of the respondents would actually be somewhere between two or indeed three of the quadrants. I also encountered respondents who though they would vehemently claim to be positioned in one of the quadrants, were actually displaying clear signs that they are in fact positioned in another quadrant (T3, W14 interviews)⁹.

The relativity of positioning the respondents in these quadrants is therefore a reflection that

- a) such a model might be internalised by many but not necessarily all the Romanian Roma and that*
- b) there is a potential discrepancy between 'self-location' (as perceived by the respondents themselves), 'location by others' (as perceived by external observers) and 'objective location' (as determined by objective scoring of income, house-size, education level, etc.)*

Data recording

The variety of research tools employed required several types of information recording techniques. The most important data collection technique was undoubtedly the open ended interviewing of the respondents. The interviews took place in various locations most often at locations chosen from the respondents natural environment be that their homes, their villages or their offices. The largest part of the interviews were recorded with respondent's explicit permission. Occasionally, notes were also taken to augment or instead of the interview tape. The transcripts of the interview tapes and originals of the interviews notes have been accurately registered and are available for inspection and further analysis. Indeed, many researchers combine

methods and do not rely solely on any one technique. Thus some may conduct free-recall listing but tape record the interviews to check the accuracy of their notes and obtain details they may have missed. Tape recorded interviews may provide more detailed accounting of case descriptions than the interviews note alone (Holstein 1995, Jaber 1997).

Significantly, despite a virtual unanimous acceptance by the interviewees of me using a recorder, some of them asked me to stop the recorder at certain points in the discussion in order to expand on a particular issue. Warren too confirms that in the process of conducting qualitative interviews she has encountered the 'on and off the record' association that the respondents have with the recording devices. Furthermore, and something also witnessed by me, in many instances interviewees continued to talk even after the recording has stopped. This seems to occur for two reasons: first, the respondent does not want to talk on the record about things they may perceive dangerous or personally damaging and second the respondent wants to talk about his or her rather than interviewer's concerns (Denzin 2003). Where this occurred, I indicated this at the appropriate point in text by explaining that the respective passages were added from notes or memory.

Gifts and rewards

Reaching disadvantaged communities as a professional Westerner and entering in direct contact with their members presented me, and undoubtedly other fellow researchers undertaking similar type of research, with a recurrence of a particular problem encountered initially in London during the first stage of the pilot interviews. Despite my detailed opening clarification that I am not in a position to offer substantive material benefits, I was occasionally asked by some gate-keepers for various favours in exchange for guaranteed access to their communities and assistance or simply for the time of the interview.

The most common request and one that occurred when interviewing Roma from all levels of the social strata was that of facilitating working visas to the United Kingdom. Sometimes these types of requests took the form of camouflaged requests to visit the UK 'as a tourist' and some other times respondents directly asked me to facilitate them an immigration or 'asylum visa'. Another type of request was for material rewards in return for access to various communities or for

facilitating an interview with an important member of the Roma community. Again, these requests came under different guises ranging from offers to enter a 'sponsorship deal', to finance an 'excellent business opportunity', requests for 'a small loan' or outright requests for 'consultancy fees'. Among many other things, I was offered the exclusive rights for the commercial exploitation of a source of mineral water in Transylvania. It was suggested to me that I could be nominated as the 'London Representative of the Roma Ethnic Community' and I was offered a prosperous marriage with the daughter of an affluent Roma business man.

Whilst in themselves these requests provided very interesting data on the aspirations and perceived opportunities of the Romanian Roma with various educational backgrounds, an area directly relevant to my research, they also placed me in a very delicate position having to perform a fine balancing act between adhering to ethical research norms i.e. not entering illegal or untenable commitments, and risking to jeopardize access to the respective individual or his community with the possible negative consequences for my research outcomes.

This is in fact a major issue in qualitative field research i.e. whether the participant can expect any remuneration or concrete advantages for the interview. Remuneration could range from pay on a per interview basis to the promise that if the interview led to a commercial publication, the participant would have the right to some proportion of the royalties. Researchers with ample experience as well as beginners have found the issue a complicated one (Patai 1987, Seidman 1998). Anything more than a token payment would seriously threaten to bias the participants' motivation for taking part in the study. On the other hand, some researchers see interviewers as potentially expropriating the words of the participants for their own use in an exploitative manner (Patai 1987). Seidman (1998) believes that each researcher has to figure it out for herself the issue of remuneration. Whatever she decides, Seidman proposes, she must be explicit in a written consent form which should state clearly either that the participant is agreeing not to make any financial claim upon the interviewer or what the basis of the remuneration will be.

In my view, taking such a rigid approach with some respondents might in effect introduce an element of unwanted formality. At worst, respondents might be put off by being asked to sign a declaration before the interview and withdraw their acceptance to participate. At best, they might be placed inadvertently in a state of alert which would govern their subsequent responses. Rather,

my principle (one also suggested by Seidman) was to give the participant the opportunity to either join or not the research on the basis of explicit information (Seidman 1998). In doing so I also agree with Bruce Jackson who feels that whether informants be paid or not, the answer depends on many factors, the most important being the local customs. In some places payment is not only necessary but expected, in some other places it would be an insult (Jaber 1997).

In the event, the solution that presented itself was the one reached at the first and second round of the pilot interviews stages, that of inserting in the opening introduction to the interview of a paragraph in which I endeavoured to make it absolutely clear that I was not in a position to offer any of the above material benefits and that I could not be seen as benefiting in any way for my collaboration with my research subjects. Naturally, having to turn down a request for financial assistance from an ill person who asked for financial help to repair his leaking roof was immensely more difficult than saying no to a suit clad NGO leader who asked me to help his graduate son to reach the UK where he heard 'social benefits are very good'¹⁰. Yet nonetheless in view of the ethical norms of sociologic research I had to be consistent.

Having said all that, to secure access to certain communities and obtain the previously mentioned invaluable support of the gate-keepers, I had to provide occasionally certain material rewards or incentives. The rules governing the Romanian Roma society too would require a visitor always to bring a small gift when entering a home for the first time or when introduced to a senior person. The gift is formally offered and accepted as a symbolic gesture and among the most frequent gifts people usually offer a bottle of wine, a couple of bottles of beer, a few cakes or even a small bunch of flowers.

The size and the value of the gift was once upon a time irrelevant yet in recent decades, this tradition became so entrenched that it began to be governed by strict rules. If the visitor does not bring a gift at all he is perceived as disrespectful. If she brings a too small a gift, she may be perceived as mean and disrespectful. A too generous gift could be taken to indicate opulence or might even be taken as forcing somebody's hand before asking for a favour or as a bribe. In the

¹⁰ See interview notes with AR, Sinti Foundation for Roma Development, Hotel Napoca, Cluj, October 2002

latter case the signal can also be taken that there is more to come whilst in the former, the host might conclude that there is no point in wasting time with the person¹¹.

I could not therefore have accessed my gate-keepers, the communities and the respondents 'empty handed', and whilst my gifts were of a symbolic nature, in the interest of transparency they must be mentioned and described. Most of the male main gate-keepers received a bottle of whiskey each and an important female gatekeeper received a small bottle of perfume. The gifts for the lesser gate-keepers included cakes, Oxford t-shirts, caps and pens, bags of groceries for the families who housed and fed me for days at a time, sweets for the children and even second hand clothes purchased in bulk from Oxfam shops in England¹².

It is very important to mention at this stage that, with three notable exceptions, the gate-keepers did not request these gifts as this would have been perceived as demeaning on their part. Exceptions did occur however and where this happened, I was careful to avoid those contacts in the future or, where an interview had already taken place, to mention the request in the opening description of the interview background so that the subsequent comments should be analysed in the light of the respective request.

Data processing

The variety of research methods employed generated an enormous amount of data in various forms. By the time I flew back from Bucharest to London in August 2003, I had undertaken hundreds of hours of observation of modern and traditional Rroma communities, over a hundred formal and informal interviews with Rroma located all across the Rroma Social Diversity Model, hundreds of photographs of Rroma communities and individuals from all walks of life and a suitcase full of notes, literature, pamphlets, newspaper articles, Roma books and manuals.

¹¹ The origins of this custom are most likely and could be traced perhaps to the hundreds years of Ottoman hegemony in these areas. Whatever the origins however, the Rroma seem adhere to this archaic custom and it is perceived as impolite to turn up 'empty handed' to somebody's home or office. This is particularly of relevance when the relationship between the visitor and hosts is one of one way seniority. In my case, I was the one who needed the help and good will of the gate-keepers thus it would have been counterproductive to ignore this aspect. In addition, I was a 'Westerner', somebody living and working in the West thus somebody generally perceived as having access to considerable material resources, certainly more so than my hosts, a further reason to be expected to provide a 'gift'.

¹² This practice was agreed with my research supervisor before leaving Oxford and approved by the assessors for my transfer of status.

In order to capture as much richness and detail as possible from the interviews I have conducted, I have transcribed all the interviews *ad literam* without any alterations of style or content. Even in cases where respondent's knowledge of the Romanian language was so poor that it was impossible for me to make sense of a particular sentence, I have reproduced it phonetically hoping that it will later reveal important aspects such as the prospects in the labour market of an illiterate Roma man with no knowledge of the Romanian language.

Similarly, I have not edited slang out of the original transcripts the slang, the swear words, the offensive remarks unpleasant as they might have been presented themselves. I have endeavoured to describe with maximum accuracy situations, like for example those when the interviews were conducted in the middle of a plain and the wind blew over the respondent's voices or when the *Shatra's* horses and dogs' loud noises were covering my interviewee's answers. Not surprisingly, the actual transcription and summarisation of the interviews took far longer, perhaps thrice, as long as the actual interviews but the end result was worthwhile as it ensured that data was now ready to be analysed.

At the start of the transcribing stage of the research I considered and tested a couple of specialist software packages like NVivo or Winmax, as I felt that their use might have saved valuable time. These packages however were based on the ability of the software's voice recognition ability. Whilst time consuming, the setting of the software to recognise my own voice proved to be a straightforward task but the voice recognition of over 70 respondents turned up to be a virtually insurmountable and not time-effective task. Furthermore, whilst most of the interviews were conducted in Romania, discussions involved occasionally words in three or four languages (Romanian, Romany, German, English and Hungarian) and setting up the software to distinguish between these different accents and words made the task unfeasible. I have thus chosen eventually to use manual transcription of the interviews, using a less sophisticated but the tried and tested pedal activated Dictaphone machine.

In short, the data collection and processing followed the following path:

Observation + Informal unstructured discussion + Open ended semi-structured interview


Interview transcription + Selection of photographic evidence + Additional notes



Identifying and selecting relevant sections from Interview Transcript



Transcript Codification into Transcript Summaries



Transcript Summaries Tabulation



Analysis

In addition to my data however, I had many memories and recollections of cases I have heard, people I have met and places I have visited. I have been granted access into cottages, cabins, caravans, tents, marble palaces, government buildings, offices, schools and shanty towns. I have met Gypsies fabulously rich and hopelessly destitute, highly educated and completely illiterate, members of parliament and former convicts, chief of clans and street sweepers and in each case I have been privileged to be given access to personal life stories, memories, experiences and understandings, views and opinions, all being elements of the large jig-saw I set up to understand at the start of my journey.

Chapter III

Traditional Gypsies - Modern Roma Dimensions

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Introduction

This chapter will address my first research question, namely will seek to shed light on the nature of Rroma ways of life in contemporary Romania. A substantial part of my research consisted of social ethnographic and visual research. Though in effect my ethnographic study began with the preliminary stages of literature review in Oxford and London and the pilot interviews held with members of the Rroma community recently arrived in the United Kingdom, the main body of research took place throughout the two field research visits in Romania, over a period of approximately four months (See Chapter II Methodology)

The literature review (See Introduction Chapter) and preliminary field research visit revealed distinct characteristics according to which I subsequently categorised the larger Rroma community into two ethnic segments: the Traditional Gypsies and the Modern Rroma, reflecting the extent to which the respective individuals displayed ethnic characteristics akin to traditional Gypsy way of life or have embraced to a greater or lesser degree the values and norms of the majority non-Rroma community: the *Gadje*¹

In addition to the segmentation of the Rroma community into two distinct ethnic segments, my research also identified socio-economic characteristics which further distinguish the members of the two vertical ethnic segments into horizontal social strata based on the occupational attainment of the respective individuals. The ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of each individual would therefore place individuals along a vertical (ethnic) or horizontal (socio-economic) spectra and for simplicity purposes, my Social and Ethnic Diversity Model, proposed in the Methodology Chapter would separate the community into the four main quadrants. The list of individual characteristics determining an individual's socio-economic position will be explored later in Chapter IV Social Structures and this chapter will focus on the respondent's ethnic identity or

¹ The reader will note that throughout this thesis, the term 'traditional' often coincides with speakers of Vlach-Romani. Whilst I endeavoured to underline that in my usage, the term 'Traditional' reflects the extent to which the respective individual or group display ethnic characteristics akin to a traditional way of life I am aware that this might inadvertently create the impression that in my view Traditional equates with speaker of Vlach-Romany. Where this juxtaposition occurs, it occurs coincidentally and without my intention to link the two. Indeed, I do not discount the possibility that a respondent might not speak Vlach-Romany but due to the rest of ethnic characteristics displayed, could be in my view more traditional than other fluent speakers of Romany.

otherwise put on the specific ethnic characteristics most likely to determine an individual's position among the vertical (ethnic segments) of the Model i.e. Gypsy or Rroma.

My analysis of the Traditional Gypsy way of life will start with the proposition that an individual's ethnic identity is made up of a number of ethnic practices making up his or her ethnic identity. Each of these ethnic practices correspond to a particular set of values, customs, norms and traditions or –expressed in a more general way - to a particular culture and act as links between the respective individual and a specific ethnic community. Whether these links consist of speaking the respective community's tongue or wearing the respective community's traditional dress or simply upholding values of the respective community it was expected that they have also the role of defining the respective individual's ethnic identity. As such, my original hypothesis is that the more ethnic practices an individual would have, linking him or her with a particular ethnic community, the more ethnically defined he would be. As in most other areas of research regarding the Gypsies and as a reflection of the Gypsy diversity, there does not seem to be a generally accepted code of classification according to which Gypsies can be identified. Ethnographers and sociologists of various schools and orientations describe the Gypsies according to various combinations of criteria.

Von Wlislocki (1890) defines the Gypsies by observing their Types of Settlements, Family Names and *Neam* Membership, Folkloric Traditions and Language and Poetry. Liégeois (1987) describes the Gypsies by deconstructing their identity in areas of observation such as their Lifestyle (including values, social interactions and language), Exclusion, Accommodation, Travelling, Economic Activities and Health. Achim (1998) focuses his observation of the Romanian Gypsies on not dissimilar areas of analysis such as Lifestyle (nomadic vs. sedentary), Marginalisation, Social Organisation, Economic Activity, Marriage and Language. Pons (1995) focuses on Language, Traditional Dress, Social Organisation, Philosophy and Traditional Occupations. Finally, Zamfir & Zamfir (1993) consider the following characteristics as the most significant in assessing the Gypsy ethnic distinctiveness: Physical (Racial) Characteristics, Distinctive Language, Folkloric Traditions (including Traditional Dress and Religious practices), Cultural Traditions (spoken and written) and Specific Lifestyle (including occupations). With a view to the overall aims of my research of observing the potential impact of education upon the social mobility and ethnic transition of the Romanian Rroma, I propose to combine the various approaches adopted above and select a number of distinctive ethnic characteristics which in my view would best assist

me to address my research questions. These include *Neams*, language, occupations, nomadism, norms and values, inter-ethnic marriage and so forth.

Traditional Gypsy ways of life

The first distinction of the Gypsy ways of life and a division observed by Gypsies too (other than that between *Gadje* and Rroma) is that of their *Natsjia* or *Rasa* which could be described as nations or tribes. Sutherland (1967) quoted by Lemon (2000) outlined four main categories of Vlach Gypsies²: *Lovara*, *Machvaja*, *Kalderasha* (*Caldarari*) and *Churara* (*Ciurari*). Some researcher feel that each *Natsjia* further subdivided into omnilineal and patrilineal descent categories called *Vitsa* - see below. (Lemon 2000)

My research found that Rroma state a sense of belonging to the *Neam* rather than the *Vitsa*. The term *Neam* (Plural: *Neams*) describes the Rroma ethnic sub-groups who traditionally identified themselves according to their traditional occupations. *Neam* means in an approximate translation Family and some of them are quite closely knit and membership to some of them is quite strictly protected. The *Neam* organisation resemble a mixture between the cast system in India from where a number of my respondents indicated that the *Neam* system has originated³ and the western style guilds where a particular trade or skill is passed down from generation to generation and the 'trade secrets' are guarded against outsiders. Direct comparisons of current Romani social organisation with Indian institutions are however more an indication the importance of Indian origins in contemporary Romani education/politics than of actual history (Marushiakova & Popov in Acton ed. 2000).

Today however, some of the *Neams* are pretty loose with some of their members claimed allegiance to some ancestors' past membership as the only linkage between them. As the paragraphs below will show, most of the Rroma researched and observed by me during the

² Rroma who lived for several centuries in Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania and who speak a dialect with Hungarian and/or Romanian influences (Sarau 2000)

³ See interview notes and conversation tapes with MV - Rroma Member of the Romanian Parliament, MI - Rroma Counsellor for the Romanian Government, DC - Rroma Researcher 'Avem Amentza' and FC-King of the Rroma

field research do not claim a particular *Neam* membership or if they do, they do it symbolically without actually practising the specific skill that once defined the respective *Neam* and without showing deference to that particular *Neam's Bulibasha*. The respondents interviewed from the Modern Roma segment, particularly those claiming *Vatrashi* descent even showed a tendency to distance themselves from the traditional *Neam* structures (T24, W23, W16, W20, W27 interviews) and in a couple of cases they even mocked the claim of some of the current *Bulibasha* to have their allegiance (W21, W27, W26 interviews). In view of the importance of this aspect, my description of the various aspects making up the Roma ways of life will begin with an exploration of this term (see below).

The Gypsy ways of life are enormously varied from *Neam* to *Neam* and from individual to individual. The differing historical experiences of various groups, their encounters, stopping places, routes travelled, the intensity of their contacts with the outside world, itself constantly changing, have given rise to a variety of cultural and social characteristics. Public misunderstanding of Gypsies and even research seeking to establish constancy and uniformity where in fact there is only change and variety, have contributed to erroneous images of the Gypsy Identity (Liégeois 1998).

An important characteristic with defining role in the Gypsy ways of life and perhaps one most traditionally associated with 'being Gypsy' is the life-style understood in the context of our research as the adoption of a nomadic or settled way of living (Cherata 1944, Chelcea 1997). Widely regarded as the core element of Gypsy identity, nomadism understood here as the practice of travelling long distances in order to secure sources of income is not embraced by the entire indeed not even by the majority of the Roma community in Romania. The concept of nomadism is however much more complex than the brief definition above and the following paragraphs will seek to clarify this concept in the context of the Roma community (Okely 1982).

One of the clearest ethnic characteristics distinguishing an ethnic group from the majority population indeed from other ethnic groups is naturally the language, in the case of the Roma community, the Romany language (Sarau 2000, Fraser 1992, Feys 1997). In addition to being a very effective mechanism for the preservation of the respective culture, the language also has the role of acting as barrier against the penetration of exogenous physical or cultural elements in the

respective community. By contrast, the language of the majority population used often as *Lingua Franca* between the majority population and the respective ethnic group or groups can act as a channel for dissemination of an ethnic group's specific values to the rest of the population or indeed to other ethnic groups (Zamfir & Zamfir 1993).

An equally significant characteristic of ethnic groups in general and of the Gypsy community in particular consists of the specific values and norms held in high esteem by the members of the respective community. This collection of values and concepts is generally understood by the members of the ethnic group and perceived collectively as central to the functioning of the respective society. In particular they govern individual's attitudes towards life, towards addressing certain situations and towards his or her own community. Importantly, these norms occasionally change with the technological and socio-economical factors affecting the respective community. As such, some of the component concepts retain their value whilst others fade out and lose their relevance to contemporary living.

Another important characteristic of the Gypsy community identified by me and by the authors cited above as central in deciding the individuals' position along the ethnic spectrum is the preference manifested towards intra-ethnic marriages as opposed to the inter-ethnic marriages. Traditionally perceived as a means of preserving the groups' collection of specific norms and values, the high importance attached to marriage within the same ethnic group or sub-ethnic group is also regarded by sociologists (Zamfir & Zamfir 1993) as an effective collective defensive mechanism employed for the protection of the groups from exogenous influences, a key factor in classic accounts of ethnicity (Gordon 1964).

Neams

Traditionally, an important element of Gypsy distinctiveness relied on the means of securing an income through traditional occupations adopted historically by the various *Neams*. The *Neams* were forms of societal organisation centred on a particular occupation in which the members of the respective *Neam* would specialise. These forms of organisation were traditionally similar to the Western style trade associations or guilds and the *Neam*'s members were very protective of their skills and markets. Among them, the *Caldarari* (coppersmiths - cauldron makers), the *Gabors* (Tinsmiths - rain gutters makers), the *Argintari* (Silversmiths – jewellers) etc. *Neam*

structures crystallised to such an extent that its members often describe themselves as members of the respective *Neam* firstly and only secondly as Gypsies e.g. they see themselves as being *Gabors* before being Gypsy (T04, T05, T06 and T12 interviews). Inversely however, some occupational terms can transcend ethnic/dialect boundaries e.g. *Musicians* which could be *Ursari*, *Matasari*, *Vatrashi*, etc. (Acton 1985). Even in cases where the respective *Neam* member no longer practised that traditional skill, he continued to associate himself with their *Neam* (W30 interview).

Gypsy traditional societies are built around an intricate pattern of family networks. Some of these network patterns are valid across the community and visible (see below) whilst other vary from group to group thus are less noticeable. Today, some of the *Neams* are pretty loose, their members claiming allegiance to some ancestors' past membership without actually practising the respective occupation that once attracted the *Neam*'s name. Most of the Gypsies I have encountered during my field research regard their *Neam* membership symbolically. The *Neams* have distinct traditions and customs sometimes even different dialects but they recognise each other right to belong to the Gypsy/Roma family provided certain *Neam* specific values (see below under 'Norms and values') are respected and adhered to.

Many Modern Roma I have interviewed claim to belong to the *Vatrashi Neam*, i.e. descent from the first Gypsy slaves forcibly settled on the Crown, Monasteries' or *Boyars*' estates around the beginning of the 14th Century⁴. When asked, the Modern Gypsies usually describe themselves as either *Vatrashi*, *Florari*, *Lautari*, *Fierari* or simply as not belonging to any particular *Neam*. During my observation and interviewing, I noted the tendency of the activist Roma and those aspiring to positions within the Roma NGO sector to associate themselves with the *Vatrashi Neam*. By contrast, the Modern Roma involved in commercial or professional activities tend to described themselves as having ancestors belonging to a *Neam* with specific skills such as the *Florari* (flowers growers and sellers), the *Lautari* (the musicians), the *Fierari* (the blacksmiths) or even some traditionally nomadic *Neams* such as the *Argintari* (the silversmiths) or the *Ursari* (the circus people). I believe the reasons for this clear pattern of claiming distinct lineage lies with the perceived potential to be derived from the available options. It is plausible that the activist Roma and aspiring Roma politicians might derive inspiration and concrete benefits in their activities from associating themselves with the first forcibly settled Gypsies and their history. By claiming

⁴ In the Vlach language, from which the modern Romanian evolved, *Vatra* means *Home*

direct lineage from the *Vatrashi*, the present day Roma might seek to consciously or instinctively explain (justify) the differences between their lifestyles and of those whom they aim to represent.

Similarly, the business and professional Modern Roma might derive equal inspiration and moral support from the assertion of a collective link to a historically successful and entrepreneurial ancestry. My interviews revealed that the Gypsies in general believe in the values of genetic inheritance and cross-generational passing of skills and knowledge. For example, a successful *Lautari* Roma would be regarded as genetically gifted and a having as head start to an *Argintari* who would contemplate taking up violin playing. I suggest that these distinct patterns of lineage assertion can be both introverted (aiming at seeking inner strength and inspiration from a real or imaginary descent) or extroverted (aiming at persuading the others of the legitimacy of their claim to a profession excellence). These are however summary reflections based on direct observation which can only be confirmed by specific research.

Though Lemon (2000) feels that the *Neams* are subdivisions of *Vitsa*, Fraser argues that each *Neam* subdivides into *Vitsa* (Branches) identifying the geographical area where that particular *Neam* is based e.g. the *Caldarari of Sibiu* though some of these are also referred to as *Rasa* (Fraser, 1992). The *Vitsa* are further subdivided into *Familia* which consists in effect of extended families, the elderly, the sons, their wives and their children and as such members of the *Vitsa* do regard themselves as family or blood related. Several *Familia* travelling or living in close proximity are called *Shatra* or *Kompania* and the *Familia* making up a *Shatra* do not have to be necessarily blood related and *Kompania* can transcend *Vitsa* boundaries. Each *Shatra* is led by a *Bulibasha*, a man with a position of authority derived from his expertise in a particular field of activity or from his well being comparative to the members of the rest of the *Shatra*. The *Bulibasha* not only acts as the leader and the figure head in the *Shatra* but it also acts as buffer or negotiator between the *Shatra* and the *Gadje* world and between the *Shatra* members⁵.

Whilst *Familia* are consisting of blood relatives and is in effect the extended family unit, the *Shatra* is the smallest political unit and its members can make decision in moral, social, political

⁵ Acton (19185) thinks that the terms *Bulibasha* is of Turkish origin and that it has passed into Romanian where it gets attached to various types of intermediary leadership recognised by non-Gypsies. The term can also carry meanings close to ‘ambassador’ and ‘plenipotentiary’. Even in Romania it has an ambiguous relationship to terms indicating internal power or authority or status such as *baro*, *shero* or *puro*.

and economic issues (Fraser 1992, Lemon 2000). Decisions taken at *Shatra* level transcend *Familia* boundaries and take priority over *Familia* and *Neam* issues with the former being too small in status to challenge *Shatra* decisions whilst the latter is being perceived as too remote from day to day issues faced by the *Shatra* thus irrelevant.

Though not related by blood, members of the same *Vitsa* are regarding each other as ‘relatives’ and are expected to assist each other in time of need; indeed the success of certain *Neams* can often be traced to the degrees of closeness and mutual support between their members, a concept similar to Social Capital. Members of the same *Vitsa* have ritual obligations, being obliged to attend other member’s weddings, *Crisses* and funerals (Achim 1998, Fraser 1992).

Among most of the Gypsies I have met and interviewed during my research, the demarcation line between being a ‘real Gypsy’ and a ‘*Castaliu*’ (pejorative term describing a Gypsy who lost his/her traditional ethnic practices and whose only link with the Gypsy-ness relies in his/her racial features) lies not so much with the life style the respective individuals have adopted, or their *Neam* membership, their dress style, occupation or even degree of fluency in the Romany language (also Lemon 2000). What seem to mostly differentiate the Rroma between Traditional Gypsies and Modern Rroma is the set of traditional Gypsy values, customs and traditions inherited from time immemorial and still observed by some of the community members. One would be tempted to place these collective symbols on a level par with other denominators of Gypsy ethnicity explored in the pages above, indeed along with language and dress style or life style they are part and parcel of ‘being a Gypsy’. The difference is that whilst collectively all the Gypsies I have interviewed appear to be flexible on speaking the Romany language or wearing traditional clothes, they are unanimously in agreement that what determines the extent of one individual’s ‘Gypsiness’ is the degree to which he or she upholds the collection of Gypsy customs and traditions. Some of these traditions were already touched upon previously in this text (see marriage related customs, *Neams* membership, tendency to treasuries gold, high value attached to animals especially to the horse, *Criss*, etc.) and the following paragraphs will seek to bring several others to light. Often, ideology of who is a ‘real Gypsy’ depends partly on the exigencies of the situation being negotiated, and crucially on the expectations of interlocutors (Acton 1985, Bobu 2002).

Decisions taken at *Vitsa* or *Shatra* level can and occasionally are challenged by individual members of *Familia* and in such cases a *Criss* (Trial: see Appendix – Glossary of terms) is called to arbitrate the matter; the decisions of the *Criss* being final and indisputable. The elders taking part in the *Criss* are normally drawn from all the *Familia* of the *Shatra* and unlike the *Gadje* concept of justice seeking trial, here the emphasis is placed upon keeping the peace within the *Shatra*, preserving *Shatra*'s unity and preventing authorities to get involved in *Shatra*'s affairs.

Researcher: How about the trials, do they play a role in Gypsy laws?

Interviewee: Yes the trials are another important one, it was after our trials that the modern society implemented the judges, the accuser, lawyers and so forth. When we organise a trial we do it properly. If there is a possibility that we are talking about a crime, then the judges reach an understanding so that the situation is not made worse. I as a judge sometimes apply my flexibility and give more to somebody who is poorer and take from somebody who has enough. And I say that he is right and he is right too and all this to make peace.

R And what are these people called?

I They are called Crisinitori, this means judges, Criss means trial.

(W03 interview, Bulibasha and Crissinitor of the Argintari Neam, Bucharest-Wallachia)

Traditionally, the *Criss* used to be employed specifically to preserve peace and unity and in some cases where a conflict cannot be addressed by a mutually agreeable solution, *Criss* has within its powers to institute its capital punishment e.g. expelling a member or his entire family from the *Vitsa* or *Shatra*. Such rulings attract not only the physical expropriation of the individuals or their respective *Familia* but it attract the opprobrium of generations to come.

Though I have heard very often of this punishment as the ultimate deterrent against unsocial behaviour within the *Vitsa* or even *Neam*, I have never encountered anybody who would be prepared to openly admit that either them or any of their distant relatives were ever expelled from the *Neam*. One can only speculate that possibly, some of the current Rroma who claim *Vatrashi* descent or who simply do not state a *Neam* affiliation might have been in their families' past members of other *Neams* who for a variety of reasons transited to the *Vatrashi Neam* or to the non-*Neam* specific group via this punishment route.

Today, the institution of *Criss*⁶ as one of the pillars of Gypsy traditional society is being increasingly eroded by the growing interaction of the Gypsies with the *Gadje* world by the

⁶ See also 'The Kris' a recent discussion by Acton of variations between *baro*-based power systems and *puro*-based authority systems. Acton argues that only the former have the Kris, and tribunals in *puro*-based systems are not called Kris. But the totemic nature of the Kris in representations of Romanian Roma ensures that the

reduced need to keep the *Gadje* out of the Gypsy affairs. Senior members of the Traditional Gypsy community have repeatedly lamented the diminishing role of the *Criss* in contemporary Rroma environment (W03, W05, W06, W09 interviews).

The names under which Gypsies *Neams* are grouped are in themselves a sign of diversity. Scores of names exist describing the groups and sub-groups each with its own claim to uniqueness. I reproduce below a list of the *Neams* and names put forward as self-appellation by Romanian Rroma during a 1993 research conducted by the University of Bucharest - Faculty of Social Assistance and coordinated by Elena Zamfir and Cătălin Zamfir. (See Appendix – Glossary of Terms for generic description of these terms)

1. Rroma (non differentiated on *Neams*)
2. *Vatrashi*
3. *Caldarari*
4. *Rudari*
5. *Spoitori*
6. *Matasari*
7. *Ursari*
8. *Caramidari*
9. *Gabori*
10. *Lautari*
11. *Florari*
12. *Ciubotari*
13. *Argintari*
14. *Pieptanari*
15. *Corturari – Nomadic*
16. *Laiesi*
17. *Cocalari*
18. *Tismanari*
19. *Fulgari*
20. *Zlatari*
21. *Cositorari*
22. *Racari*
23. *Bidineri*
24. *Geambasi*
25. *Ciurari*
26. Romanians
27. Hungarians
28. Turks/Tartars

(Zamfir & Zamfir 1993)

term is expanded to cover all sorts of decision-making and that to some extent this happens among ‘Vlach’ Roma in other countries too.

In addition to this list, my own research identified, observed and interviewed members of other *Neams* such the *Fierari* (Blacksmiths), *Boldeni* (or *Florari*), *Zavragii*, *Castalii*. It is difficult to ascertain with precision whether these are *Neams* within their own right or varying regional variations of already mentioned ones. No *Neam* however can be understood in isolation, as they exist and survive in continuous cooperation and/or competition with each other forming thus an extensive network of individuals bound together by their collective acceptance of commonly held values and cultural or ethnic components.

Finally, I believe that an important element of a community's ethnic distinctiveness is the sum of collective folkloric traditions. In the process of historical evolution of a particular society, communities developed sets of customs connected to the important stages in life and are often distinctly gender specific. In the case of the Rroma such cultural traditions are most vividly expressed in the specific dress code assigned to community members of both sexes and various ages (Achim 1998, Liégeois 1998). Historically, the Gypsy traditional dressing was an important element distinguishing a Gypsy from a *Gadje* and as it will be shown, the Gypsy dress code varies according to the respective *Neam*, gender, age and degree of integration in the wider community. Throughout the next pages, I will expand and provide evidence of these several Ethnic Practices encountered by me and considered by most authors as central to being Gypsy.

Nomadism

Widely regarded as the core element of Gypsy identity, nomadism is understood here as the practice of travelling long distances in order to secure sources of income. However, the concept of nomadism is however much more complex than this brief definition. The term is used to refer to groups who move from place to place, without a year round permanent residence: Bedouins are one example. Traditional anthropological literature identified two types of nomadic lifestyles: pastoralist and hunter-gathering respectively. The extent to which these two types of nomads are dependent on other settled groups varies from group to group but in an ideal type they are completely independent or self-sufficient. (Okely 1982, Acton 1985, Rao ed. 1987)

Other authors distinguished a third type of nomadism, commercial nomadism or peripetecism and concerns specifically the object of my research: the Gypsies. The Gypsies' degree of interdependence with the settled groups does not constitute an element of comparison, as indeed all the nomadic Gypsies, irrespective of their degree of mobility, traditionally enjoy a symbiotic

relationship with the settled community by providing occasional goods and services (Acton 1985, Nemeth 1986, Rao ed. 1987). A distinction between Gypsies and ordinary nomads is that the former travel from place to place in order to sell their goods or services whilst for the latter it is a question of seasonal migration for pastoral/agricultural reasons (Acton 1985, Nemeth 1986, Rao ed. 1987, Fraser 1992).

A distinction regarded by anthropologists as central to defining the nomadic status of the Gypsies is the type of employment taken up by the Gypsies at their point of destination or along their journey. It is argued (Okely 1982) that unlike migrant workers who move from A to B for settled and wage labour jobs, Gypsies operate independently of wage labour. The greatest opportunities for Gypsies lies in those occupations which others are less able or less willing to undertake (Acton 1985). This is also true of migrant workers moving to the industrialised areas but they either take up wage labour employment or operate small fixed business. By contrast Okely argues, the caravan dwelling Gypsy family is both self-employed and actually or potentially mobile with lorry, trailer and minimum overheads. Acton proposes that the crucial role which the Gypsies attribute to nomadism is in fact the economic freedom or the self-employment. 'Economic not geographical freedom is most crucial but geographical freedom and willingness to travel are a consequence of economic freedom and a condition of it' (Acton 1985).

In tandem with the diversity of reasons for travelling, there is also an equal diversity of practices connected to it manifested in the means of transport (from horse to the aeroplane), the frequency of moves (from daily to almost never), the scope of travel (from a few hundred meters to across continents), the practical arrangements for setting up camp and so forth.

However, my research revealed that in Romania only the very poor Gypsies (or those appearing to be poor) still tend to travel with their entire families and more significantly none do it permanently i.e. fully nomadic or without a fixed domicile somewhere in Romania. Throughout my field research I was constantly on the look out for these archetypal nomadic Gypsies, those whose entire families and livelihoods travel with them in the back of their caravans and without a fixed domicile somewhere in the country. Though I have travelled thousands kilometres across all the Romanian provinces, I have never encountered them and none of my interviewees (Traditionals or Moderns) come across any. Whilst I might discount the fact that I have never encountered such fully nomadic Gypsies as a result of pure chance (or lack thereof), I cannot

discount the views of all the respondents, some of them Gypsy Leaders (T01, T02 interviews) who were unanimous in stating that today there are no longer fully nomadic *Shatras* roaming the Romanian provinces without a fixed domicile. This is of course still not a full guarantee that they no longer exist, rather that if they do still exist, their numbers are very small indeed. The list below indicates the *Neams* encountered by me during my research and the extent to which those members of these *Neams* encountered by me were nomadic, semi-nomadic or settled.

1	Rroma (non differentiated on <i>Neams</i>)	Settled
2	<i>Vatrashi</i>	Settled
3	<i>Caldarari</i>	Semi-nomadic: long range
4	<i>Rudari</i>	Semi-nomadic: long range
5	<i>Spoitori</i>	Semi-nomadic: long range
6	<i>Matasari</i>	No experience
7	<i>Ursari</i>	Settled
8	<i>Caramidari</i>	Semi-nomadic: long range
9	<i>Gabori</i>	Semi-nomadic: short range
10	<i>Lautari</i>	Settled
11	<i>Florari</i>	Settled
12	<i>Ciubotari</i>	Settled
13	<i>Argintari</i>	Semi-nomadic: short range
14	<i>Pieptanari</i>	Settled
15	<i>Corturari – Nomadic</i>	Semi-nomadic: long range
16	<i>Laiesi</i>	No experience
17	<i>Cocalari</i>	No experience
18	<i>Tismanari</i>	No experience
19	<i>Fulgari</i>	No experience
20	<i>Zlatari</i>	No experience
21	<i>Cositorari</i>	Semi-nomadic: long range
22	<i>Racari</i>	No experience
23	<i>Bidineri</i>	No experience
24	<i>Geambasi</i>	Settled
25	<i>Ciurari</i>	No experience
26	Romanians	Settled
27	Hungarians	Settled
28	Turks/Tartars	Settled
29	Fierari	No experience
30	Boldeni	Settled
31	Zavragii	Settled
32	Castalii	Settled

In Romania, the combination between a nomadic lifestyle during the warm months of the year and sedentary living during the cold winter months adopted by the Gypsies is indeed not a modern phenomenon *per se*. As discussed in more detail in Introduction Chapter, historical evidence suggests that Gypsies were living in settled conditions (be they enforced or voluntarily) on the

Boyars domains as early as 1385. In a donation act from the Wallachia's *Voievod* Dan I to the Vodita Monastery, the Voievod granted the monastery lands and villages including a village of 40 families of Gypsies.⁷

Achim too suggests that the Gypsy Nomadism in the Romanian Principalities should not be taken in the strict sense of the word. The Gypsies we are referring to as Nomads were spending the winter on the *Boyars'* estates and the summer roaming throughout the country on well determined routes. Furthermore, the *Rudari* were spending the entire year in fixed locations on river banks where they were practising their occupation: gold prospecting. The purely and strictly nomadic lifestyle was therefore adopted from early times only by a relatively small part of the Gypsy community and for the rest, the sedentarisation process began in effect very early as a natural process. Achim further adds that in 1839, when Wallachia undertook a census of its Gypsies, most of them were settled in villages and inhabited houses being assimilated in with the agricultural workers of the wider Romanian community (Achim 1989 quoting from the *Analele Parlamentare ale Romaniei*, 25 Vol. Bucharest 1890-1915). Whilst it is plausible to expect that a certain degree of generalisation might have been applied by the Romanian authorities, it is reasonable to conclude that a sizeable proportion of the Romanian Gypsies were living at the time in permanent settlements.

It would be very difficult therefore to devise a precise formula by which an individual Gypsy or his family can be classified as nomadic, semi-nomadic or settled. To complicate the matter further, the Gypsies themselves are not unanimous in describing who is and who is not nomadic. Some Roma I have encountered regarded themselves as Traditional semi-nomadic Gypsies (T1, T2 and T3 interviews in the town of Sibiu -Transylvania) despite having a brick house equipped with all modern conveniences and travelling only 'on business'.⁸

'Researcher: if somebody were to ask you what is the difference between you and Romanians who live across the road from you what would you say?

T3: Well we are Gypsies and they are Romanians...

R: OK so what is different about you two then?

⁷ Documenta Romaniae Historica, Wallachia, I Bucharest, 1966, Academia Romana

⁸ Despite being interviewed by their caravans, some of my respondents appeared offended when I suggested they were Nomads whilst the King of the Gypsies appeared equally offended when, interviewing him in his marble-clad villa in Transylvania, I suggested he is a Settled Gypsy.

T3: They are Gadge, they are settled people you see, all the Gadge, whether they are Romanians or Hungarians are Gadge, to us it doesn't matter, they is no Gypsies like us.

R: But if they want to become Gypsies do you think they can?

T3: ...no, no, no somebody else asked me this question, they can't because they live in house whereas we are Gypsies and can always move on.

R: But you live in house like them, even bigger, it would be as difficult for you to sell your house as it would be more them, wouldn't it?

T3: You don't understand me my friend, we are Gypsies, we have it in our blood, for us the road is already there, maybe tomorrow maybe next year, maybe next generation, but they are from here we Gypsies just live here.

(T3 interview, Sibiu, May 2003)

Like many other aspects of the Rroma lifestyle, the habitation criterion is described by a wide variety of styles, choices, sizes or combinations thereof. For the purpose of generating a sense of understanding rather than providing a clear definition, I decided to employ a combination of two methods; the self appellation method as suggested to be by the respondents during the interview and the descriptive method of their lifestyle or habitation arrangements as observed by me in the field. Recognising that neither the self-appellation nor the description methods are likely to bring crystal like clarity in the categorization of the nomadic or settled Rroma, I decided to refer to them as they have preferred to be seen whilst describing their background in as much detail as possible, encouraging thus the readers to make up their own mind whether the respective individual would fit in one or other category.

Transportation

The means of transportation for the semi-nomadic Gypsies also varies from *Neam* to *Neam* and from *Shatra* to *Shatra*. Most of the semi-nomadic Gypsies I encountered travelled in horse-drawn caravans, usually a family to each caravan. Each *Shatra* is traditionally made up of three to four caravans though I encountered groups of up to twenty caravans in Wallachia near the town of Alexandria where they had gathered to celebrate with relatives from a nearby village the annual Easter festival. During another interview I was told by the interviewee (W14 – near Titu - Wallachia) that he once came across a *Shatra* made up of up to fifty caravans.

The contemporary Gypsy caravans are no longer the archetypal Gypsy wooden caravans with a tin chimney piercing the roof and elaborately painted panels. Indeed, the only place where I actually saw such an archetypal Gypsy wooden caravan was back in Bristol when visiting the local

museum with my daughter, where an exquisite example is preserved including its cast iron cooking stove complete with copper cooking utensils and bunk bed.

Most caravans I encountered were very basic with hoods made up of plastic sheets or impermeable canvas. Utensils and accessories were hanging on the outside of the caravan and to preserve the horses' strength, only the children and the elderly were allowed to sit in it whilst the caravan was in motion. Journeys undertaken by such groups are medium to long distance stretching often to 600 km (Figure III.2).



Figure III.1 Caravan belonging to nomadic Gypsies observed in Wallachia near Romania's border with Bulgaria. Note the dog travelling on top of the caravan, a rather unusual arrangement as the dog normally walk freely along the road.

Caravans are pulled traditionally by one or two horses though I was told (W8, W9 interviews) that due to the rising prices of the horses, fewer and fewer families can afford two horse caravans. In turn this means that their caravans must be smaller reducing their travel range on account of less room for provisions, goods and raw materials. The number of family members that can travel in a smaller one-horse caravan is also significantly smaller though I encountered families of seven (two adults and five children) travelling in one-horse caravans.

'Before [he means during communism] it was better, you know, you had a job in the forest for a man [he means a Romanian farmer asked him to get him fire wood for the winter; the job involved cutting down a tree in the forest, chopping it into logs and delivering it into the farmer's yard – usually, an illegal practice which throughout the decades has led to the wide spread deforestation] you went to that or the other one: look I need your horse for a day I'll buy you a few drinks, and that was it. Now nobody wants to lend their horses anymore and if they do, they ask for the moon in the sky for it'

(W10 interview, Targu Bujor - Wallachia)

Inside the caravans, there is usually a wooden platform two or three feet above the caravan's floor. This platform is covered sacks filled with straw or wool on top of which there is a rug.



Figure III.2 Caravans owned by a family of *Rudari* Gypsies observed and interviewed in Wallachia. Note the suspended bed platform underneath which children travel during the day.

During the day and whilst in motion, the platform acts as a divan on which the children and the elderly rest in the shade. During the night, the platform becomes a communal family bed on which the family members sleep transversally. When it is cold or rainy, the men or the man and the adults always sleep at each end of the platform respectively at the entrance and the exit of the caravan and in summer, the men or the adults sleep on the floor on rugs (Figure III.3)

Underneath the platform inside the caravan, there is a space traditionally used as storage area. When the family travels with caravans and tents, the area underneath the divan is used to store the elements of the tent structure such as the canvas sheet and the wooden poles. Once the tents are erected, the space under the divan acts as either a bunk bed or storage area.

A more modern alternative to the caravan based travel for the semi-nomadic Gypsies is a combination of long distance travel using hired lorries for the relocation of tents and tools, combined with short distance, local pedestrian travel for work. Whilst in Transylvania, I have located and interviewed a group of semi-nomadic *Caldarari* Gypsies originally from South-Eastern Wallachia (approximately 800km away) whose annual pattern of circular migration involved hiring a lorry for large segments of the journey (T8, T9 and T10 interviews). Their annual journey was undertaken in stages planned according to the forecasted demand for their services along the way to Northern Transylvania and back to Eastern Wallachia. Each stop involved erecting the tents, setting camp, reporting to the local town hall and police, re-establishing links with locals and supply centres, offering their merchandises: copper cauldrons



Figure III.3 *Caldarari* Gypsies selling a copper still for home distillation of plum brandy at a car boot sale in Wallachia.

and copper stills for the (usually illegal) distillation of plum brandy (Figure III.4). Once the local market was saturated and no further demand could be expected, the *Shatra* packed up, contacted the lorry driver and awaited embarkation at the agreed collection point from whence they would be transferred to the next destination point.

Another type of Gypsy semi-nomadism I encountered was the individual man or small family who reached their specific markets by using the available means of public transportation. The Gypsies I have encountered of this type were mostly the *Argintari* and the *Gabors* who often travelled alone or accompanied only by their immediate family members. The *Argintari* in particular travelled alone by train and bus keeping thus their travel costs to a minimum and often set up their

‘workshop’ by the side of busy public roads, next to supermarkets, bus stations or village fetes (Figure III.5).



Figure III.4: Semi-nomadic *Argintari* Gypsy at work whilst the customer is observing the process.

These individual semi-nomads normally hire rooms for the duration of the summer in a local peasant's home or simply sleep under the summer sky. Their journeys last shorter and they normally rejoin their families after spells of one to two weeks. They return to their main bases to replenish their provisions and move on again, this time to a different destination. Travelling individually or in small groups, they are limited to the amount of provisions they can carry using public transport.

This pattern was explained to me in detail by an *Argintari* Gypsy (W13 interview) in Alexandria - Wallachia. He also showed me the tools of this trade, a wooden box the size of a shoe box, containing various hand made instruments. He proudly explained that his father and his grandfather before that used to earn a living with those tools but that his skills and way of life were likely to die with him as neither his son nor his daughter were interested in learning his trade. His son was a student at the faculty of Social Studies at the University of Bucharest, studying for a Bachelor Degree and working as a volunteer and activist for a Roma Development NGO in Bucharest. Interviewed later, his son explained (W12 interview) that he still saw himself as a Traditional Roma but certainly not a semi-nomadic one as he no longer travelled with his father around the villages as he used to do as a child.

Gabors too, traditionally specialise in ambulant selling and favour regional migration in search of new markets to sell their products. Traditionally the *Gabors* would sell either their services, as welders of roof rain gutters or as ambulant sellers of various household items such as rugs, clocks, electric equipment, cutlery sets, kitchenware et cetera. The *Gabors* are according to my observations arguably the most traditional *Neam* of the Roma community (from the point of view of speaking Romany, wearing traditional Gypsy clothes and observing the traditional Gypsy values and customs) and they guard their trade secrets including their routes fiercely. They are extremely versatile and ingenious in their approach to business and take it as a matter of personal prestige to succeed in business (T4, T5, T6 interviews)⁹ (Figure III.6).



Figure III.5 Gypsy *Gabors* family from Cluj – Transylvania selling kitchen utensils and vacuum cleaners in a boot fair in Bucharest – Wallachia.

post revolution principles of liberal economy and freedom European frontiers initially, then gradually reaching as far as manufactured products to sell back in Romania.

Gabors are among the most traditional of all *Neams* and specialise in small to medium scale street vending and in the manufacturing of rain gutters.

Accommodation

Other than the caravan itself (described above), the traditional accommodation arrangements of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Gypsies is the tent, a construction that evolved perhaps very little in the last hundreds of years and as it will be seen below, one that still occupies a significant role in the traditional Gypsy life style. They are made up of sheets of various sizes and shapes of impermeable material shown together into large rectangular shapes. These shapes are held up by long wooden poles fixed directly into the ground and held together by their own weight. The last of these poles is left loose and by propping it against the entrance or removing it acts as a curtain or as a 'door'. The wooden poles are struck circularly into the ground and by increasing or decreasing their angle of inclination, the space left at the top is either made larger or smaller respectively. This space in the 'roof' of the tent acts as a smoke duct during the cold days when cooking is made inside the tent. The Gypsy tents however vary in sizes and fabric and the tents I observed and visited in Transylvania appeared smaller (Figure III.7) than the Gypsy tents I observed in Wallachia (Figure III.8) but they all consisted of one communal living space inhabited by all family members young and old.



Figure III.6: Tents belonging to *Caldarari* nomadic Gypsies in Transylvania. Note the half finished copper

still and a copper sheet in the process of being hammered on a wooden anvil.

Depending on the length of the particular sojourn, communal beds are made up of wooden poles struck directly into the ground and covered with sacks made up of colourful material and filled with leaves, straw or feathers. Alternatively, for shorter stays in one place, the sleeping sacks are placed directly on the floor.



Figure III.7 *Caldarari* Gypsy tent in Branceni - Wallachia

The space inside of the tents I visited were very tidy and whether they had an inside fire or not, they had a very warm family-like atmosphere (Figure III.9). Not counting the periods when one or more of the family members are away from the *Shatra*, the rest of the time of the Roma family is spent in very close proximity to each other. This family intimacy and the rest of the times spent together whilst travelling, contributes I believe, to much of the closeness of the traditional Roma family. Interestingly, even among those Roma who despite their semi-nomadic background have still built themselves small or large houses with many rooms available, most of the day of the family is still being spent in one single room where adults and children eat, sleep or work together.



Figure III.8 Interior of a Caldarari Gypsy tent in Transylvania. The beds consist of make shift wooden structures made of wooden poles hammered into the ground and horizontal tree branches, all layered with rugs and pillows.

Despite owning often large houses with many rooms, these well off Traditional Gypsies families often keep erected tents in their yards or nearby their houses, an indication of the symbolic value attached to the traditional tents and their role in the context of the nomadic life (Figure III.10). On several occasions, in the *Shatras* belonging to semi-nomadic Gypsies I noted that the tents once used for daily living were now used as ‘garages’ for the wagons or summer kitchens which seems to indicate that despite their obvious irrelevance in the context of their settled life-styles the tents were still maintained as a reminder of that returning to a nomadic life-style could always be a possibility (Figure III.10b). The King of the Gypsies too, (T01 interview) and many *Bulibashas* (W1, W2 interviews) maintained tents as a symbol of their ethnicity.

Finally, it is important to mention that my research revealed in addition to nomadism losing its appeal to the wider Rroma community as a potential lifestyle choice, it is also being perceived as increasingly marginal to ‘being a real Gypsy’. My interview topic schedule included a section on the meaning of various Gypsy symbols including questions on what distinguishes Gypsies from *Gadje*.



Figure III.9 Shatra of Caldarari Gypsies in Branceni - Wallachia. Note the tents standing in front of the houses.

Significantly, not only did nomadism not figure prominently among the list of significant elements making up the Gypsy identity but some respondents were actually dismissive of the old nomadic lifestyle (W24, W30, W31, T14, T20, T19 interviews). In other words, even Roma who were admiring and nostalgic of the ‘real Gypsiness’ as a way of life, seldom listed the nomadic lifestyle as a significant factor in determining what is and what is not a ‘real Gypsy’.

Researcher: I would like to know about the Gypsies, what do the Gypsies have in common in your view? How are they different from other nations?

T11: Well I don't know, this is how it has been laid down...

R: OK please tell me, when did you first realise you are a Gypsy?

*T11: Since I started to talk as a child, with other children you see... They used to tell me Oy! you Gypsy, go fu** yourself you Gypsy!*

R: But your Mum and Dad did not tell you anything about being a Gypsy?

T11: Yes of course they did back in the village where I grew up, I thought I was Romanian...

R: But if you had a home, that means you were not ‘Corturari’ (nomadic) right?

T11: No, no, we are Hungarian Gypsies, like those with big hats from around Targu Mures, we are called Gabors, Gypsy Gabors!

R: So you are different then, but are you Gypsy even if you don't travel with your tents?

T11: This is what we are Gypsies! tent or no tent...

R: And how is better: with a tent or with a flat?

T11: It is better to have a home, to stay in peace, in the old days the Gypsies were staying in tents throughout the winter or summer but now...

(T11 interview, Hunedoara, May 2003)

Language

From an outsider's *Gadje* perspective, an important element of the traditional Gypsy way of life could be perceived undoubtedly to be the Romany language but among our respondents, the Romany language appeared to have a varying degree of relevance in reinforcing the individual's Gypsy identity. As in the previous areas of observation, it is impossible from my research to ascertain the exact numbers of Romany speakers within the Romanian Roma population let alone the extent to which these Romany speakers are fluent or not. The following paragraphs will therefore not attempt to shed light on this question, rather they will present the extent to which the respondents making up our sample were fluent or basic in Romany. This will be done in order to familiarise the reader with the multitude of Romany speaking ranges encountered during my field research. Importantly, it will also explore the attitude of the respective interviewees regarding the Romany language in general and the weight attached to it in the context of defining Gypsy ethnic identity.

Though the theory of Gypsy migration from the Indian sub-continent is still disputed ([Okely 1982](#)) linguistic research has revealed that Romany is an Indo-Aryan language originating roughly in the Gujarat region of the Indian sub-continent ([Kogalniceanu 1837](#), [von Wlislocki 1890](#), [Potra 1939](#), [Fraser 1992](#), [Achim 1998](#)). It is proposed that throughout centuries of Roma migration, the once unitary language has suffered innumerable influences and in its present modern form, bears witness to the passage of the Gypsies through several Asian and Middle Eastern countries ([Fraser 1992](#), [Achim 1998](#), [Sarau 2000](#)). Furthermore, due to the extended periods of times intervened between the several Roma migrations to Europe and the subsequent separations of many of the tribes, their dialects became more and more distinct from each other.

Finally and perhaps most significantly, Romany was and still is the language spoken by a predominantly unlettered people thus it was only transferred from generation to generation phonetically. Inevitably, the teaching and learning of a language phonetically alone is bound to result in discrepancies between regions and even between various *Neams*. Today we can no longer speak of a universal Romany language, spoken and understood by Roma the world over;

rather we can distinguish an European Romany, a Persian Romany, Armenian Romany and so forth (Achim 1998)¹⁰.

The Roma of Romania are very diverse from the linguistic point of view too. I expected the Roma of Transylvania to speak a Romany language with strong Romanian and Hungarian influences whilst those of Wallachia would be expected to speak Romany with Romanian and Turkish words. As mentioned previously, one of the principal elements usually regarded as distinguishing the Traditional Gypsies from the Modern Roma is the extent to which they use the Romany language. As such, according to my Social and Ethnic Diversity Model, the archetypal semi-nomadic Gypsy were expected to speak fluently Hungro-Romany or Vlacho-Romany and poorly Romanian.

Using the list of self appellations and *Neam* stated membership compiled by Zamfir & Zamfir and presented at the beginning of the chapter I now propose an approximate description of the extent to which various Roma groups encountered by me spoke Romany. I must underline that in the absence of specific and large scale linguistic research, my list is only a modest attempt to describe my experience of the linguistic differences between the respective groups and a summarisation of the anecdotal evidence collected from Roma formal and informal respondents regarding the fluency in Romany of various Gypsy groups. In the cases where lack of encounters or lack of evidence did not allow me to formulate an opinion I have specified it accordingly.

33 Roma (non differentiated on <i>Neams</i>)	Basic or no Romany spoken
34 <i>Vatrashi</i>	Basic or no Romany spoken
35 <i>Caldarari</i>	Fluent Romany – basic Romanian
36 <i>Rudari</i>	No Romany spoken

¹⁰ Acton (comments 2007) however argues that two of these dialects are not Romani but other Indian-derived languages: ‘Armenian Romani’ probably refers to Lom/Lomavren, which is probably spoken by only a few thousand. “Persian Romani” probably refers to either Luri/Luli (variants of Farsi) or Domari (spoken by up to 2 M “Middle Eastern Gypsies”, but 3-400 years older than Romani) or Zargari (which is perfectly intelligible Balkan Romani). Romani as a language, like Swahili was probably always a convergence of several related dialects, rather than a divergence from one. Some 5 million people speak mutually intelligible dialects with a post-1000 AD Indian grammar as opposed to a maximum of 2 million speakers of “mixed” dialects such as English Romanes, Calo, or Rudari. We should not see the mere presence of loanwords as an indicating a mixed language: all languages have loan-words. The core dialects of Romani are rapidly producing a convergent common Romani on the internet and in trans-national organisations (much as the growth of English literature began to create a common English in the 14-16th centuries). We should also remember the existence of completely or nearly completely non-Romani Gypsy/Traveller languages, such as Gammon or Beash. Beash and Rudari are of course important languages in the Romanian context. Contrary to the belief of many Romani-speaking Roma and Western observers, Beash and Rudari/Ludari are NOT the same.

37 <i>Spoitori</i>	Fluent Romany – Fluent Romanian
38 <i>Matasari</i>	<i>No experience</i>
39 <i>Ursari</i>	Little or no Romany spoken
40 <i>Caramidari</i>	Fluent Romany – Fluent Romanian
41 <i>Gabori</i>	Fluent Romany – Fluent Romanian/Hungarian
42 <i>Lautari</i>	No Romany spoken
43 <i>Florari</i>	Fluent Romany – Fluent Romanian
44 <i>Ciubotari</i>	Basic or no Romany spoken
45 <i>Argintari</i>	Fluent Romany – Fluent Romanian
46 <i>Pieptanari</i>	<i>Unable to formulate an opinion</i>
47 <i>Corturari – Nomadic</i>	Fluent Romany – basic Romanian
48 <i>Laiesi</i>	<i>Unable to formulate an opinion</i>
49 <i>Cocalari</i>	<i>Unable to formulate an opinion</i>
50 <i>Tismanari</i>	<i>Unable to formulate an opinion</i>
51 <i>Fulgari</i>	Basic Romany - fluent Romanian
52 <i>Zlatari</i>	<i>Unable to formulate an opinion</i>
53 <i>Cositorari</i>	Fluent Romany – fluent Romanian
54 <i>Racari</i>	<i>Unable to formulate an opinion</i>
55 <i>Bidineri</i>	<i>Unable to formulate an opinion</i>
56 <i>Geambasi</i>	Basic Romany - fluent Romanian
57 <i>Ciurari</i>	Fluent Romany – basic Romanian
58 Romanians	Claim to speak only Romanian
59 Hungarians	Claim to speak only Hungarian-Poor Romanian
60 Turks/Tartars	Claim to speak only Turkish/Tartar

In addition to the above list¹¹ identified by Zamfir & Zamfir’s research, the *Neams* or the self-appellations identified by my research also vary from the point of view of their degree of fluency in Romany. As such:

29 Fierari	Fluent in Romany – fluent in Romanian
30 Boldeni	See <i>Florari</i>
31 Zavragii	Basic or no Romany – fluent Romanian
32 Castalii	Basic or no Romany – fluent Romanian

Some of the traditional Gypsies I interviewed did not speak Romany at all and spoke instead only Romanian (W14, W11 interviews). Initially I believed that they are reluctant to confirm their knowledge of Romany, a habit resulting from decades of discrimination and persecution. As soon as I was invited to visit their caravans and to share their food however, I had to disregard this

¹¹ I recognised however that this table is somewhat over-generalised. Acton (comments 2007) feels that a further interesting aspect is the extent to which members of these groups who have migrated away from Romanian territory since the 19th century have lost Romanian, rather than Romani, with the exception of the Beash. Some Rudari have reacquired Romani dialects by intermarriage with other groups.

hypothesis. In addition, none of the hundreds of Rroma I encountered during my research appeared to fear persecution on account of their fluency in Romany. If anything, the trend was in the opposite direction; many of the Rroma I have encountered, irrespective of their social economic background and positioning on the Social and Ethnic Diversity Model exaggerated their knowledge of Romany. People I interviewed and observed felt rather embarrassed to admit that they did not speak the language of their forefathers, indeed after initially admitting that they do not speak Romany, some were quick to add that they now study it as a foreign language. Others were at pains to convince me that they are now ‘re-learning it’ as if they used to know it at some point but they have forgotten it and went to great length to justify to me why they did not speak Romany, being apologetic about it (W35, W28, W19 interviews).

Researcher: What does the word Rroma means to you? Please explain to me why in your view you are Rroma?

W27: I am a Rroma because the same way you might have been born in Africa, and your people developed there, and after the colonisation process you still call yourself African, the same way because of the passage through history, sedimentation in Romania of this people who might have been assimilated or not and we cannot deny our origins...

R: What does differentiate you from Romanians, other than the colour of your skin (you mentioned already)

T27: other than the colour of my skin and the human condition, there is nothing between me and the Romanians, the social context differentiate me, the negative connotations that have been built up throughout the time...

R: What language do you speak at home with your family?

T27: My family has not kept the Romany language, only my mother in her family used to speak to her family a bit of Romany, there were hard times...

R: Did she teach you any of it?

T27: No she didn't, as I say those were hard times, as if she didn't have anything better to do then to teach me Romany, as if we didn't have enough problems as it was...I wish now she did but is too late, I learn now English at University...

R: Does your Dad speak Romany?

W27: My dad died long time ago...but he never spoke Romany either...

R: If you I ask you to teach me some Romany, would you teach me?

W27: Of course I would but I can only teach you So mai keres? (How are you?)

R: How about Geannes Romanes? (Do you speak Romany?)

W27: (he laughs)...oh yes I understand that too, but that's about it...

(Interview with W27, Bucharest, March 2003)

One such group of traditional Gipsies was made of up to twenty *Rudari* men, women and children, travelling in Southern Wallachia in three caravans (Figure III.13). I interviewed *Bulibasha* and another man of his group (W11, W14 interview) and observed the *Shatra* getting on with their daily activities over two days. One of the things they unanimously agreed on was

they were *Rudari* and that they were so ‘from father to son’ a Romanian way of saying from time immemorial. They also confirmed adamantly that they do not speak Romany.¹²

‘...we don’t speak Gypsy Sir, it ain’t our language we speak Romanian that’s what we speak that’s what we always spoke, if that’s what we speak what else can I tell you. From father to son, we always spoke Romanian we don’t understand Gypsy, we are not like them you see, we are Rudari. I don’t say that I would not like to speak it but if nobody taught me how can I speak it? They are different and we are different, that’s how it is.’
(W14 interview: *Rudari* Gypsy, Titu – Wallachia)

It is equally possible in my view that the *Rudari* are one of the many Gypsy tribes who under prolonged exposure to the *Gadje* world have gradually lost the reason and the incentive for speaking a separate language. Interestingly, all the *Rudari* people I interviewed gave me different answers as to what their ethnic identity was. Some said Rroma, some said Gypsy, some said even Romanian and Rroma within the same interview (W11 interview). They all however indicated towards a perceived difference between themselves and the ‘other Gypsies’. Whilst I was observing them, I noted that their claim to not speaking Romany was true; neither their children nor their wives spoke to each other in Romany for all the period of my visits totalling over 9 hours of formal interviewing, informal discussions and observation¹³.

Interestingly, speaking ‘proper’ Romany is something that the Modern Rroma themselves openly acknowledge is an attribute of the Traditional Rroma. They admit this with a combined sense of

¹² Subsequent research revealed that the *Rudari* are a traditional Gypsy *Neam* who indeed do not speak Romany. It is suggested (Achim 1998, Zamfir 1993, Pons 1999) that the profound transformations which impacted upon the wider Romanian society in the XIX Century impacted dramatically on the *Rudari* too who were deprived of their main sources of living: gold and coal mining. One theory is that some of the ancestors of the *Rudari* were apparently free Romanian or Turkish men and women who deliberately sold themselves into slavery with a view to saving themselves from starvation and malnutrition by working for regular and long periods of time in the coal mines of western Transylvania and Wallachia (Ionescu 2003). In the middle ages Romanian Principalities, the individuals deprived of freedom such as serfs or slaves were exempt from paying taxes and there is evidence that this encouraged many free born men and women to forfeit their own freedom and voluntarily become slaves.

¹³ Acton (Comments 2007) argues that we are hampered by the lack of studies of *Rudari* language usage in other countries and apart from Papp of Beash, the great majority of observers have assumed that what these groups spoke was “just Romanian.” Papp, however demonstrated that southern Hungarian Beash is a very conservative archaic dialect of Banat Romanian which rigidly excludes all lexical items of Romani origin (which is more than modern Romanian, or come to that, modern English, does). Acton explains that his own conversations with *Rudari* (who have always distinguished themselves from Beash – ‘they are not Rom, we are’) seem to suggest that they do sometimes use a partly Romani-derived Romanian argot. Note also that although Romanian-speaking by English *Rudari* seemed to die out in the 1970s, the present generation speak the English Romani of the group they have married into. This is also true of *Rudari*/*Ludari* in the US. In both cases the numbers are small.

pride and 'looking up to' the cultural purity of their 'real Gypsies' co-ethnics and a sense of embarrassment for not being able to speak it properly themselves. Even those Modern Roma who currently speak Romany admit that their mastery of the language is not up to the standards of the 'Real Gypsies'. Some of the Modern Roma I have interviewed and/or observed explained to me that they wish indeed things were different and that their parents did teach them whilst young.

Finally, another category of Modern Roma from the linguistic point of view is the activist or activist Roma who are now learning back the Romany language from books and audio-tapes at organised courses, same as Romanian men and women would learn a foreign language. Asked why, I have been often told that their reasons for learning back their ancestors lost language is not as much as a means to preserve their culture rather, they candidly admitted that speaking Romany would confer them legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

'When we go in the Shatra, they [the village's formal and informal leaders] often ask us mockingly what sort of Gypsies are we if we don't speak their language. They laugh at us and they call us Castalii. They go, what sort of Gypsy are you lad and how dare you come in here and lecture us, do you think you are smarter than us because your father married a Gadge and moved to town? You can't even speak to your people in your own language get out of here before we let the dogs lose on you. On one hand they admire you for going to university and they are proud of you and all that but then they don't see us like them'
(W20 interview, Bucharest – Wallachia, June 2003)

Some of these Roma activists, spoke to me with a sense of bitterness about their parents who for a variety of reasons refused to teach them Romany. In an interview with one of the two Roma Deputies (Members of the Lower House of the Romanian Parliament) he explained that he wished his father taught him Romany or at least talk to him about his Roma background. He apparently began to learn it all very late as a student and he felt that as a Roma politician, he had a lot of catching up to do (W20 interview). Another one, Director of a Roma Development Agency in Bucharest and the son of a teacher and poet in Romany also explained:

'I cannot believe my father; he wrote poems in Romany, he taught people to speak Romany, he spoke Romany to our mother in the house but when we asked him to teach us he always said why would we need it, we better go and do our homework for school that's what we need not to speak Gypsy! If only he knew how much I would gain from speaking it now'
(W16 interview, Bucharest – Wallachia, June 2003)

Having interviewed some of their parents too, I learned that the reasons for which they decided not to teach their children Romany were two fold. Firstly, the parents sought to protect their children from discrimination and similar negative consequences of their ethnic identity. In an interview with W35 the father of W16, I was explained that at the time of his four sons growing up, W35 balanced the benefits and the disadvantages to be drawn from teaching his children Romany. He eventually concluded that they would stand to lose more than winning from speaking Romany so he decided not to teach them.

Secondly, whilst he felt that language is an important element in the Rroma cultural identity he deliberately withheld the knowledge of Romany from his children thus aiming towards their faster assimilation in the wider Romanian society. I observed therefore on one hand the reactive objective i.e. safeguarding one's children's from possible discrimination, and a proactive objective i.e. encouraging their children faster assimilation within the Romanian society. I was later to encounter other examples similar where parents had a similar approach to their children's learning of Romany (W03 and T15 interview).

The perception of potential discrimination as a result of speaking Romany does not come however solely from parents. It can also originate from children themselves as some children identify early in their development stages potential sources of discrimination such as being seen playing with other Rroma children, being known to live in a predominantly Rroma district, or wearing Gypsy clothes. Being heard by the rest of the colleagues as speaking Romany is occasionally perceived as a potential source of discrimination and some children may tend to avoid speaking it to their parents in front of other children (W23 interview). In schools where several Modern Rroma children have learned to speak Romany as a foreign language, they avoid speaking Romany among themselves for fear of being marginalised by other children and maybe by teaching staff (W26 interview with the Romany teacher in Ferentari - Bucharest).

It could therefore be the case that the perceived danger of potential discrimination alone, must have been sufficiently powerful to deter the parents from teaching their children to speak Romany and the children who already learned it to speak it among themselves.

Dress Style

The common perception is that Gypsies are clearly distinguishable due to their traditional colourful costumes. Gypsy women in particular are perceived as wearing long colourful skirts covered by colourful aprons with bright red shirts and silk headscarves covering long dark pleated hair. The traditionally dressed Gypsy men too are expected to wear black felt trousers, wide leather belts and felt jacket with a leather waistcoat with wide black hats (Figure III.11).



Figure III.10 Gabor Gypsies (father and son) in Cluj-Transylvania

My research found that such traditional Gypsy costumes can only be encountered among two or three *Neams*. Among them, the *Gabors*, the *Caldarari* and to a lesser extent by some of the *Florari*. This is of course not to say that Gypsy men and women of other *Neams* never wear traditional clothes, rather that they do it far more sporadically and not as a rule. In addition to their colourful skirts, aprons and handkerchiefs, women and girls particularly those of the *Caldarari Neam*, wear traditionally, gold coins and sea shells pleated in their hair and depending on their husbands' or fathers' wealth, they also wear necklaces made up of five to seven gold coins each of them worth in average £70. Occasionally, both Traditional men and women of considerable means have their incisors teeth crowned in gold (Figure III.12).



Figure III.11 *Caldarari* Gypsy mother and daughter, the wife and daughter of the *Bulibasha* of Branceni – Wallachia. Before taking this photograph the *Bulibasha* asked me to wait for several minutes so that he could prepare a gold coins necklace for his daughter too.

It is very important to note that the traditional Gypsy costumes are hand made of natural fabrics such as silk, leather and velvet and which can be very expensive. Whilst these traditionally dressed Gypsies can still be seen today in Romania, their number is however very small and it is mostly the women who wear traditional outfits. It is impossible to account precisely the proportion of the traditionally dressed Gypsies out of the entire Roma population in Romania but out of the hundreds of Gypsies observed during the field research only a small proportion of perhaps 10% were wearing traditional Gypsy clothes.

The mainly nomadic Gypsies (*Rudari* and *Caldarari*) whom I have encountered and interviewed were from both ends of the socio-economic spectrum and whilst some displayed indeed some of the features outlined above, most of them were extremely poorly dressed. Their appearance was radically different from the image of the traditional Gypsy. Some of them (*Rudari* especially) were dressed almost in rags or with discarded European style clothes. Instead of the traditional Gypsy black hats, the men were walking bareheaded (once a shameful thing to do) and the once proud belts studded with silver buttons were now replaced by pieces of string holding together old suit trousers made of synthetic fabric. The trousers and the shirts had wide holes in them and occasionally they showed signs of previous repairs. The jackets or pullovers were ill fitting and some were barefoot (W11, W14, W15 Interviews).

The women in this group were not wearing traditional Gypsy clothes either and appeared as destitute as their men folk. The traditionally bright coloured silk dresses had been replaced by synthetic skirts of various lengths and some even wore trousers (once an unacceptable item of clothing for a Gypsy woman). The traditional Gypsy apron, a symbol of the Gypsy woman's

modesty and an item without which no respectful Gypsy woman or girl after the age of puberty would be seen in public was being worn by only a handful of women. Their tops were of cheap mass-produced fabric of a variety of styles, colours and patterns. Some of the women and the children were walking barefoot along the road or wearing only socks. The most destitute looking were the children, who were wearing badly damaged clothes. (Figure III.13).



Figure III.12 Family of semi-nomadic *Rudari* Gypsies. Note that some of the women do not wear shoes rather only socks and the scrap metal collected at the back of the caravan.

In contrast to the Traditional Gypsies, the clothing patterns of the Modern Roma are very similar to those of the *Gadje* society. Throughout my field research I have sought to identify certain distinctions between the way Roma dress and the way the Romanians do but I have not been able to identify any. Like their fellow Romanian citizens, the Modern Gypsy men and women wear Western inspired clothes in various styles, conditions and quality. In this respect, the wider Romanian society itself does not differ significantly in the way it is dressed from the rest of the Europe. Whilst subtle differences might be notable to the trained eye, these differences are attributable in my view not so much to ethnic or geographical demarcations. Whether Roma, German or Turkish, the members of various ethnic groups of Romania cannot be distinguished in their modern clothes. Irrespective of their membership to various ethnic communities, today's Romanian citizens wear virtually the same type of clothes.

The young men and women tend to wear modern Western style clothes such as denim or outdoors items manufactured by or imitating those manufactured by established brands. Many of them wear local versions of popular brand names locally manufactured in Romania or cheaper versions imported from Turkey. The footwear used by the Modern Roma is indistinguishable

from those of the *Gadje* too. Many wear trainers bearing famous logos of Western firms and it is difficult to say how many of them are original items and how many are counterfeited copies.

Having attended several Roma social events (Cluj - Transylvania, Dej - Transylvania, Bucharest - Wallachia, Branceni - Wallachia, Alexandria - Wallachia)¹⁴ I noted that the Roma young people like the young people the world over tend to dress up for these events. The standard of dressing on these occasions was notably higher than average with both men and women wearing smarter, newer and generally better quality items of clothing. On such social occasions attended by both Romanians and Roma I could not distinguish any difference between the two groups. The places where one could observe and compare the specific dressing patterns of Roma and Romanian women and men were the markets in the larger towns where members of various ethnic communities would mingle (Figure III.14).

One of the most significant feature of the Modern Roma dressing patterns however is the fact the Modern Roma women do wear trousers¹⁵, unlike the Traditional Roma women for whom this would be inconceivable though I did observe exceptions (see above paragraph on *Rudari*). The trousers worn are jeans or lounge trousers made of various fabrics and colours and again, I have been unable to trace a distinct Roma pattern. Another significant feature of the contemporary Roma men and women dressing patterns is the headgear; as mentioned above, headgear for Traditional men and women is believed to be very important. It is believed to be unusual for a traditional Gypsy man from adolescence upwards to be seen without a hat and for a traditional Gypsy woman past the puberty age to be seen without a headscarf. By contrast, Modern Roma men and women appear to have dispensed with the headgear altogether, particularly when interacting with *Gadje*. The only headgear I noted to be worn by Modern Roma were baseball caps with various Western logos for men and women and of course a variety of winter hats worn by both sexes during the cold season. I asked both men and women of their view on wearing traditional headgear and the general impression was that the Modern Roma perceived wearing of traditional headgear as denoting backwardness.

¹⁴ See field notes and photographs from: Cluj - Transylvania Folk Festival, Dej - evening out with Roma, Bucharest - T12 birthday party and Branceni - 'Pigs Slaughtering' Easter *Shatra* Festival March to May 2003

¹⁵ See field notes and photographs from: Cluj - Transylvania Folk Festival, Dej - evening out with Roma, Bucharest - T12 birthday party, informal discussions with Maria Ionescu – Romanian Government Roma Counsellor

Openly however, it was interesting to note the romantic aura attached to most features of Rroma Traditionalism included an admiration for the ‘classical beauty of the traditional Gypsy costumes’. I have been often pointed out by Rroma activists (W20, W24, W27 interviews), by Rroma officials (T13 interview and Maria Vasilescu preliminary interview), by Rroma politicians (W36 interview) and by Rroma sociologists and historians (Acton and Hancock 2003) ‘the manly appearance of black velvet-hat wearing Gypsy man’ and ‘the feminine beauty of the Gypsy women covered with colourful silk- headscarves’.



Figure III.13 Car-boot fair in Bucharest. Note the easily distinguishable *Gabor* Gypsy woman compared to the Western style clothes of the Modern Rroma men (in blue tracksuit top).

Whilst interviewing Modern Rroma working for a Rroma focussed Human Rights Organisation in Bucharest (Romani Criss) I was introduced to and interviewed one of its members who in his spare time trained to be a clothes designer (W24 interview). His vibrant creations consisted of modern stylisations of the Traditional Gypsy costumes and borrowed heavily from the *Caldarari* and *Gabori* style. Having glanced over his portfolio I noted his clothes shows were set up on the background of traditional *Shatra* decorum including camp fire, cart wheels and Gypsy music. W24 was dreaming to launch his collection on the Western market and promote this way ‘positive aspects of Rroma culture’. Poignantly, only two of his models were Rroma, the rest were Romanians. Even more interesting, I found the fact that once the show over, neither W24 nor his Rroma models were wearing at least one single item that could be described as traditional Gypsy.

As a final point, I have noted a certain degree of ‘Gypsy style revival’ among the Rroma women and particularly among the young, educated and activist Rroma women. It is difficult to establish a cause for such emerging trends but it was noticeable that at various festivals, meetings and at public demonstrations for Rroma related issues, Rroma women who despite not belonging to a

particular Traditional *Neam* were proudly displaying elements of Gypsy traditional style such as traditional skirts, colourful silk blouses and traditional head kerchiefs¹⁶ (Figure III.15). On a particular occasion, whilst in one of the buildings belonging to the University of Bucharest, I noted a young Rroma woman engaged in a discussion with other fellow students and who was dressed as an ultra-traditional *Gabors* Gypsy. The woman, whom I later discussed with, turned out to be a lecturer of mixed Romanian-*Vatrashi* descent and a Rroma activist with a Rroma organisation *Avem Amentza*.



Figure III.14 Group of Modern Rroma wearing traditional Gypsy clothes at a folk festival in Transylvania. I later learned that the skirts were borrowed for the occasion from the local *Gabors* community.

On a different occasion, whilst interviewing the Rroma Member of the Romanian Parliament a Deputy in the Lower House (W36 interview) I noted that although he was a archetypal Modern Rroma and a *Lautari* Gypsy, he was wearing a Traditional Gypsy red silk shirt, something I have not noticed at any of the other *Lautari* Gypsies I have interviewed and observed. I believe these examples are in fact political rather than cultural statements and indicate a revival of the Gypsy ethnic consciousness and an increase in the degree of ethnic assertiveness.

Having interviewed and observed members of various *Neams* located in various geographical and socio-economic positions and wearing different types of clothes I was repeatedly explained that their lifestyles (fully nomadic vs. settled) and their main occupation (traditional vs. modern) would not always allow them to maintain highly elaborate traditional Gypsy clothes. My impression however was that the difference between their appearances and the absence or the presence of traditional Gypsy clothes was in fact a combination of the level of their income and of the degree of significance they attached to wearing traditional Gypsy items of clothing. This view is

¹⁶ See field notes and photographs from: Cluj - Transylvania Folk Festival Cluj – May 2003, and visit

supported by the evidence that some nomadic *Rudari* Gypsies (W11, W14 interviews) and traditional *Argintari* Gypsies (W03, W13 interviews) do not observe a traditional Gypsy dress code whilst some settled *Florari* Gypsies (W32, W33 interviews) do.

My impression was that the further the respective Roma man or woman would be located from the Traditional/Modern border of the Social Diversity Model i.e. the more Modern Roma, the more ‘*Gadje* style clothing’ they would wear. Similarly, the more Traditional Gypsy she or her family would be, the stricter her attitude to clothes would be. For example, when whilst interviewing a member (T16 interview) of the Roma Student Association at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj –Transylvania, I noted that some of his Roma women colleagues were wearing jeans and short skirts and high heels, indeed they were indistinguishably dressed from their fellow Romanian or Hungarian students. A week later, I was invited to visit and visit and two of these students’ homes and interview their families (T6, T5, T7 interviews) about 120 km further North from Cluj in a village called Reteag (See Methodology Chapter: Respondents’ geographical distribution map). I noted that in the presence of their parents, all three girls were wearing skirts not trousers and that while their skirts were still *Gadje* in style, they were nonetheless long down to the ankle.

Marriage

The age and type of marriage varies considerably among the Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma but the Traditional Gypsy wedding still consists of the traditions the Gypsies inherited from their former nomadic life (Cherata, 1997). In addition, there are distinguishable marriage differences within the Traditional Gypsy segment depending on the particular *Neam* the couple belong to. At one end of the spectrum I have encountered evidence of under-age marriage among the *Gabors* and the *Caldarari*. Marriage within these *Neams* takes place at very early stage in the life of the young Roma sometimes as early as 12 or 13 for girls and 15 and 16 for boys (T03, T08, W03 interviews, also Chelcea 1944, Cherata 1997, Gheorghe 1999). Whilst this is in practice illegal in Romania, it is generally regarded as a ‘culturally specific’ and tolerated by the authorities. It is argued (Cherata, 1997, Gheorghe 1999) that this practice is rooted in the early maturity reached by Gypsy children, who growing in relative full liberty and being fully aware of

to ‘Avem Amentza’ Roma Association - Bucharest, March 2003

all the challenges faced by their parents, begin to participate actively to the family and community life from early ages. They also begin to learn their parents' trades and to assist them from early ages (Cherata, 1997).

My research did not provide me with sufficient data to ascertain with accuracy whether these claims are valid or not though during my field research I noted that 'liberty argument' proposed by Cherata should be taken with caution; indeed in my experience only the Gypsy boys are indeed raised in a spirit of freedom. Far from experiencing freedom, the Gypsy girls by contrast are kept under tight supervision very close to their female folk. Indeed one of the reasons cited by Gypsies when seeking to account for reduced levels of education among women and girls is that they are to be protected this way from *Gadje* influence (T02, T03, T04, T06 interview).

Arranging an advantageous marriage for his son or daughter is a very important obligation for a father and he does so with the father of the prospective partner in collaboration with other male members of the family. Negotiations for the forthcoming wedding could be lengthy and public processes with the occasional involvement of other *Neam* members. Fraser (1992) goes far as to suggest that this collective involvement of the community into the arrangements are due to safeguard the very existence of the Gypsy lifestyle. In theory the couple themselves are not supposed to get involved but they have the right to refuse a union (T01 interview with the King of the Gypsies). After the marriage the couple usually lives with the man's family and the young wife's role is often a subservient one to the rest of the male and female members of the household. In effect her duties are to care for the in-laws, her husband and produce and care for children (Achim, 1998).

Several of my respondents from both the Traditional and the Modern quadrants, have indicated their disapproval of early marriages. The Modern Rroma in particular regarded this practice as archaic and counterproductive to the development of the Rroma community (W20, W22, W35 interviews) and indicated that they would discontinue such practice if they could. By contrast, Traditional respondents (T1, T2, T12 interviews) indicated their awareness that early marriage does not always assist the individual's development but were reluctant to change it on the grounds that it could strike at the foundation of their culture. They seemed to perceive early marriage as a fundamental element of their traditional culture and one that is essential for the preservation of their ethnicity.

Among the Traditional Rroma the argument for the preservation of this practice was that if left too late (i.e. over 16), girls would be regarded as old and would lose the best chances of a 'good marriage'. Even if some parents might not necessarily agree with marrying their children young, the rest of the community would uphold the tradition thus leaving the non-conforming ones as outsiders. Individually or in small groups parents would stand very little chance to challenge the established structures of clan hierarchy and law and alter this tradition ¹⁷. Similarly, I had the following discussion with the *Bulibasha* of a *Shatra* in Wallachia:

Researcher: Tell me Bulibasha, what would you say if your daughter's teacher at school gives you very good feedback on her progress and encourages you to keep her in school as long as you can? What if she tells you that she is intelligent and she could be a Doctor?

Bulibasha: I would be proud of her of course but she can't stay study for too long, who would marry her after that, our children marry young you see...

Researcher: Do you think that is a good thing or bad thing?

Bulibasha: Is not a good thing but that's our law, that's our religion, what can we do...

Researcher: But if you say that it is not a good law, why do you keep it?

Bulibasha: I am the Bulibasha, I am their Chief, that's why they chose me to keep the laws, imagine what everybody would say if my own daughter would not marry according to our customs. (W10 interview, Targu-Bujor - Wallachia, May 2003)

An interesting contribution to this discussion is the one made by [Acton, Caffrey & Mundy \(1997\)](#) who argue that it is absolutely 'de rigeur' that a girl should wail at her wedding. If she doesn't it would indicate a wholly deplorable eagerness to get married (the very opposite of demure 'honour'). It would also be highly disrespectful to mother and father if you don't bewail leaving their roof. Acton argues that such highly public and often theatrical wailing does not mean that these girls actually don't want to get married.

¹⁷ As a case in point, shortly after my return from the field research in Transylvania, Romanian and European officials have been horrified by the case of the Romanian Gypsy King's 14 years old daughter who in a lavishly choreographed ceremony married, with her father's blessing but against her own will, the 16 year old son of the King's neighbour. Despite its communality in the Rroma community, the marriage only caused a scandal due to the prominence of the bride's father. Following pressure from the European Union, the Romanian authorities were forced to intervene and annul the marriage contract under the threat of taking the minors into care. The Gypsy King however reacted by declaring that the marriage can be annulled only under the Romanian law and that under the Gypsy law it is still valid and that since the children's parents owned houses next door to each other, the annulment would be virtually impossible to enforce. This case exemplifies how entrenched this tradition is and how difficult would it be for individuals or organisations to challenge it ([The Independent – Alison Mutler, 29 September 2003](#), [The Guardian - Callum Macrae, 30 May 2004](#))

Another important element of the Traditional Rroma marriage arrangement is the ‘Payment’ or the ‘Gift’. Traditionally calculated in gold, this is a sum negotiated by the parents of the children long before the wedding, sometimes as early as soon after the birth of the daughter. According to the custom, the boy’s father undertakes to pay the girl’s father a specified amount of gold coins on the day of the wedding provided the girl is ‘raised up honourably’. This in effect means that the girl should be virgin, that she should have been raised to respect her husband and his family and that her own family is regarded in the community as ‘respectable’.

The size of the ‘Gift’ appeared to be directly proportional to the status of the girl’s parents. Similarly, the girl’s beauty, her health, age at marriage, her house skills would increase the amount her parents can expect. Interestingly, several *Gabors* and *Caldarari* respondents indicated that a ‘too educated’ girl would attract a small ‘Gift’ in their views on two accounts: if she is well educated she must be old i.e. seventeen or eighteen. Similarly, none of them wanted to be an object of ridicule in their communities by being referred to as the ones with wives smarter than themselves. (T1, T2, T4, W3, W6 interviews)

On the day of the marriage, if all the above conditions have been met, the ‘Gift’ is handed over to the father of the bride in a elaborate ceremony designed to advertise both the groom’s family’s wealth and the bride’s family honour. I have heard - though have not witnessed – cases where the groom’s father presents the bride’s family with a bucket filled up with gold coins¹⁸. The average wedding would see only a handful of gold coins being offered, most of which being expected to remain the property of the bride. From thence, she is expected to wear a necklace made up of these coins as a sign of her wealthy marriage¹⁹.

¹⁸ The tradition of using gold coins as ‘Gifts’, dowries or savings is closely associated with the Gypsies traditional tendency of saving and investing in gold coins but is not limited to the Rroma alone. Indeed gold coinage plays an important role in the lives of Romanians, Macedonians, Greeks, Serbians and other nations in the Balkans or the Middle East (Friedber & Friedberg, 2003). It’s most likely explanation might be that throughout the troubled histories of these regions, people would have found it practical to invest their possessions in something easy to pack away and carry or hide at short notice. Gold coins minted by various countries offered a particular appeal as they were difficult to falsify and instantly recognisable even by unlettered peoples. Equally important, their gold content would preserve its value long after disappearance of the respective country or government. Finally, gold coins often could double as jewellery as well as currency (Figure X.16) and as part of the local custom, women of various nationalities wear them pleated in their hair or as necklaces.

¹⁹ Cases where the agreed conditions no longer apply are met with swift annulment of the agreement between the parents and the cancellation of the wedding. Occasionally, the agreement would be renegotiated to reflect the changed circumstances such as the ‘reviewed value’ of the girl or her family’s changed status. In exceptional cases where for example the husband joins the woman’s family (perhaps because his parents do not agree with the



Figure III.15 Collection of *Caldarari* women necklaces. Note the gold coins of various denominations and origins.

The preferred unions are therefore firstly between very young boys and girls, something that also ensures that the young bride will be obedient in her new role (Figure III.17) and also among members of the same *Neam* and *Shatra* as it tends to reduce the possibility of complications arising later e.g. the bride's family taking their daughter back on allegations of mistreatment without actually returning the Gift. Divorce and adultery also can complicate the arrangements and problems of this kind as well as the one above, require usually the adjudication of a *Criss* (see below Customs and Traditions and Glossary) before problems degenerate further. The *Crissinitori* often decide the amounts to be paid to be returned and the matter is settled for good (W03 interview, also [Acton 1985](#), [Gheorghe 1997](#), [Fraser 1992](#)).



Figure III.16 Newly wed *Caldarari* husband and wife in Wallachia. The husband is the son of the local *Bulibasha*; note the larger than average gold coins necklace worn by his wife.

marriage or because he is orphan) no bride price is expected. The 'Gift' is not a commercial transaction *per se* and the respective gold coins do not have the value of currency and some Gypsy sociologists and historians ([Fraser 1992](#), [Acton](#), [Caffrey & Mundy 1997](#)) and Roma activists (W03, W16 interviews) argue that the Gift practice is more an acknowledgement that the man's family cannot return the privilege and provide the woman's family with a girl in return. (see notes of conversation with Maria Ionescu, Romanian Government Roma Counsellor, Bucharest 2003)

It is important to mention that as part of Gypsy practices, my description of the Gypsy traditional marriage is intended as a general guide of some of the customs observed by me during my research and as described to by my respondents. It would be very difficult to provide in these pages a thorough analysis of all the customs and rules governing the Rroma marriage arrangements let alone the extent to which they apply to various segments and quadrants of the community. The paragraphs above were intended as an indication of the significant differences existing between the traditional Gypsy unions and those of the rest of the *Gadje* community. The type of marriages encountered during the research ranged enormously between ultra-traditional intra-ethnic and intra-*Neam* weddings of the *Argintari* (observed in the Alexandria-Wallachia), *Caldarari* (observed in Branceni – Wallachia) and *Gabori* (described by respondents) and the Modern Rroma inter-ethnic marriages (as observed in Bucharest – Wallachia and reported by respondents on many similar elsewhere). In between these extremes of the marriage spectrum, there are undoubtedly a myriad of combinations each of them with a possible impact on the overall location of the respective couples in the Social Mobility and Ethnic Diversity model.

The *Marime* Code

The concept that pervades most of Gypsy's attitude to various life situations and that shapes much of their overarching philosophy – and incidentally the one that is most difficult to understand by *Gadje* - is the dread of contamination and the taboos that arrive from that (Fraser 1992, Gheorghe 1997, Acton, Caffrey & Mundy 1997). The Purity Code or the *Marime* Code and the subsequent belief in Pollution is a core element of the Gypsy culture and one that is used to demarcate them from the *Gadje* world (Okely 1982) . The *Marime* name derives from the word 'Dirty' or 'Unclean' in Romany and the totality of its rules and taboos regulates the interaction between the men and women and between Rroma and *Gadje*. To be declared Polluted, is the greatest shame that can befall upon a Traditional Gypsy and his or her family and even the expulsion from the *Neam* would pale in significance. It is virtually a social death as the condition can be passed on: anything a *Marime* Gypsy does or touches becomes in turn *Marime*. For communities for which the communal social life is crucial and where weddings, baptisms, funerals and festivals are often the only social occasions (Fraser 1992) such sentence is much

feared and a very effective control mechanism. The only way the *Marime* status can be revoked is by convening of a high level *Criss*.

The taboos relate to person, objects, parts of the body, food stuffs and topics of conversation but the pervading theme is the woman's uncleanness and the resulting threat to ritual purity. The lower body, particularly of the woman is considered *Marime* and everything that touches it becomes in turn *Marime* : genitalia, bodily functions, clothing touching the lower body, allusions to sex, period and pregnancy, etc. Strict washing regulations are supposed to be enforced but despite the unanimous claims that the *Marime* Code is respected, I have observed that in certain instances, the statement of adherence to the code was more pronounced than the actual enforcement of it. In one instance whilst interviewing in Bucharest and seeking to understand the code, I was bluntly told that the respondent could not contemplate for example eating from the same plate as myself due to my *Marime* status (W31 interview).

The traditional Gypsies wash separately the respective upper and lower items of clothing, each in a different sink or bowl. The concept and the strength of its application is similar to the *Kosher* principle in the Judaic tradition. A bowl in which the lower body clothes have been washed should not be used for washing the face and separate towels and soaps must be used for the two respective parts of the body. Similarly, a bowl in which the *Marime* items of clothing have been washed cannot be used for washing dishes or kitchen utensils; most importantly, the woman's items of clothing ought not to be washed in the same water or bucket as the man's clothes. Again, some ultra-traditional Gypsy go as far as not permitting the woman's clothes to be dried out on the same line as the men's (T01, T02, T11 interviews). During certain periods in her physiological cycle e.g. puberty, menstruation, pregnancy and post-pregnancy, the woman is perceived as particularly polluted and kept isolated²⁰.

Gadje are by definition polluted seeing that they are not aware of the *Marime* concepts and thus, the code acts as a buffer between the Gypsy and *Gadje* communities. As in the previous other

²⁰ Whilst this might appear entirely one sided, another side of the *Marime* code is that the woman can use it as a very powerful weapon by only threatening to defile a man in public by touching him with a certain item of her clothing. Discussing the matter with a Roma government official, activist and writer, she explained that on one occasion, during a heated debate within a Roma community, a Gypsy informal leader uneasy about her powerful position threatened to harm her physically. To this, the Roma Counsellor replied by counter-threatening to defile him publicly and the argument was promptly ended.

Gypsy traditions, adherence to the letter of the *Marime* Code is very difficult in the context of modern living and, the adherence to it is a function of the role attached by the respective individual to the code and his/hers physical ability to observe it.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that the concept of Gypsy Identity does not consist of a homogenous collection of characteristics according to which, an external observer can classify an individual regarding his or her ethnic identity. According to my research findings and related literature (Okely 1982, Fraser 1992, Liégeois 1998, Guy 2001) it would be extremely risky to attempt to ascertain the extent to which an individual belongs to the Roma community. Furthermore, it would be even riskier to seek to draw a sharp dividing line within the Roma community, dividing the Traditional Gypsies from the Modern Roma segments.

This apparently blurred picture is a result firstly of a vast array of elements making up the Gypsy Identity, and I have attempted to shed light on those ethnic elements which in my view have the greatest impact in determining the ethnic positioning of the respective individual. The reader was introduced to a selection of these ethnic elements with the aid of visual data and interview excerpts. Secondly and equally significant, the chapter described the variability of the relevance of each of these Ethnic Practices as perceived by various individuals themselves. In other words, whilst some particular Ethnic Practices are perceived as crucial to being Gypsy by one *Neam*, or *Shatra* or even some individuals, they may not be regarded as equally significant by other *Neams* or individuals.

I remind the reader that my research was based on generating the respondents' own views, understanding and perception on the aspects discussed thus the most difficult aspect to quantify however and one that further blurs the picture of Gypsy Identity for the outside observer, is the distinction between claiming to uphold some of the traditional ethnic elements and actually adhering to them. As an outsider *Gadje* researcher, I found it extremely difficult to ascertain with accuracy the validity of some of the statements (e.g. always earning a living through traditional Gypsy occupations as opposed to doing it occasionally, being fluent in Romany as opposed to speaking basic colloquial sentences, adopting a permanent nomadic lifestyle as opposed to

occasional and/or independent travel) and virtually impossible to verify others (e.g. adherence to all the rules of the *Marime Code* as opposed to some of them, intra-ethnic marriages in one's family and so forth).

Furthermore, it was extremely difficult to discern whether to attach weight to claims of adherence to a particular ethnic element as opposed to the actual observation of that element. In other words, what could constitute an accurate denominator of an individual's 'meeting' a particular Gypsy practice: stating his respect for the Gypsy values or his regular adherence to that value? Should the absence of 'adherence' invalidate the presence of 'claim'? If the answer to this question would be yes, then I would be in a position to discount the claim to being Gypsy of most of the Romanian Roma but I do not believe this should be the case. My view is that the very statements of being aware and upholding some of these ethnic practices including the exaggerated claims of regular adherence to them do in themselves provide us with very important insights towards understanding the differences in the Ethnic Identities of respondents from both segments: Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma.

Having said that, as this chapter has shown, building a clearly cut picture of the 'true Gypsiness' and its defining Ethnic Practices is therefore not only an impossible task akin to shifting sand but one that even if fulfilled and if an 'absolute framework' of Gypsy identity could be sketched, it would only apply to a very small percentage of the entire population. Rather than attempting therefore to capture a continuously metamorphosing and elusive picture of absolute Gypsy identity, as observers of Gypsy ways of life we should perceive the Gypsiness as a multidimensional spectrum stretching concomitantly in different planes.

Independent plans correspond to each Ethnic Practice we identified as making up the Gypsy Identity, and the resulting identity of each respondent is a function of the collective positioning of the individual in each of these plans. In actual terms, each Ethnic Practice plan stretches from a hypothetical absolute value signifying complete awareness and adherence to that respective Ethnic Practice by the individual to a gradual fading of the value attached to the Ethnic Practice and culminating in a total disregard of it. The closer in the respective Ethnic Practice plan an individual would be positioned towards the 'absolute' end of the spectrum, the more significant we could consider that the respective Ethnic Practice is in the formatting of the individual's ethnic identity. Very importantly for our understanding of the Gypsy identity is the fact that each Gypsy

individual's identity is a unique combination of these Ethnic Practices, in turn, each of them being at a different location on the 'absolute – inexistent' spectrum. Furthermore, the chapter has shown that these unique individual combinations are not static either in the inter-generational plan or intra-generational plan and that they tend to fluctuate.

In the following Chapter: Social Trajectories I will explore closer with the aid of case studies (T12, W11, T15, W30, T01, W08, T17, W36, T19, W03) the process through which some of these practices are being abandoned. To illustrate the process, in addition to the above case studies I will also use visual data and interviews excerpts proving that not only are these Ethnic Practices variable in relevance from individual to individual but they also tend to shift in time from generation to generation and from period to period, sometime within the same family of the Roma community. What several decades ago may have constituted the corner stone of traditional Gypsy life e.g. the nomadic lifestyle, today has significantly decreased in value and has thus been replaced by say the role of the *Criss*. It would be appropriate therefore to state that in general, the Traditional Gypsy Ethnic Practices embraced by the community three decades ago are similar as those embraced by the community today. It would be however fraught with risk to continue the generalisation by claiming that today, they are held *equally* in high esteem across the Traditional Gypsy segment let alone across Roma community.

Chapter IV

Social Class Structures

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Introduction

This chapter will describe the patterns of Rroma occupations and employment in the Romanian contemporary labour market and will facilitate a better understanding of the nature and ways of life of the Romanian Rroma both traditional and modern. The various occupations encountered by me throughout my research will be described in detail and placed in the context of the Rroma Class Structure, a classification designed by me for the purpose of addressing the research questions. This will be done through an ethnographic approach and will bring forward the results of the ethnographic research, observation, formal interviewing and informal discussion carried throughout the field research with respondents from the Traditional and Modern segments of the Romanian Rroma community.

The chapter will begin with a section in which I will introduce several ‘archetypal Rroma occupations’ and the ways of life of those individuals or groups who practise them. I will explain that these ‘typical Gypsy occupations’ have been passed on from generation to generation and that they are rooted centuries back in Rroma history perhaps as far back as before the beginning of their exodus from the Indian subcontinent.

This section will explore what are the distinct features of these occupations or in other words what makes these occupations ‘typical Gypsy occupations’ as opposed to any other modern occupation not specific to any ethnic group. Among these features, I will firstly focus on the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the practitioners of these archetypal Gypsy occupations and the rest of the *Gadje* communities. In this subsection I will show that the traditional Gypsy occupations are in fact demand-led and as such they are shaped by the needs and requirements of the settled communities. Consequently, they continue to adapt over time.

Next, the section will investigate the employment aspects prevalent among the traditional Roma occupations such as the contractual basis upon which the work is being carried out; the absence of formal contractual relationship between the client and the service provider and similarly the absence of any formal contractual relationship between the service providers themselves. I will show that the provision of services by the Gypsies does not involve written contracts or even receipts and that most of the agreements are made informally, based on verbal agreement and often sealed with a shake of hand.

Related to the aspects of contractual arrangements, I will then explain that the employment status of the practitioners of traditional Gypsy occupations is very often self-employment or at most, a loose combination between self-employment and part-time seasonal casual employment. Even in cases where occasionally traditional Gypsies are forced to enter a long term arrangement with a customer or group of customers, the employment status of the respective Gypsy worker remains self-employment governed by arrangements that allows the flexibility of being able to relocate at very short notice.

The section will then explore a direct result of the above characteristics of the typical or archetypal Gypsy occupations, namely that it encourages the creation and exploitation of very close family or *Neam* networks as structures upon which the entire income generating activities are based. As predominantly unlettered people, and in the absence of formal commercial contracts and employment laws, the Gypsies had to develop and rely on strong family ties that offered them the security of a reliable labour force. The availability of skilled labour within a particular family or extended family depended upon the constant provision of training in the respective occupation or task and the *Neams* function as social structures bound together not only by common ancestry but by the collective ability to provide competitively priced and highly skilled services to the outside world.

A further resultant of the symbiotic nature of the working relationship of the traditional Gypsy occupation combined with the *Neams*-based organisation, I will next explore the nomadic way of life as a necessity for identifying work opportunities. Here, I will describe the patterns of nomadism associated with these archetypal Gypsy occupations and explain that far from being a universally adopted feature of the Gypsy way of life, the Gypsy nomadism is in fact limited in range and seasonal. I will explain here that historical evidences indicate that for a multitude of reasons, certain traditional Gypsy occupations were in fact practiced by settled rather than

nomadic Gypsies for centuries. Traditional occupations most prone to a settled way of life are those occupations where a constant large local demand for the respective service would make the migration towards new markets unnecessary.

The second section of the chapter will explore modern western style occupations practiced by those Rroma whom in Chapter I I have described as the Modern Rroma. These are in effect neither specifically *Gadje* nor Rroma occupations; rather they are modern labour market and commercial opportunities in which modern Rroma have found niches. The second section will explore these different ranges of occupations and will seek to differentiate them from the traditional Gypsy occupations explored above.

In this second section, I will describe the nature of the employment relationships between employees and employers and the formality of contractual arrangements prevalent here. Without seeking to provide the reader with a detailed account of the modern Romanian employment practices, in this section, I will seek to explain that once departed from the traditional core of traditionalism, the modern Gypsy occupations or income generating activities take place in a working and legislative environment common with the rest of the community, operate along the same employment rules and contractual arrangements as any other modern occupation, and are therefore almost indistinguishable from each other.

A significant element distinguishing the typical Gypsy occupations from the modern ones is the separation between the family and working environment. Unlike in the cases of traditional Gypsy occupations where the family and work coexist, here in the modern occupations the family is seldom associated with the income generating process. Except for a few cases where, like the *Gadje*, the Gypsies happen to work along members of their families such as their parents or partners or even the elder children, family ties have no relevance.

Another feature distinguishing the traditional occupations from the modern ones is the nomadic or the settled way of life. Unlike the case of the traditional occupations, nomadism would hinder the process of generating an income in a modern Rroma occupation and, as such, the two virtually exclude each other. With the exception of seasonal agricultural farm work, which can arguably be described as a modern occupation from the point of view of not involving a traditional Gypsy skill, and where indeed Rroma families may undertake occasional travel in order to relocate for a short period of time on a large farming complex, I was not able to identify modern Rroma occupations practicable by nomadic families or individuals.

Like the previous section, this section will conclude with a focus on the cultural aspects associated with modern Rroma occupations. I will examine here whether the cultural aspects we saw as being closely associated with archetypal Gypsy occupations are still existent in the areas of modern occupations. I will show that, whilst there are instances where traditional Gypsy dress and language skills are present, they are in general neither a condition nor a resultant of the individuals occupying a particular Rroma occupation. Instances where the reverse is true i.e. where the wearing of traditional dress and knowledge of Romany are perceived as beneficial and even as a precondition are in effect a requirement of the particular position rather than the generic occupation. For example, a Rroma social worker or medical worker would benefit from wearing traditional Gypsy dress and speaking Romany only if his or her role would bring them into contact with traditional Gypsy communities where such symbols would be valued. Displaying these symbols of Gypsy ethnicity would in fact hamper the activity of the respective Rroma social worker in their work in a *Gadje* community.

Having listed and described several of the archetypal Gypsy traditional and modern occupation, the third and the final section of this chapter will list and describe the income earning strategies adopted by the individuals making up my researched sample. I will explain here that the combination of commercial opportunities and roles undertaken by the Rroma are far from being clearly delineated along the lines of archetypal occupations as I described them in the previous two sections. I will explain in this section that there is significant overlap between the traditional and modern income earning methods adopted by the Rroma.

In addition, my research revealed that there appears to be a tendency towards increased modernisation of all aspects of Rroma life including income earning approaches to the extent that indeed, throughout my field work, I have encountered virtually no case where an individual or family would derive their entire income from a traditional Gypsy occupation. Furthermore, the overlaps and the absence of clear patterns also occur in the areas of employment status and relationships, nomadic and settled ways of life and with regard to specific cultural aspects.

To introduce a degree of structure in the amorphous environment of the Rroma income earning approaches, I will propose in this section a Chart of Rroma Occupations. This chart will list the groups of Rroma occupations observed by me throughout the field work, listed in the order of the access to capital required by these positions. The chart will also indicate the instances where the

individuals observed by me in the respective occupations appeared to belong predominantly to one or more *Neams* or where the respondent, though feeling strongly Roma, did not perceive himself as a member of a particular *Neam*.

To place my findings in perspective, I will describe each of the seven entries of my chart through real life case studies and photographic evidence. I will exemplify here case studies observed by me where income earning was pursued by respondents through archetypal Gypsy occupations and where conversely, the respondents secured their living through modern occupations. In addition to the chart briefly described above, through the case studies, I will seek to facilitate a better understanding of the amorphous and fluid nature of Roma patterns of income earning techniques and how traditional and modern, regional and local, nomadic and settled, self-employed and employee, seasonal and permanent overlap in what is in fact an immensely diverse and constantly metamorphosing environment.

The next chapter, Chapter V Social Trajectories, will explore the main social mobility patterns observed by me among the respondents and will take up the cases where I identified cases of multidirectional social trajectories and ethnic transition movement. With the aid of case studies I will explore these movements and explain whether they occur intergenerational and/or intra-generational together with the circumstances in which they occur as perceived from the eyes of the respective individuals themselves.

Traditional Roma occupations

Based on the findings of the literature review and those at the preliminary stages of the field research, the Roma community of Romania has been divided into two major segments: a small but clearly identifiable segment consisting of those Roma with a significant number of 'ethnic facets' or elements of ethnic identity such as embracing a traditional occupation and way of life including semi-nomadic style of living, wearing traditional jewellery and costume, having Romany as a mother tongue and above all, embracing Roma laws and upholding traditional Roma values. I have named and referred to this group as Traditional Roma or Gypsies.

On the opposite side of the social diversity model I have identified the existence of a very large but more difficult to define segment of the community which I have collectively described as Modern Roma. Having undertaken a long journey of assimilation within the wider *Gadje* society, the Roma identified in this segment have retained a reduced number of 'ethnic facets'

or elements of ethnic identity. As such they have few or none of the characteristics displayed by the Traditional Roma but they still retain a collective sense of ethnic identity generated by a combination of exogenous causes (collective discrimination in the labour market, social, economic and geographical marginalisation, etc.) and endogenous causes (racially distinct features, family influences, self-identification).

It would be impossible to define an accurate typology of traditional Gypsy occupations let alone to list them all; due to their fluidity, whatever list we would attempt to provide in these pages, it would become obsolete in a short time. There are however certain occupations mentioned in the related literature (Liégeois 2001, Acton 1985, Zamfir & Zamfir 1993) which helped me identify several general tendencies: metalwork and wood work, collection and resale of various materials e.g. scrap ferrous and nonferrous metal, paper, glass, rags, feathers etc., various forms of entertainment e.g. music, circus, fairgrounds, horse training and dealing, selling door-to-door and at the markets, agricultural work, fortune-telling, brick-making, begging and others.

A main category according to which the traditional Roma occupations could be classified, refers to the type of employment relationship the respective practitioner has with the customer or employer. According to this way of differentiating between various Roma occupations, we distinguish the self-employed artisans and skilled providers of services and the semi-skilled or un-skilled workers on a long term, temporary or casual basis.

The first category would encompass Gypsies working as self-employed artisans or semi-skilled workers and creating various products required by the *Gadje* communities. These products consist of metal or wooden household and farm utensils and tools e.g. buckets and cauldron makers (*Gabori*, *Caldarari*), or makers of spoons, willow brooms and baskets (*Rudari*), brushes (*Rudari*), bricks (*Caramidari*), jewellery (*Argintari*) etc.

In the same category I also list the Gypsies earning a living from the provision of services to the *Gadje* community such as shoe and clothes repairing (*Ciubotari*), decorating houses (*Chivute*), music entertainment (*Lautari*), circus entertainment (*Ursari*), taming and/or raising animals (*Geambasi*), extracting gold (*Aurari*, *Rudari*), flower selling (*Florari*), rag and bone collectors (*Zavragii*), repairing kitchen utensils (*Spoitori*), or simply providing unskilled casual manual

labour and fortune telling (*Corturari*). These occupations are rooted in a traditional way of Gypsy living and closely dependant upon a distinct Gypsy ethnic facet, namely nomadism¹.

A description of the traditional Gypsy occupations observed during the field research and for brief descriptions of other traditional Gypsies occupations not encountered during the field research, is available in the Glossary of Gypsy Terms (See [Appendix](#)). It is very important to note that even in the cases where these occupations were encountered among the communities observed, they were almost never encountered independently of other non-traditional occupations. In other words, throughout the entire field research, those respondents identified as practising a traditional Gypsy occupation did so in conjunction with other occupations whether traditional or not.

Begging: perceived by *Gadje* and *Rroma* themselves as a traditional Gypsy income generating means, it is practised mainly by Gypsy women of some *Neams* irrespective of their socio-economic position. I have observed Gypsy beggars in Bucharest, Cluj, London and Oxford and the process usually involved adopting a humble attitude and presenting a compassionate story to the 'customer'. The beggar has usually the ability of changing the story swiftly from case to case in order to maximise the potential donation; in Bucharest a Gypsy beggar presented herself as an abused mother of five whose only hope of providing a meal for their sick children rested with the generosity of the 'customer' whilst in Oxford a Gypsy woman presented herself as a refugee from Kosovo whose house has been burned down by the Serb paramilitaries (approached in Vlach-Romany by me, she admitted she was in effect a Romanian Gypsy from Wallachia and that she never went to the former Yugoslavia). The Gypsy women I observed² begging belonged to different *Neams*: *Ursari*, *Caldarari*, *Spoitori*, *Caramidari* and *Rudari*. This is a potentially lucrative occupation particularly if practised abroad; e.g. a few lucky begging days in Germany could easily earn more than a whole year of hard working in Romania ([Zamfir & Zamfir 1993](#)).

¹ Achim suggests that the Gypsy Nomadism in the Romanian Principalities should not be taken in the strict sense of the word. The Gypsies we are referring to as Nomads were spending the winter on the *Boyars'* estates and the summer roaming throughout the country on well determined routes. Furthermore, the *Rudari* (the Gold prospectors) were spending the entire year in fixed locations on river banks where they were practising their work. The purely nomadic lifestyle was therefore adopted from early times by a relatively small part of the Gypsy community and for the rest, the sedentarisation process began in effect very early as a natural process. Achim further adds that in 1839, when the Wallachian state undertook a census of the Gypsies, most of them were settled in villages and inhabited houses being assimilated in many respects with the agricultural workers of the wider Romanian community (Achim 1989 quoting from the *Analele Parlamentare ale Romaniei*, 25 Vol. Bucharest 1890-1915). Whilst it is plausible to expect that a certain degree of generalisation might have been exercised by the Romanian authorities at the time, we can assume that many of the Romanian Gypsies were living at the time in permanent settlements.

² See field notes of Oxford (June 2002), London (August 2002), Cluj (April 2003) Bucharest (May 2003)

Blacksmiths: perceived as the main traditional Gypsy occupation (Von Wlislocki 1890, Fraser 1992, Liégeois 1998, Godwin 2001) consists of various types of iron working required by the *Gadje* communities. Ranging from manufacturing nails and knives, horseshoeing, wagon repairing, axes, knives and scissors sharpening to plough and other farming tools repairing, Gypsies have built a reputation for reliable workmanship. Initially the *Fierari Neam* (Fier = Iron in Romanian) used to hold the monopoly of blacksmithing but as their skills were invaluable to the running of the rural and agricultural economies, they were among the first *Neam* to be settled among the *Gadje* communities and sometimes the name of Blacksmith was synonymous with Gypsy (Achim 1998). Today, Gypsies belonging to various *Neams* and without any *Neam* membership practice this occupation though due to the ongoing process of industrialisation the rural blacksmiths no longer enjoy the high status they used to have in the rural communities. I have encountered blacksmiths belonging to the *Fierari*, *Caldarari*, *Ursari* and *Vatrashi Neams* and the process usually takes place within a workshop fully equipped with forge, bellows, anvil, tongues *et cetera.*, though I have been told that the same operations though limited in scale are occasionally being performed by nomadic Gypsies away from their workshop. Blacksmith Gypsies are usually paid in goods or money.

Brick making and clay working: Occupations practiced traditionally by nomadic *Caramidari* and due to the low skills required associated with very low status. Brick makers traditionally set camp every year on the outskirts of villages on established routes. The production process consists of digging a large hole in the ground, filling it with water then adding argyle and straw. The mixture would then be shaped in wooden frames, allowed to dry in the sun then burned in large ovens. Throughout my observation of these brick-makers and discussions with Roma social workers (W16, W20, W21 interviews) I was told³ that today there are virtually no fully nomadic *Caramidari* Gypsies and that most are settled. Despite the freely available argyle and water, wood for the burning of the bricks is increasingly expensive and during the winter season, when both water and soil are frozen, the brick-making activities come to a halt (Figure IV.1).

Brick making is a labour intensive occupation paid in goods or money and I was told that modern *Caramidari* Gypsies find it increasingly difficult to compete with mass produced factory bricks and prefabricated panels. When working towards large orders, the entire family or even

³ See also preliminary pilot interview London, June 2002

Shatra participates in the process but increasingly, during the ‘dry’ spells, most *Caramidari* earn their living through alternative occupations such as agricultural work and scrap metal collection.



Figure IV.1 *Caramidari* Gypsies in the process of preparing the brick mixture and finished bricks observed in Nusfalau Transylvania.

Coppersmiths: Another traditional Gypsy occupation, it involves manufacturing copper cauldrons and stills for domestic uses such as distillation of plum brandy, soap making, fat extraction, *et cetera*. The process takes place directly on the ground, is conducted with rudimentary and make-shift tools, e.g. a fallen tree acting as anvil, a local water pool used as cooling basin, a knotted piece of string acting as tape measure, *et cetera*, and is extremely laborious with the entire family helping in various ways. Children collect wood for the furnace, the women operate the bellows and the men hammer the metal into required shapes. Work is normally done on order according to the client’s specification or in advance and sold at markets along routes, and payment is in money or products. The copper cauldrons and stills are in demand in the rural environment due to their fine finishing and copper’s heat resistant qualities. Coppersmiths operate on a small scale with low outgoings and return ratio for their products allows them to exploit their traditional skill whilst enjoying an independent living. Knowledge of non-ferrous metals allowed some coppersmiths to diversify into industrial boiler production (T01, T03 interviews) and dealing in metals bars and rough cast products (W01, W02 interviews). Coppersmithing is practised mainly by *Caldarari* but I have also encountered *Gabors*, *Corturari*, *Fierari* and *Spoitori*⁴ who claimed to derive an income from it. In London too, the repair of copper kitchen equipment of French restaurants in London is monopolised by French *Caldarari* who make annual visits, much to the annoyance of the London *Caldarari* who feel excluded from this lucrative niche⁵. (Figure IV.2).

⁴ See field note from Bucharest flea market (March 2003) and from Dej town market (May 2003)

⁵ See discussion notes with Acton, T, (April 2007) University of Greenwich, London.



Figure IV.2 Caldarari Gypsies in Transylvania in the process of melting down scrap copper, welding copper sheets into copper stills and selling the finite product at the local market.

Fortunetelling: Occupation usually practiced by women belonging to various *Neams*, it consists of fortune telling, curing diseases, ensuring prosperous marriages, relocating lost objects *etc.* Traditionally, once a *Shatra* sets up camp near a village, fortune tellers would contact potential customers offering their services. Alternatively, some fortune tellers would erect their tent at village fetes and fairs. Established fortune tellers receive customers in their home or tent and some have reached a high degree of respectability in their trade that allows them to operate waiting lists and receive advance bookings. Those operating at the higher end of the market have regular customers and are able to demand very high fees⁶ earning themselves a very comfortable living (Figure IV.3).

The ‘tools of the trade’ consist of a wide array of implements such as tarot or playing cards, sea shells, crystal globes, dried animal (usually chicken or rabbit) feet, dried beans *etc.* The tradition requires to ‘unlock the future by crossing the Gypsy woman’s palm with a silver coin’ i.e. to offer money, but fortune tellers operating at the lower end of the market also accept payment in goods. Gypsy fortunetelling women are very skilled in offering basic generalities at the beginning of the ‘session’ and increasing their requests for fees according to customer reaction.



Figure IV.3 The house of a famous Gypsy fortune-teller ‘Princess Sidonia’ on the outskirts of Bucharest - Wallachia. The firm at the entrance reads: Here lives the Princess of White Magic Princess Ioana Sidonia, the most powerful white magic sorcerer, specialising in fortunetelling, curing, abates curses, facilitates weddings, offers talismans. Contact us with confidence on telephone, mobile, fax.

⁶ See conversation notes with researcher’s mother, once a regular visitor of a Fortunetelling Gypsy woman Bucharest March 2003

Flower selling: Occupation traditionally practiced by the women of the *Florari* (or *Boldeni*) *Neam* with the aid of their men and it is to our knowledge the only Gypsy *Neam* whose name derives from the occupation of women. Traditionally, Gypsy women would collect wild flowers, arrange them in bouquets and sell them at the markets or directly door to door. Gradually, the trade extended to include the cultivation of flowers or bulk-buying from growers and selling as flower arrangements at markets or at street corner stalls. Flower sellers are very effective in identifying lucrative markets for their products e.g. cemeteries, churches, hospitals and periods of maximum demand e.g. religious festivals, Mother's day, name days *etc.* Holding a large share of the market, they are able to adjust prices with relative ease and payment is accepted in cash only. Traditionally, only the *Boldeni* and *Florari* Gypsies would trade in flowers but during my field research I have also encountered and heard of flower traders claiming *Vatrashi*, *Ursari* and *Ciubotari* membership (W30, W33, W34 interviews).

With the liberalisation of the Romanian economy in 1990, some flowers sellers travel regularly across Europe to Holland where they purchase exotic fresh flowers e.g. orchids and tulips which they then ship back to Romania in frigorific lorries. Such a business trip would require in excess of £10,000 and flower selling on this scale is these days conducted by large families or groups of families working together (Figure IV.4).



Figure IV.4 Bulk flower Gypsy sellers of the *Florari* (*Boldeni*) *Neam* in a market in Bucharest.

Musicians: Occupation practiced predominantly by the members of the *Lautari Neam*, it involves playing various instruments and entertaining audiences at various events. Traditionally the musician Gypsies would be employed by the *Boyars* and would be expected to provide all year round entertainment to their households and guest. Eventually, after emancipation of the Gypsies more and more individuals (having become *Vatrashi* in the mean time) have taken up playing various instruments and, having gained their freedom, would either gain employment

with a wealthy patron or would roam the villages and towns seeking employment at various events such as weddings, christenings, birthdays and name days parties (Pons 1995). Currently, the musician Gypsies (collectively referred to as *Lautari* regardless of their membership of other *Neams*) earn their living similarly as their post-emancipation ancestors e.g. by offering their services to various parties. After the liberalisation of the market and the success in business ventures of some Rroma, the musician Gypsies were able to secure a niche in the market by playing Gypsy specific melodies. Today, some successful Gypsies operating at the higher end of the market have attended studies at the renowned Music Conservatory in Bucharest, command fees in excess of £5,000 per evening⁷ and some have launched their own records. Musicians usually work individually or with a small group and the Gypsies practising this occupation are drawn from various *Neams*. The musicians benefiting from undisputed supremacy in the field are still the *Lautari* and interestingly, one of the two Rroma Members of Parliament is a *Lautari* Gypsy. (Figure IV.5)



Figure IV.5 Modern Lautari Gypsy performing in a Transylvanian restaurant and the cover of the 18th CD produced by a famous *Lautari* Gypsy: Adrian Copil Minune (photo courtesy of Virtual Music Romania)

Scrap metal collecting: Occupation that used to be the main income earner for some of the nomadic Gypsies but which recently became increasingly appealing to settled Rroma and even Romanians from poor economic backgrounds. During my field research, I have encountered scores of Gypsies and Romanians at various locations in Romania who collected scrap metal either as a main occupation or as a supplement to their other occupations (W33, W34, W11, W14, T42, T25, T28 interviews)⁸.

Traditional scrap metal collectors would roam villages and towns in their carts, calling aloud for *Gadje* villagers to hand them over unwanted items of metal. The metal would be weighed and

⁷ See informal conversation notes with MV a Lautari Gypsy, Bucharest April 2003

⁸ See also field notes and photographs from Patarat - Cluj (2003), Dej (2003) and Hunedoara (2003)

depending on the weight and type of the metal the *Gadje* would receive payment in cash or other household items such as crockery sets, kitchen pots etc. In addition, full time scrap metal collectors would search the region for abandoned cars, discarded agricultural equipment, metal debris etc. The metal thus collected would then be sold for a higher price to industrial scrap metal dealers and the whole process would be started afresh. The Gypsies I encountered practising this occupation belonged to both modern and traditional segments and claimed membership of many *Neams*. The tools used by scrap metal collectors are hammers, hacksaws and pliers and once located, the scrap metal would be collected in carts, hand-pulled trolleys or wheelbarrows or simply in arms. This is an occupation practiced usually only by men but I have observed women and children helping too (Figure IV.6).



Figure IV.6. Gypsy scrap metal collectors in Wallachia and Transylvania

Silversmiths/Goldsmiths: This occupation is practised almost entirely by *Argintari* who, unlike other *Neams*, travel independently, sometimes on foot, sometimes using available means of transport but never with traditional Gypsy wagons. They carry only the tools of their trade and, for security, do not carry raw materials for their trade e.g. gold, silver or gems. The custom is that the client provides the necessary materials for the work. The *Argintari* normally work ‘on order’ and the material is provided in the form of an old gold or silver coin or a broken old piece of jewellery which the *Argintari* turn into an elaborate new ring or necklace. Occasionally, the *Argintari* also create in advance various items of jewellery which they later sell at fairs and village fetes around the country.

The process takes place directly on the floor in front of the client and the tools used are very basic but imaginative e.g. a hammer with a sharpened handle which, when struck in the ground is used as a mini-anvil. A small pipe is used as bellows and a paraffin lamp is used as blow torch. Work is paid in money, products or left over material. Due to the specialised skills required and the small size of orders, silversmiths and goldsmiths do not require help from their extended family or friends (Figure IV.7).



Figure IV.7 Silversmiths Gypsies manufacturing jewellery in front of the customers in Bucharest - Wallchia, displaying ready made jewellery and tools of the trade in a market in Cluj - Transylvania and the ring of the *Argintari Neam Bulibasha* in Bucharest – Wallachia.

Tinsmiths: Occupation involving manufacturing of tin buckets, tin roofs, tin water drains and gutters, *etc.* Traditionally, it was practised by *Gabori* in Transylvania and by *Caldarari* in Wallachia but I noted that members of other *Neams* specialising in metal work (*Spoitori* and *Fierari*) can practice it. In the past, tinsmithing was practiced by nomadic Gypsies as demand for tinwork in any one village was not sufficient to justify permanent settlement for one *Shatra*.

Recently however, with means of transport becoming increasingly affordable, Gypsy tinsmiths can afford a permanent base from where they travel regularly in search of custom. The process involves going from door to door with samples of tin work and negotiating contracts of various size, e.g. a tin bucket or re-roofing an entire house. Once terms are agreed, tinsmiths purchase metal sheets from factories and process them into required shapes working it ‘cold’ or ‘hot’ depending on the desired outcome e.g. rain gutters and roof ornaments are processed without heating whilst buckets require hot soldering.

Tinsmiths work independently when seeking customers after which, depending on the size of the order, they may call for help from extended family members. Women (particularly *Gabori* and *Caldarari*) are rarely involved in the working process. Payment is accepted in cash or goods except for larger orders involving family members, when only cash is accepted. *Gabori* and *Caldarari* tinsmiths operate a system of verbal agreement which when accompanied by hand shakes becomes a binding contract (Figure IV.8).



Figure IV.8 Tinsmith Gypsy of the *Gabori Neam* showing a work sample, (rain gutter made of tin metal sheet), in Hunedoara -Transylvania and the elaborate tin roof of a Gypsy house on the outskirts of Bucharest-Wallachia.

Woodworking: Occupation involving the manufacturing of wooden kitchen utensils e.g. dough and salad bawls, cutlery, sieves, rolling pins , brooms and brushes, baskets, coat hangers and pegs. Gypsies specialising in this type of work also repair items of furniture and replace chairs bottoms. I found no evidence that woodworking was ever practiced as main occupation presumably due to the time required for this time of work and the low fees extracted. Rather, various nomadic and semi-nomadic *Neams* use it as an additional source of income.

The *Rudari* Gypsies were primarily dealing with extracting gold from the auriferous sands in Transylvania but they were also associated with woodworking (Ruda = Sieve in Romanian). Traditionally the work would be done in advance, during the winter months when the *Shatra* would congregate indoors around the fire and when men, women and children would all carve together. The stock would then be sold in the spring along their routes or in markets. All the *Rudari* I observed generated income from woodworking (together with scrap metal collecting and agricultural casual work) but I also met Gypsies of other *Neams* selling wooden spoons and kitchen articles in the markets of Transylvania and Wallachia. The cost of wooden pegs and spoons is very low (in 2003, this was approximately £0.20 for six wooden spoons) and payment is only accepted in cash (Figure IV.9).



Figure IV.9 Woodworking nomadic Gypsies of the *Rudari Neam* and their finished products in Titu - Wallachia . Note the wicker baskets hanging on the side of the wagon and the scrap metal collected at the back of the wagons.

As mentioned prior to this listing, it would be impossible to compile a fully comprehensive and accurate list of all the traditional Gypsy occupations let alone the extent to which they are practiced by the Rroma community. I also wish to emphasise that these were the occupations encountered and observed by me during my research but there undoubtedly must be other traditional Gypsy occupations which due to the limited scale of my research I did not investigate.

In the past and particularly before the 1859 emancipation of the Gypsies (See Introduction - Historical Background section) the archetypal Gypsy occupations were practiced in the villages located along the Gypsy nomadic routes and in those villages where Gypsy communities were living a sedentary life on the *Boyars* or monasteries estates. Gradually however, Gypsies began to penetrate larger cities, particularly those in Transylvania where they established themselves in various economic domains (Panaiteescu 1941, Winstedt 1941, Achim 1998). As far back as in the XIVth century, Gypsies were providing Transylvanian cities with their traditional services and were occasionally required to also provide certain community services such as repairing the towns' walls and gates, cleaning the streets and markets, cleaning the canals and cesspits (Panaiteescu 1941, Winstedt, 1941, Achim 1998)

The preferred unit of production was traditionally and still is the family unit or the extended family unit although for bigger projects temporary wider partnerships may be formed. Whilst in Hunedoara-Transylvania, I interviewed a *Gabor* Gypsy (T11 interview) who was regularly working alone but when offered a big 'job' would call upon his relatives to help him. Such help would not normally be remunerated but the individual receiving help would be expected to offer help in return when asked. A similar practice I also encountered among the *Caldarari* Gypsies

(T08, T09, T10 interviews), among the *Florari* Gypsies (W33, W34 interviews), among the *Ciubotari* Gypsies (W30 interview) and to a lesser extent among the *Argintari* Gypsies (W12, W13 interviews).

According to this system, identifying the potential customers and securing the 'job' is traditionally the responsibility of the head of the family. With the exception of those women who are expected to generate an income from begging, fortune-telling and healing, the rest of the women remain within the *Shatra* and undertake domestic activities such as minding the children, cleaning and tidying the homes and preparing the food (Okely 1982). It is the male Gypsy who is responsible for leaving the *Shatra* in search of work in the nearby villages or town and, very often during my field research, I would reach a *Shatra* for observation and interviews only to be told that the men folk are away looking for work and that I should return later in the evening if I wished to speak to them.

The common perception is that Gypsies are clearly distinguishable due to their traditional colourful costumes. Gypsy women in particular are perceived as wearing long colourful skirts covered by colourful aprons with bright red shirts and silk headscarves covering long dark pleated hair (Figure IV.10). The traditionally dressed Gypsy men too are expected to wear black felt trousers, wide leather belts and felt jackets with a leather waistcoat with wide black hats and long moustaches (Figure III.10 and III.11). In particular, one would expect Gypsies performing traditional occupations to wear traditional clothes or at least some items of traditional clothing.



Figure IV.10 *Corturari* woman photographed in Viile-Dejului village Transylvania.

In addition to their colourful skirts, aprons and handkerchiefs, women and girls particularly those of the *Caldarari Neam*, wear traditionally gold coins and sea shells pleated in their hair and

depending on their husbands' or fathers' wealth they also wear necklaces made up of five to seven gold coins each of them worth in average £50. Occasionally, both Traditional men and women of considerable means have their incisors teeth crowned in gold.

My research found that traditional Gypsy costumes can only be encountered among two or three *Neams*. Among them, the *Gabors*, the *Caldarari* and to a lesser extent by some of the *Florari*. The mainly nomadic Gypsies (*Rudari* and *Caldarari*) encountered and interviewed by me, and most of the traditional Gypsies still practising archetypal occupations, were from both ends of the socio-economic spectrum and whilst some displayed indeed some of the features outlined above, most of them were poorly dressed. This is of course not to say that Gypsy men and women of other *Neams* never wear traditional clothes. Rather that they do it far more sporadically and not as a rule. I found however no correlation between the practice of a particular Gypsy traditional occupation and the wearing of traditional clothes.

Modern Rroma Occupations

Despite having a traditional main skill e.g. jewellery making or copper cauldron making, Rroma individuals can and very often do practice a variety of additional occupations e.g. agricultural work, animal husbandry, fortune telling, scrap metal collecting, *etc.* (Potra 1939, Pons 1995, Liégeois 1992). My research findings support this view as indeed in virtually all the cases of respondents with traditional Gypsy occupations, they were found to supplement their income with alternative modern sources e.g. *Argintari* Gypsies also working as social workers, *Caldarari* Gypsies also working as farm workers, *Gabori* Gypsies also selling imported electrical appliances, *etc.* (W13, T8, T9, T10, T6, T4 interviews)

Liégeois (1998) also suggests that an essential characteristic of the Gypsy work patterns is the independence which permits the individual to be in control of his own time. Thus flexibility is being preferred to job security. Accordingly, the essential characteristic of an acceptable trade is, above all, the way in which it can be practiced, and the choice of activities is the result of a compromise between the necessity of earning a living and the desire to maintain a lifestyle within the changing socio-economic environment.

A study conducted by the Institute for the Study of the Quality of Life in 1993 by Elena Zamfir and Catalin Zamfir into the level of economic marginalisation of the Roma population in Romania identified that out of a sample of 5,968 economically active respondents (from the population of self-declared Romanian Roma) the proportion of those Gypsies still with a traditional occupations is very low: 7%. Of these, 76 respondents were *Caldarari*, 12 *Argintari*, 8 *Lautari*, 67 *Corturari* and several other not specified *Neams* (Zamfir & Zamfir 1993). These figures obtained from researching a much larger sample than mine tend to confirm my finding that among the Romanian Roma, the Gypsy traditional occupations play a marginal role among all the other income generating means adopted by the Gypsies. In addition to Zamfir & Zamfir's findings however, my research explored the reasons for which these choices are being made and showed that in reality, even where these traditional Gypsy occupations are still alive, they are practiced almost without exception concomitantly with alternative modern *Gadje* occupations or with modern and updated variants of the traditional Gypsy occupations.

Most of the Modern Roma I interviewed claim descent from the first Gypsy slaves forcibly settled on the Crown, Monasteries' or *Boyars*' estates around the beginning of the 14th Century the *Vatrashi*. When asked, the Modern Gypsies usually describe themselves as either *Vatrashi*, *Florari*, *Lautari*, *Fierari* or simply as not belonging to any particular *Neam*. During my observation and interviewing, I noted the tendency of the militant and activist Roma and those aspiring to positions within the Roma NGO sector to associate themselves with the *Vatrashi Neam*. By contrast, the Modern Roma involved in commercial or professional activities tend to describe themselves as having ancestors belonging to a *Neam* with a specific skills such as the *Florari* (flowers growers and sellers), the *Lautari* (the musicians), the *Fierari* (the blacksmiths) or even some traditionally nomadic *Neams* such as the *Argintari* (the silversmiths) or the *Ursari* (the circus people).

I believe the reasons for this clear pattern of claiming distinct lineage lies with the perceived potential to be derived from the available options. It is plausible that the militant Roma and the aspiring Roma politicians might derive inspiration and concrete benefits in their activities from associating themselves with the first forcibly settled Gypsies and their emotionally loaded history. By claiming direct lineage from the *Vatrashi*, modern Roma might seek to account for their difference in lifestyle from those whom they aim to represent.

Similarly, modern day Roma who work in business and similar professions might derive equal inspiration and moral support from the assertion of a collective link to a historically successful and entrepreneurial ancestry. My interviews revealed that the Gypsies in general believe in the values of genetic inheritance and cross-generational passing of skills and knowledge. As such, a successful *Lautari* Roma would be regarded as genetically gifted and as having a head start to a traditional *Argintari* Roma who would contemplate taking up violin playing. I would incline to believe that these distinct patterns of lineage assertion can be both introverted (aiming at seeking inner strength and inspiration from a real or imaginary descent) or extroverted (aiming at persuading the others of the legitimacy of their claim to a profession excellence). These are however summary reflections based on direct observation which can only be confirmed by specific extended research.

Profound and rapid changes in the socio-economic and political Romanian environment in the last decades have impacted directly on the choice of economic activities traditionally undertaken by the Gypsies. In addition, the rural exodus, industrialisation and changes in the law (making it increasingly difficult to occupy a position without adequate paperwork such as proof of residency, proof of education record, previous employment references) impacted dramatically upon the traditional Gypsy way of selecting occupations. Today *Gadje* too have learned skills and occupations traditionally associated with Gypsies such as collecting scrap metal, collecting empty bottles, selling flowers in bulk or at a market stall, etc.. The growing interest of the majority population in formerly Gypsy specific trades and the natural shrinking of some of the previously secure Gypsy markets, meant the Gypsies too had to diversify by entering occasional medium to long term contractual employment in non-Gypsy specific occupations e.g. unskilled and semi-skilled factory work, industrial and town cleaning, refuse collection, newspapers selling (Figure IV.11), community work and others.



Figure IV.11 Roma working in modern occupations: selling newspapers in Bucharest, teaching in a *Gadje* school, market security staff

The combinations of various modern Rroma occupations is immensely varied both in scale and scope and it would be therefore impossible to attempt to compile a list of these occupations similar to the one presented for the traditional Gypsy occupations encountered during my research. Modern Rroma practise occupations and/or income generating activities mirroring perfectly the *Gadje* occupations. Indeed, not only are the range of occupations identical with the *Gadje* occupations but they also take place within the same environments (factories, offices, markets, residential areas, the military, etc.) and observe the same labour market legislation as the rest of the Romanian society.

Furthermore, my research observed that, with the only exception of the Rroma specific NGO's where Romany skills might be a requirement, there is virtually no difference in the skills required by the modern Rroma's positions and those occupied by the *Gadje*. A modern Rroma accountant or waiter would necessitate the same skills and credentials as a Romanian counterpart occupying the same position. This is not to say that instances of discrimination based on racial and ethnic differences do not occur, indeed they have often been alleged to me, but for the purpose of our analysis of the modern Rroma occupations it is important to mention that they are indistinguishable from those of the modern *Gadje* occupations.

My research revealed so firmly the lack of ethnic specific differences in the modern labour market that I believe it is accurate to state that, with the exception of specific Rroma-focussed positions like Rroma counsellors or Rroma party officials where indeed specific skills might be required, modern Rroma occupations *per se* do not actually exist. Rather we can speak of *Gadje* occupations and income generating activities, taken up by Modern Rroma men or women.

The dress patterns of the Modern Rroma are like other topics discussed in this section, very similar to those of the Romanian society. Throughout my field research I have sought to identify certain distinctions between the way modern Rroma dress and the way the Romanians do but I have not been able to do so. Like their fellow Romanian citizens, the Modern Gypsy men and women wear Western inspired clothes in various styles, conditions and quality. In this respect, it would be fair to say that the wider Romanian society itself does not differ significantly in the way it is dressed from the rest of the Europe. Whilst subtle differences might be notable to the trained eye, these differences are attributable in my view not so much to ethnic or geographical

demarcations rather to wealth of the respective individual. Whether ethnically modern Roma or German, the Romanian citizens cannot be distinguished in their modern clothes (Figure IV.12).



Figure IV.12 Roma respondents in modern occupations: President of a holding company - T1, Human rights activist - W25 and Director of Roma development agency - W16

One of the most significant feature of the Modern Roma dressing patterns however, and with a relevance to occupying modern occupations, is the fact the Modern Roma women do wear trousers, unlike the Traditional Roma women for whom this would be inconceivable. The trousers worn are jeans or lounge trousers made of various fabrics and colours and again, I have been unable to trace a distinct Roma pattern. Another significant feature of the Modern Roma men and women dressing patterns is that of the head gear. Headgear for traditional Roma men and women is omnipresent and is governed by a clear set of rules. It is unusual for a Traditional Roma adult man to be seen without a hat and for a traditional Roma woman past the puberty age to be seen without a headscarf (W28, W9, T23, T28, T29 interviews)⁹.

By contrast, Roma men and women involved in modern occupations appear to have dispensed with the headgear altogether, particularly when interacting with *Gadje*. The only headgear I noted to be worn by modern Roma were baseball caps with various Western logos for men and women and of course a variety of winter hats worn by both sexes during the cold seasons. I asked both men and women of their view on wearing traditional headgear and the general impression was that Roma in modern occupations perceived wearing of traditional headgear as unsophisticated and denoting backwardness.

Whilst interviewing Modern Roma working for a Roma focussed Human Rights Organisation in Bucharest (Romani CRISS), I was introduced to and interviewed one of its members who in his spare time trained to be a clothes designer (W24 interview). His imaginative and vibrant

⁹ See also field notes and photographs with workers at Orbis Cleaning Agency Bucharest (May 2003)

creations were modern stylizations of the Traditional Gypsy costumes and borrowed heavily from the *Caldarari* and *Gabor* style. Having glanced over his portfolio I noted his clothes shows were set up on the background of traditional *Shatra* decorum including camp fire, cart wheels and Gypsy music. George was dreaming to launch his collection on the Western market and promote this way 'positive aspects of Rroma culture'. Interestingly however, only two of his models were Rroma, the rest were Romanians. Even more interesting, I found the fact that once the show over, neither W24 nor his Rroma models were wearing at least one single item that could be described as traditional Gypsy.

I feel that it is important to draw attention to the fact that, occasionally, some of the occupations listed above were observed being practised by Rroma independent of their particular segment e.g. Traditional or Modern, of their respective *Neam* membership e.g. *Caldarari*, *Spoitori*, *Ursari*, of their knowledge of Romany, their wearing of traditional dress and independent of their geographical location e.g. Transylvania or Wallachia.

The particular traditional occupations through which various Rroma individuals derived an income was in my experience primarily an indication of their Traditional/Modern Segment membership and of their socio-economic background rather than of their respective *Neam* membership. For example, a Gypsy tinsmith was likely to be a *Gabori*, *Caldarari*, *Spoitori*, *Fierari* or *Corturari* but he would most likely be located on the Upper Quadrant of the Traditional Segment.

Similarly, none of the occupations observed in detail during my research and presented above, was found to be practiced on its own. In virtually all cases, one or more of the traditional Gypsy occupations listed above was practiced concomitantly or intermittently with other traditional or modern occupations. To further blur this intricate pattern of occupational attainment and individual characteristics e.g. cultural, linguistic, etc. even further, there appears to be very little correlation between respondents' characteristics and that of their parents or children. To give an illustration of the diversity encountered among the respondents and their parents or children I have attempted to structure these characteristics in a table capturing the characteristics of a sub-sample of respondents (Figure IV.13)



		Respondent's Ethnic Layers							Father's Ethnic Layers						
	Stated	Stated	Romany	Gypsy	Gypsy	Gypsy	Nomadic	Gypsy	Romany	Gypsy	Gypsy	Gypsy	Nomadic	Gypsy	
Code	Ethnicity	Neam	Fluency	Clothes	Values	Skills*	Lifestyle	Marriage	Fluency	Clothes	Values	Skills*	Lifestyle	Marriage	
T11	TR**	Corturari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
T15	MO	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	
T16	MO	NN***	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
T19	MO	Geambasi	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	
T24	MO	NN	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
T31	MO	NN	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
W01	TR	Caldarari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
W02	TR	Caldarari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
W03	TR	Argintari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
W04	TR	Caldarari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
W05	TR	Spoitori	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
W06	TR	Spoitori	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
W16	MO	Vatrashi	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	
W26	MO/TR	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	
W27	MO	Vatrashi	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	
W30	MO	Ciubotari	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	
W35	MO	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	

* Refers to whether the respondent's main income earning activity is a traditional or modern occupation.
 ** Traditional or Modern
 *** No stated *Neam* affiliation

Figure IV.13 Chart indicating the ethnic make-up and traditional/modern occupational attainment of a sub-sample. Note the inter-generational loss of traditional Gypsy skill

As will be seen, among a sub-sample of 17 Transylvania and Wallachia Modern and Traditional Gypsies there seem to be a small correlation between the type of occupation attained (Gypsy Skills) and the respondent's ethnic segment (Stated Ethnicity) or his *Neam* membership (Stated *Neam*). Furthermore and as described above, the linguistic element (Romany Fluency) or the dress (Gypsy Clothes) seem less significant in determining an individual's ethnic identity than the strength of cultural background (Gypsy Values) or the type of marriage (Gypsy Marriage). Despite this apparent limited emphasis placed by some of the respondents on some Ethnic Practices they were adamant in their listing them collectively as central to being Gypsy..

Rroma Occupations classification

Confronted with such a diversity of Gypsy and Rroma occupations and income generating sources, further exacerbated by diversity in regional distribution, style of living, seasonal patterns and scale of enterprise, I felt it would be beneficial if, for the purpose of introducing an element of structure in this complex pattern, I construct a scale of classes along which I could

place my respondents and the rest of the Roma observed and researched. In practice however, due to the distinct set of values adopted by the members of the two various segments of the Roma community (Traditional and Modern) the amalgamation of all the encountered occupation into one single table proved at best inaccurate and at worst impossible. As such, I have created two separate occupation scales relevant to each of the sectors: one occupation scale addressing the classification of the occupations encountered among the Traditional Gypsies and one describing and classifying occupations encountered among the Modern Roma.

Traditional Gypsy Occupation Classification

The Gypsy Occupation Classification (Table IV.14) uses as classifying factors firstly the barriers to entry into the respective trade. For example, working as a silversmith, coppersmith or tinsmith requires significant skills, tools, capital and know-how for purchasing raw materials, reputation among the potential customers, demand for the respective products and the existence of support networks among the respective *Neam* on whom to rely in case of large orders and/or during adverse market conditions.

By contrast, occupations such as basket weavers, scrap metal collectors, brick making and casual farming required low or no capital, low or no skills, depended heavily on the market fluctuations and seasonal patterns and did not allow for building up of a client base to ensure a repeat custom. Irrespective of his satisfaction with the service received, a brick-maker's client could not be depended upon for building a new room or workshop in the foreseeable future, nor could the quality of scrap metal collected be used to build up a reputation of reliability and quality for the respective scrap metal collector.

The resulting Gypsy Occupations Classification table therefore uses as classification criteria, elements relevant to pre-industrialised communities where opportunity for advancement and further professional development and the job security are not yet present. Similarly, working conditions in the industrialised sense such as the legislated work contracts, formal training processes, binding agreements with minimum working hours and other similar terms and conditions do not apply. Here, we observe instead a higher emphasis placed on the flexibility of working arrangements and geographical location and a greater reliance on informal training arrangements with a greatly reduced job security and legal protection.

 Gypsies Occupations Schema		
Rank	Descriptive title and occupations encountered	Typical <i>Neam</i>
1	Large Proprietors	<i>Caldarari, Gabors, Florari, Ursari + Vatrasi*</i>
	Working workshop owners, depots, scrap metal dealers, flowers dealers, market owners	
2	Self-employed professionals (Lower Grade)	<i>Lautari, Ursari + Vatrasi</i>
	Artists, fortune tellers	
3	Small proprietors	<i>Argintari, Gabors + Vatrasi</i>
	Working owners of small workshops, jewellers, commercial entrepreneurs	
4	Skilled self-employed manual workers in manufacturing (Higher Grade)	<i>Caldarari, Gabors, Argintari, Florari, Ciubotari + Vatrasi</i>
	Tin roof/rain gutters makers, cauldrons/still makers, florists, animal husbandry, jewellers	
5	Skilled self-employed manual workers in manufacturing (Lower Grade)	<i>Corturari, Rudari, Caramidari + Vatrasi</i>
	Basket weavers, brick makers, wooden kitchen utensils makers	
6	Unskilled self-employed workers	<i>Corturari, Rudari, Caramidari, Ursari + Vatrasi</i>
	Scrap metal collectors, jobbing farmers, day/building site labourers, newspapers sellers	
7	Marginals	<i>Corturari, Cocalari, Rudari, Caramidari, Ursari + Vatrasi</i>
	Unemployed, petty criminals, begging, squatting smuggling, scavenging	
	* <i>Vatrasi</i> refers here to modern Rroma or those not identifying themselves with a particular <i>Neam</i> .	

Figure IV.14 Gypsy Occupations Schema

According to my schema describing the Gypsy occupations encountered during my research, they can be grouped in seven general categories. It must be emphasised however, that very often, due to the fluctuating circumstances described in the previous sections and due to the overlap between various occupations practiced by the Gypsies at any one time, the borders between these categories are often very blurred. Interestingly, I have observed that the higher a

respondent's main occupation would be in the Gypsy Occupational Schema, the more distinctly defined his occupation would be.

Similarly, the lower we descend in the classification, the more likely we are to encounter combinations of various occupations on the part of the same individual. For example, respondents identified among occupation Level 1. Large proprietors: working workshop owners, scrap metal dealers, market owners and Level 2 Self-employed entertainers: artists and fortune-tellers (T1, T2, T3 W1, W2) were unlikely to undertake additional occupations from lower levels. By contrast however, respondents identified as occupying lower levels such as Level 7 Marginals: un-employed, petty criminals, begging, squatting, smuggling and dependent on benefits and Level 6 Unskilled self employed workers: scrap metal collectors, jobbing farmers, day building site labourers, newspapers sellers (T8, T9, T10, T10, W10, W11, W12, W13) were often encountered undertaking occasionally higher level occupations located at Level 5 Skilled self-employed manual workers: Basket weavers, brick makers, wooden kitchen utensils makers.

Beginning therefore with the highest level in the Gypsy Occupation Schema, Level 1 Large Proprietors: Working workshop owners, depots, scrap metal dealers, flowers dealers, market owners, I have identified here a number of respondents with high skills attainment and/or access to large amounts of liquid capital, easily transferable in raw materials, tools or access to specialist expertise such as legal and financial advice. Respondents located at this level would be most likely to belong to *Neams* such as the *Caldarari*, *Gabori* and *Florari*. They would most often specialise as coppersmiths, tinsmiths, market owners, large scale scrap metal dealers and depot owners (T1, T2, T3, W1, W2).

At Level 2, Self-employed entertainers: artist and fortune-tellers I have located high earning individuals in the music and circus (fortune-telling) professions who in view of their skills and ability to create and defend a market niche have secured a very large and reliable customer base. Traditional Gypsy music players and bands, Gypsy clairvoyants may not have required a substantial amounts of capital to start their business but they required nonetheless specific skills required an paid for generously by the *Gadje* and access to informal training which other members of the Gypsy community could not access.

Occupations encountered at the level below, Level 3 Small Proprietors: Working owners of small workshops, jewellers, commercial entrepreneurs, is similar to Level 1, with the difference that whilst it still required a high degree of skill as for silversmiths and cobblers etc. and the ownership of a small amount of specialist tools (see section above) it guaranteed nonetheless access to a much smaller clientele base and a much lower investment/return ratio. These occupations did require however a fixed based in the form of a building or premises from where the respective occupation can be practiced. These premises were usually hired and often consisted of the respondent's home but nonetheless the difference between these occupations and those encountered at level 1, was one of scale and size rather than significant scope.

At Level 4, Skilled self-employed manual workers in manufacturing (Higher Grade): Tin roof/rain gutters makers, cauldrons/still makers, florists, animal husbandry, jewellers, respondents operated on a smaller scale without a fixed premise for their business, often travelling around the villages (jewellers, coppersmiths, tin roof makers) or hiring out their skills in animal husbandry to farmers and agricultural cooperatives. The respondents located at this level as well as those located at the level 3 above, appeared to me to be ideally placed to take advantage of market opportunities and favourable circumstances and to diversify and/or expand the scale of their business. Occasionally, some of them would join up with other members of the same *Neam* or family and undertake for a limited period a large contract such as the manufacturing of the roof for a large complex of buildings or welding a large scale industrial size pressure copper boiler (W1, W2 interviews).

At a level below, Level 5 Skilled self-employed manual workers in manufacturing (Lower Grade): Basket weavers, brick makers, wooden kitchen utensils makers I also encountered self-employed artisans specialising in the manufacturing of small households utensils made out of wood or cane with small retail value. These respondents required very little skills to practice their occupations and they manufactured their products mostly during the winter season when the entire families huddled together around the wood burners in small cottages or shelters. The finished products would then be sold later during their summer travels at village fetes and markets. The brick makers in particular would combine the summer time manufacturing of bricks at various locations with the winter wood carving occupation back at their fixed abode.

As described above, the Level 6 Unskilled self-employed workers: scrap metal collectors, jobbing farmers, day building site labourers and newspapers sellers encountered by me during the research required virtually no skills other than the basic numeric skills needed for selling newspapers and the ability to distinguish the different types of ferrous and non-ferrous metals. In this category I have encountered, as described in the following chapter, the largest amount of illiterate and semi-illiterate respondents.

Lacking sufficient skills demanded by the market and having been deprived by the *Neam* support (they usually belonged to poorer, dispersed *Neams* such as the *Corturari*, *Rudari*, *Caramidari* unable to provide support to their struggling members) these respondents often combined a living with increased reliance on state benefits, begging and scavenging. These occasional experiences would bring them closer to Level 7 Marginals: Unemployed, petty criminals, begging, squatting etc.

Modern Roma Occupation Classification

Having discussed the classifications of occupations encountered among the traditional sub-segment of my sample I would now like to turn my attention to the modern segment. Occupations encountered here were more varied than those encountered among the traditional segment. This was mainly because, as explained above, the occupations of Modern Roma are in effect the occupations attained by the wider *Gadje* community governed by the same rules and subjected to the same employment and business laws. As such, the classifications of these occupations followed the same pattern as the classification of the Romanian occupations as listed in the 2002 Romanian National Census of Persons, Addresses and Occupational Classification.

Currently, there are already a number of up to date occupation classifications covering industrialised societies in general and the Romanian labour market and though they were discussed in detailed in the Literature Review Chapter: Introduction, I shall now briefly revisit the most significant of them.



Modern Occupation Schema

Rank	Descriptive title and occupations encountered*
1	Legislators, executive members, leaders in public administration and socio-economic and political units Legislators, Members of the Executive, High Dignitaries in Public Administration, Leaders of Large Socio-Economic Units, Leaders of Small Socio-Economic Units
2	Specialists in intellectual and scientific occupations Physicians, Mathematicians, Engineers, Specialists in biology, agronomy and life sciences, Professors in Tertiary and secondary education and related, Other specialists with intellectual and scientific occupations
3	Technicians, foremen, and assimilated Technicians in the physics and technical domains, Technicians in life sciences, health protection and related, Teachers and related, Other related occupations
4	Administrative functionaries Office functionaries, Public service functionaries
5	Operative service workers in commerce and related Workers in personal and protection services, Fashion models, sales assistants in shops and markets
6	Farmers and qualified workers in forestry and fishing Farmers and qualified workers in forestry and fishing
7	Artisans and qualified workers in machine and installation maintenance Skilled workers and craftsmen in the extractive and building, Industries, Skilled workers and craftsmen in metallurgy, steel constructions and related, Skilled workers and craftsmen in fine mechanics, printing, artisanship and related, Skilled workers and craftsmen in alimentation and other artisan fields
8	Machine and installations operators, machines, equipments, products assemblers Operators of fixed installations and related, Operators of machines and heavy machine and equipment and other products assemblers, Vehicles operators of mobile equipment
9	Unskilled workers Unskilled workers in services and sales, Unskilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, Unskilled workers in the mining, constructions, public works, manufacturing and transport
10	Armed forces Undeclared occupations
11	Benefit dependents Benefiting from housing benefit, social assistance, child benefit, invalidity benefit
* as listed in the Romanian National Census of Persons, Addresses and Occupational Classification 2002	

Figure IV.15 Modern Rroma Occupations Schema

The 2002 Romanian National Census of Persons, Addresses and Occupational Classification offered me the best tool for the classification of the occupations encountered among the modern

segment of my sample (Figure IV.15). According to this classification, the Romanian labour market can be categorised into ten major categories according to the respective occupation's required skills and expertise. To these categories I have added a further eleventh level, corresponding to those respondents identified by me as reliant on various state benefits including incapacity and pensions. In total, the eleven categories range from Level 1 Legislators, executive members, leaders in public administration and socio-economic and political units: Legislators, Members of the Executive, High Dignitaries in Public Administration, Leaders of Large Socio-Economic Units, Leaders of Small Socio-Economic Units to Level 11 Benefit dependents: Benefiting from housing benefit, social assistance, child benefit, invalidity benefit.

I have encountered several Rroma at Level 1, and had discussed with three though one was a woman (Government Rroma Advisor) thus I could not include her in my formal sample (see Methodology Chapter) and one, a Senior University Lecturer, was unable to offer me sufficient interviewing time, rather the discussion with him took an informal format. The remaining one (W36) was a member of the Lower House of the Romanian Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) and the representative of a large Rroma Party. The expertise encountered among all these three professionals and the impact of their position upon the rest of the Romanian society was considerable. I have been told that due to their membership of the Rroma community, the ensuing voting power they could generate and their exposure to the national and international media, they could exercise comparatively greater influence than their Romanian counterparts occupying similar positions. Indeed, throughout my field research, I was often referred to the names and statements of these individuals and on a couple of instances I have watched them on national television programmes¹⁰.

Immediately below them, at Level 2 I also encountered and interviewed specialists in intellectual and scientific occupations: Physicians, Mathematicians, Engineers, Specialists in biology, agronomy and life sciences, Professors in tertiary and secondary education and related, other specialists with intellectual and scientific occupations. Again, I was not able to formally interview all of the Rroma I have observed in this category but the informal discussions with all of them and the formal interview I conducted with two of them (T13, W26) indicated an identical role, responsibilities and privileges as enjoyed by the rest of their Romanian colleagues.

¹⁰ See informal conversation notes with Maria Ionescu (Romanian Government Rroma Counsellor), MD Romanian Parliament Deputy and Delia Gheorghe - *Avem amentza* Rroma Association (Bucharest 2003)

At level 3, (Technicians in the physics and technical domains, Technicians in life sciences, health protection and related, Teachers and related, Other related occupations) I have observed and interviewed a number of teachers in a secondary school in a predominantly Roma quarter in Bucharest. One of them in particular (W26) came across as very interesting as he was one of the interviewees most adamant that he is a Traditional Gypsy though in fact he displayed none of the ethnic facets I have described above as making up the archetypal Gypsy identity. W26's clothes were very modern, he lived fully settled in a comfortable flat and worked as a teacher with a permanent contract in a secondary school. Furthermore, his father too wore modern clothes, lived fully settled and did not specialise in any specific traditional Gypsy occupation. Despite these characteristics, W26 insisted to be referred to as a Traditional Gypsy. His occupation however, was actually specifically related to Traditional Gypsy values as he was in fact teaching Romany language and ethnicity to Roma children within the context of Romanian education establishment. His working hours, responsibilities, remuneration package and teaching methods did not differ in any way from those of his *Gadje* colleagues who were teaching other subjects. W26 also confirmed during his interview that he was in fact mixing more with *Gadje* friends and colleagues than with Roma.

'Yes I am a traditional Gypsy, more traditional then those guys you see on TV, you know but that doesn't mean I mix only with Gypsies. I have lots of Gadje friends, we go out together watch the football, you know the whole things, of course I do, I went to university with them, I live next door to them, my wife works with them and my children play with them, of course I do'

(W26 interview, teacher of Romany at Ferentari secondary school, Bucharest – Wallachia)

At level 4, (Office functionaries, Public service functionaries) I have observed a larger number of Roma employees of non-governmental organisations, accountants, functionaries and similar positions. All the Roma observed and interviewed by me in these roles were of modern descent and though some of them claimed to have a distant grandfather or even father with distinct traditional Gypsy heritage, they themselves appeared very modern in appearance, language, life-style and/or adherence to traditional code of Gypsy values. Among respondents with occupation from this level, W23, W24 and W25 were typical examples of young, educated and rising modern Roma. All of them were immaculate in appearance, spoke very good Romanian and confessed of knowing very little Romany.

Interestingly however, whilst all these respondents occupied level 4 positions, they were all employed in Roma organisations or associations. In the following chapter I will explore the extent to which their ethnicity had in fact aided them to reach their current positions. For now, it is worth explaining that these modern Roma respondents came without exception from settled families where the father and sometimes the mother too occupied modern occupations among *Gadje*. Having been raised in environments with considerable cultural and social capital their access to positions of level four, might not have been as straightforward as of the *Gadje* with similar education and background but it must have been comparatively easier than that of their fellow traditional Gypsies. Having reached these positions, these Roma enjoyed regular salaried employment, benefited from annual holidays, statutory rights such as pension, sick leave and most importantly secure long term employment. Ironically, in view of their employment in specific Roma organisations, their prospects in terms of employment security, career opportunities and access to legal advice was apparently better than for *Gadje* in similar roles¹¹.

At level five, 'Operative service workers in commerce and related' (Workers in personal and protection services, fashion models, sales assistants in shops and markets) I have met and interviewed a Roma (W30) who was working at the time of the interview as a sales assistant in his brother-in-law's grocery shop whilst at the same time selling flowers at a near-by bus stop and also working occasionally as van driver. W30's knowledge of Romany was very basic according to his own acceptance, in fact when I asked him a couple of basic questions in Romany he smiled and explained that he did not speak the language 'that well'. As a true Modern Roma he also wore modern clothes, had no knowledge of any traditional Gypsy skills and lived a fully settled life. His occupation did not involve a high level of skills or training though to work as a van driver he did require a driving license. This requirement however was in line with the legal requirement for any van-driver whether Roma or *Gadje* and was not resulting from his ethnicity.

W30's long term employment prospects were by his own description very limited and from his detailed account of what his daily work involved, I understood that he did not have a formal employment contract, that his brother-in-law did not pay any insurance or tax for his work and

¹¹ See field notes and informal discussion notes with Roma Directors and Social Workers at Avem Amentza - Bucharest, Romani CRISS - Bucharest, Sinti Humanitas - Cluj, Centre for the Roma Resources - Cluj, Office of the Deputy Mayor - Cluj (Transylvania and Wallachia 2003)

that he had virtually no guarantee that there would be work for him next week. W30 also derived some of his earnings from child benefit and income support. Over 30% of the Roma I observed in similar positions enjoyed equally limited job security or long term career prospects and the employee ethnicity did not appear to play any role in the respective employment arrangements. Whilst W30 as well as other respondents alluded to discriminatory employment practices, he was also candid in admitting that he secured his current employment due to his family relationship with the shop's owner; thus one can argue that his Roma ethnicity had in fact aided him in obtaining that job.

At level 6: 'Farmers and qualified workers in forestry and fishing' I have met and interviewed one respondent T19 in a remote Transylvanian village. I found that this category and in those below an increasing difficulty of locating respondents matching the right characteristics. In view, this is because in the rural areas in particular where Roma have lived for generations, they are virtually fully absorbed in the *Gadje* community. It is in these areas where most respondents gave me alternative answers to the question: what are you, Roma, Gypsy, Hungarian or Romanian? Having been asked this question, several respondents gave me either alternative Romanian and Roma answers or Hungarian and Roma. My observation at the time was that, unlike in the urban areas where Roma could create Roma specific social networks, in the rural areas where the *Gadje* were predominant, Roma had to interact with the rest of the community on much intense level thus their assimilation was accelerated.

T19 was a well established farmer earning the majority of his living from agriculture and animal husbandry but deriving additional income from commercial activities. During the formal interview and subsequent discussions T19 explained to me that benefited from an initial long term contract with the local state-owned farm where he worked initially as stable cleaner then through 'hard work and respectful attitude' learned additional skills and became eventually the head of the animal carers. When at the end of communist period, the farm was disbanded, T19 was able to buy some stock at reduced prices and together with his sons, set up his own farm.

The entry requirement in his field was skilled based and a small amount of capital for buying the first stock. By the time T19 was able to set up his own business, at the end of the communist period, he had already built himself a large house and was able to secure a loan. Together with his savings T19 found himself in an ideal position to start a business. The availability of

virtually free labour provided by his extended family also gave him a distinct market advantage. With a combination of specific skills, free labour, available capital and good networks T19 experienced a very comfortable living, entirely similar to that of successful Romanian farmers.

T19 and his wife did speak Romany fluently and claimed membership of the *Geambasi Neam* (Horse traders) and all their children were married to *Gadje*. I believe that initially his *Neam* membership might have assisted T19 to secure an initial job with the cooperative farm, gradually this initial advantaged ought to have been reduced and I observed no evidence that at the time of interviewing T19 owed a great deal of his circumstances to being a Gypsy. With increasing amounts of capital available, T19's family gradually diversified their commercial activities and began trading in textiles and later in made-to-order knitting. His long term employment prospects were entirely similar to those of any Romanian farmer and though he did not benefited from formal job security, legal protection, annual leave or medical assistance, he was enjoying a comfortable semi-retirement.

At level 7: 'Skilled workers and craftsmen in the extractive and building, Industries, Skilled workers and craftsmen in metallurgy, steel constructions and related, Skilled workers and craftsmen in fine mechanics, printing, artisanship and related, Skilled workers and craftsmen in alimentation and other artisan fields' and level 8: Operators of fixed installations and related, Operators of machines and heavy machine and equipment and other products assemblers, Vehicles operators of mobile equipment I have observed and interviewed a number of respondents both in Transylvania and Wallachia. I found it particularly easy to contact respondents from this level as many of the settled Roma, like their Romanian neighbours were encouraged during the communist era to enter employment in factories and large industrial complexes. Many of them acquired industry specific skills and were able to secure long term employment prospects, state owned accommodation and medical assistance. Their children benefited from free education and were involved in integration programmes as part of large scale, social engineering projects (W36, W17, W22, W23, W29, W23 interviews)

It is alleged but I do not have evidence supporting this claim, that with the collapse of the centrally planned economy, the Gypsies were the first to lose their jobs and be made redundant and lose all the employment related benefits. I can confirm that most of the respondents I have encountered from this group and who once belonged to this social level, were almost unanimous

in regretting the fall of the communism. I was often explained that for 'them' the communism provided security, roofs over their heads, schools for their children and hospitals for their sick.

One particular respondent, W22, a machine operator at the Braila steel plant in Wallachia, still benefited from some of these-job related advantages though greatly reduced. Specifically, W22 still held to his plant provided flat though the entire block of flats was no longer serviced with electricity or heating and had the relative security of a permanent job though there months when they could not be paid. Having attained several training and development programmes during the communist era, W22 was now operating machines below his potential and was supplementing his income with artistic activities as he was an organist and was able to perform at weddings for a small fee and free meals. When I met and interviewed W22, he was also working as Roma Projects Coordinator for a local charity. When asked how could he be a machine operator and Projects Coordinator at the same time, I was told that when he was assigned a project by the respective charity, he was being signed off 'for medical reasons' by the local doctor. The plant management knew he was not sick for he was occasionally playing the organ at a local restaurant frequented by his managers but since the plant could ill-afford to pay him anyway, they were turning a blind eye. His income levels were therefore reduced and fluctuating according to the plant's contracts and W22 had very little power to influence it other than taking additional jobs away from his qualifications and experience.

W22 did not speak Romany and he explained that in view of his work with the Roma, he wished he could speak the language. Having interviewed his father (W35) and his brother (W16) I noticed that his father spoke fluent Romany. I was told that his father deliberately refused to teach them Romany with a view to help their 'integration' in the Romanian society. Ironically, whilst this might have helped W22 in his machine operator role during the communist era, now it played no role. In fact, W22 was now finding himself at a considerable disadvantage when undertaking Roma project work for he could not speak the language of his beneficiaries.

The list of levels continues with occupations at level 9: 'Unskilled workers in services and sales, Unskilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, Unskilled workers in the mining, constructions, public works, manufacturing and transport' and level 11: 'Benefit dependents - Benefiting from housing benefit, social assistance, child benefit, invalidity benefits, etc.' Out of all the social levels making up the two segments of the Roma community

(Traditional and Modern) these latter levels, requiring lower skills and knowledge and generating in turn poorer revenue were the most populous in terms of ease of access and availability of potential respondents. Throughout my field research, respondents with this level of occupational attainment were far easier to reach than those at higher levels on the schema; over two thirds of the respondents (42) were placed on the lower levels of occupational attainment schemas. Most of the modern Roma I interviewed were located on the lower levels of the Roma Occupation Schema and this is of course to be expected considering the overall distribution of the Roma population in the Romanian labour market (see Literature Review Chapter: Introduction). Similarly to the Gypsy Occupation Schema, the respondents observed by me on the lower levels of the MOS tended to fluctuate between these adjacent lower levels.

Modern Roma positioned at this level are often illiterate or semi-illiterate and their skills levels are particularly low. To put it in perspective, the most common aspiration I encountered at this stage would be to obtain a driving licence which in turn, would enable the individual to work as a van driver or as an unlicensed taxi driver. Since to qualify for a driving license in Romania one has to be literate to qualify for a written test most of the Roma were unable to reach thus far. Similarly, the only income security they appeared to have was linked to the benefits they were entitled to at any one time and most of the time their income consisted only of a combination of child support, unemployment benefit, pension and disability benefit. Respondents located at level 11 in particular were the most deprived of my entire sample and their standard of living was far below those located at the lowest level in the traditional segment.

Virtually all the respondents interviewed from these categories (T28, T29, T30, T31, W30, W31, W32, W33, W34, W35) described that at various points throughout the recent months they had alternatively derived an income from both state benefits and unskilled work in various fields: daily labour on building sites, street cleaning, loading and unloading train wagons and trucks, car washers, fruit pickers, stable cleaners, etc. Living in squalid conditions, often squatting or in abandoned blocks of flats, with diets consisting of discarded food at the end of market days, these respondents had according to my observations a very limited range of options available to them. Significantly, many of them confessed during the interviews and subsequent discussions that they have served time in penitentiaries for various offences and some of them were even defiant about their options. One particular respondent confessed that having served time for storing stolen goods, he would do it again only to get a chance to 'get food on his kids' table'.

A level which at the point of my research was still valid but that was likely to be disappearing was Level 10 Armed forces. As described in the Methodology Chapter, for the purpose of uniformity and with a view to exploring the potential impact of the military service upon the respondents' social mobility (something that eventually did not generate the expected result and had to be dropped) all the respondents were selected from post-military service age.

Regardless of their assumed or real *Neam* descent, all the Modern Rroma interviewed and observed during my research derived their income from various income generating activities. At the lower end of the spectrum, these activities fluctuated according to seasonal and regional demand or simply according to the *ad-hoc* demand with no particular seasonal or regional pattern. At the higher end of the spectrum the occupations observed tended to be more stable and I observed Rroma individuals working as legislators, politicians, academics and able to hire long term or permanent employees, owners of workshops, factories and even lorry fleets. These occupations bore no relation to the particular *Neam* the respondent would belong to and indeed very often the modern Rroma respondents would deny membership of any particular *Neam*.

Conclusions

This chapter began by introducing the reader to a typology of traditional Gypsy occupations as described in the related literature and as encountered by me during the field research. The text indicated the extent to which, the typical Gypsies occupations have evolved to match the changing demands of the modern societies. Specifically, it illustrated that in most of the cases researched, whilst the respondents have retained the core of their traditional skills, their current occupation attainment consisted of combinations of new modern occupations to which the traditional skills were still relevant and other more modern unrelated occupations.

Next, through case studies, quotes and visual data, the chapter described the most common occupations encountered among the Modern Rroma and to the context within these occupations were practiced. Here, I shown that with the few exceptions of Rroma specific careers, the modern Rroma occupations are virtually identical to the current *Gadje* occupations. Both type of occupations (Traditional and Modern) were described according to a number of categories corresponding to the various levels of skills required, capital needed to access and operate within

the respective labour niche, job security, reliance on the rest of the family members, ability to impact upon the working environment, fluctuation of demand, etc.

In view of the distinct characteristics identified in each of the two ethnic segments (Traditional and Modern), I have created two different occupational level schemas designed to indicate as accurately as possible, the various occupational spectra across which the occupations encountered by me were located. The reader was thus familiarised with the concept that the occupations encountered within each ethnic segment were observed from points of reference relevant within the respective segment. As such, the occupations encountered among the Modern Roma respondents were considered and compared with the rest of the *Gadje* occupations and the occupational schema constructed for this segment (ROS) mirrored in effect the classification of the Romanian Occupations¹² as constructed by the Romanian Commission for National Statistics for the 2002 National Census. By contrast, the occupations encountered among the Traditional Gypsies could not be observed in the context of the Roma Occupation Schema because whilst the ROS had relevance in a modern industrialised labour environment, the Traditional Gypsies operated using production and contractual mechanisms relevant to pre-industrialised societies. For this reason, I created a separate occupation schema, the Gypsy Occupation Schema (GOS) with fewer occupational levels but better geared towards the type of occupations practiced by the traditional settled and semi-nomadic Gypsies.

Through case studies, the paragraphs above illustrated how all individuals from both ethnic segments and located at various occupational levels adopted strategies of combining various occupations within their lives and sometimes at the same time. Significantly, the chapter showed that Traditional Gypsies were observed to also undertake income earning activities specific to the Modern Roma (i.e. *Gadje*) segment but that this did not apply to the respondents interviewed from among the Roma segment i.e. that I have not encountered Modern Roma respondents who also practiced traditional or traditional-based Gypsy occupations.

¹² See *Classificarea Ocupatiilor din Romania*, Ministry of Social protection and the National Commission for Statistics, Lumina Lex, Bucharest 2003

Educational Attainment and Social Mobility among Romanian Roma
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Chapter V

Social Trajectories and the role of education - an overview

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Introduction

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or entire groups of individuals between various social positions. It is commonly accepted that social mobility can be firstly discussed from the 'direction of movement' point of view and by this I mean upwards social mobility (referring to those individuals or groups who ascend socially) or downwards social mobility (referring to those individuals who descend socially). Secondly and less commonly debated, is the discussion of social mobility from the 'distance of movement' point of view. By this latter distinction, social mobility movements are discussed as long-range or short range depending on the distance travelled between two given social positions attained at various points in time by the same individual. A final distinction in the study of social mobility is that between intra-generational and inter-generational social mobility (Sorokin 1964, Strauss 1971, Sorokin 1998, Heath 1981, Waters 1994).

Though much earlier published and undoubtedly more generalist in approach, Pitirim A. Sorokin's description of the social stratification as the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically superposed classes is, I believe, more pertinent to my research, in particular to the dichotomy prevalent amidst the two Roma segments. According to Sorokin, the basis and very essence of social stratification consists in the unequal distribution of rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among the members of a society (Sorokin 1928). Sorokin goes on to explain social mobility trajectories as taking place along two axes: vertical and horizontal. Social mobility along the vertical scale he describes as the ascending and descending of an individual from one social stratum to another. Most importantly however and crucial to my research, Sorokin identifies the horizontal social mobility and describes it as the transition of individuals from one social group to another situated on the same level e.g. from one citizenship group to another, from one religious group to another without any noticeable change in the social position of an individual in the vertical direction (Sorokin 1928). This last distinction on horizontal mobility is what recommends Sorokin's

writings on social mobility as particularly relevant to my research as it first proposes the concept of two-dimensional social mobility. This theme will be detailed in the 'Ethnic Transition' pages.

Firstly though, this chapter will introduce the summary of social trajectories observed among the sample of interviewees during the pilot, preliminary and main visit interviews. I interviewed in total over 70 respondents on a variety of topics perceived as relevant to the main themes of the research: ethnic identity, educational and occupational attainment and social mobility. As described in the Methodology Chapter, the sample of respondents interviewed was purposefully selected from the overall Roma population in Romania. The sample was selected in such way as to shed light on the way in which the respondent's particular background impacts upon his social mobility. By respondent's background I refer to the totality of ethnic, educational and employment characteristics as illustrated by their answers contained in the open ended questionnaire. I sought to identify respondents from both the Traditional and Modern sectors of the Roma community. I also sought to interview individuals located at various strata across the Roma Social Diversity Model (See Methodology Chapter). Finally, I sought to interview Roma whose life experiences could shed the clearest possible light on the possible social trajectories followed by the Romanian Roma community.

The backgrounds and experiences brought forward by the responses obtained from my sample cannot be taken as representative of the backgrounds and experiences encountered by the entire Roma population of Romania. Most importantly, I cannot extrapolate that the social trajectories embarked upon by the Gypsies present in my sample are representative of the entire social mobility pattern prevalent among the Romanian Roma. However, they do illustrate the range of trajectories that can be found. Next, the chapter will bring forward a richer understanding of the main social trajectories identified among various types of Romanian Gypsies in Transylvania and Wallachia. The in-depth qualitative interviews, the informal discussions carried with Roma from all walks of life and hundreds of hours of observation conducted in various Gypsy settlements, have succeeded in analysing the main trajectories identified and they are now presented from the perspective of the individuals who undertook the respective trajectories focussing on the various directions and distances upon which these Roma individuals have travelled. The case studies thus selected will place the respective social trajectories into context and will describe the social underlying the observed patterns of mobility.

During my research and the subsequent data analysis it became very clear that a by-product of the Social Mobility process is in fact the Ethnic Transition of the respective individuals from positions of ‘nomadic Gypsies’ to ‘fully settled Rroma’ something that Sorokin referred to as ‘horizontal mobility’. The process of ethnic transition took place in some cases within one generation (intra-generational) or in some other cases along several generations (inter-generational). As it will be seen, whilst the speed of Ethnic Transition varies from case to case, the actual process through which respondents shed one or more Ethnic Practices (see Chapter III) is occurring concomitantly with the process of Social Mobility. Far from being presented as a criticism of the community and group of individuals who in the process of ascending socially lose some of their Gypsy distinctiveness, my findings are only intended to highlight the existence of another type of social trajectory: Ethnic Transition (horizontal mobility).

Following the summary description of the main social trajectories identified among the sample of respondents, this chapter will present an outline of the Romanian Educational System, the various stages available to the Rroma and *Gadje* individuals. This section will familiarise the reader with the formal academic environment with the aim of assisting the reader to place in context the individual education attainment levels reported by the respondents and the subsequent impact on their social mobility.

In the following chapters (see Chapter VI: Case Studies Traditional Gypsies and Chapter VII: Case Studies Modern Rroma), I will describe in detail social processes underlying the social trajectories identified in this chapter and the reasons for the impact of the attainment of educational qualifications on the Gypsies’ social mobility.

Codification and grading methodology

The overall methodology adopted for this research has been presented in its entirety in the methodology chapter of this thesis. The following pages will not reiterate therefore the methods used for questionnaire design, respondent selection during the field trip and so forth. Instead, they will concentrate on the next stage of the research, in particular on the coding and summary of the interviews and the positioning of respondents across the occupational scale.

The codification and summary of the interviews began by identifying a number of sections in the transcripts containing data deemed essential to the investigation of the relation between respondent's educational attainment and the subsequent pattern of his social mobility. The purpose of this exercise was to condense all the data drawn during the open ended interviews. The formal and informal sections of the interviews lasted in average over 90 minutes and the many pages of transcript of each interview had to be condensed into one A4 page, consisting of the most important data (See Appendix). Areas of particular interest thus selected for codification were:

Interview location and interviewee's place of birth: these two sections were considered significant because they would shed light on the interviewee's intra-generational geographical mobility. This I considered to be significant because I wanted to ascertain whether social mobility occurs concomitant with geographical mobility.

Interviewee's research code: this is the research code assigned to each interviewee in order to preserve the respondent's anonymity. The letter T or W denotes the province where the interviewee was based. The number bears no relevance to the respondent's social position, rather it reflects the order in which the interviewees were recruited.

Interviewee's ethnic background: This entry refers to the respondent's membership of either the Traditional or Modern segment of the Rroma community. This was derived from the interview area dealing with ethnic identity including questions probing respondent's understanding of the meaning of Rroma identity, his adherence to the *Marime* Code, his knowledge and embracing of Traditional or Modern Rroma practices, his dress style i.e. Traditional Gypsy or Modern European clothes, his life style i.e. settled or nomadic and his statement regarding his ethnicity (See Traditional/Modern Rroma Dimensions Chapter).

Interviewee's age: Interviewees were selected from Rroma men of post-military service age, i.e. 21 years old. The age was considered relevant for the summary coding because I wanted to observe whether a particular level of occupational attainment might be a partial reflection of the respondent's age and his years in the labour market. This was particularly useful when comparing father and son's respective social level.

Educational attainment: This entry summarised respondent's educational experience expressed as either number of years of full time school attendance or the respective educational level successfully completed, i.e. primary, secondary or tertiary. In cases where the respondent fulfilled an educational level and only a few years of the subsequent stage without actually completing it, the educational attainment was recorded as the completed stage. E.g. primary plus the number of years from the subsequent stage e.g. two.

Respondent's GOS/ROS level: this entry referred to the respondent's occupational attainment graded according to Gipsy Occupational Schema (GOS) or the Rroma Occupational Schema (ROS) designed and adopted in the previous chapter; recall that there are seven GOS levels and 11 ROS levels (see Social Structures Chapter). This social grading of occupations proved a useful tool for the categorisation of the occupations attained by my respondents. Quite often, the respondent declared a number of occupations as his regular sources of income. Since each of these occupations was scored differently, I averaged the respective levels and proposed an approximate Average Level as respondent's main occupational attainment. In order to be able to observe the pattern of intra-generational social trajectory, all the occupations mentioned by the respondents were listed in the order in which the respondent undertook them. For summary purposes and to provide average simplified patterns of all respondents' trajectories, I gave here average scores.

Respondent's employment status: I felt that a significant aspect of respondent's social positioning would be his employment status as an employee (EE), employer (ER) or self-employed worker (SE). In certain cases, the respondent's employment status fluctuated according to work volume and seasonal patterns and in these cases, both statuses would be mentioned with the primary status listed first and the secondary listed second e.g. a self-employed rain gutter maker would be primarily self-employed but would also occasionally hire casual workers to help him with large orders. In this case his employment status would be recorded as SE/ER.

Respondent's father's occupation description, respondent's father's occupation level and respondent's father's employment status: these entries were recorded in the same way as the respondent's entries and the aim here was to be able to compare father's and son's averaged occupational attainment and to be able to trace the subsequent inter-generational trajectory.

Intra-generational trajectory: this entry summarises the social trajectory experienced by the respondent within his own working life. Possible options here were of ascending, descending or stable trajectory.

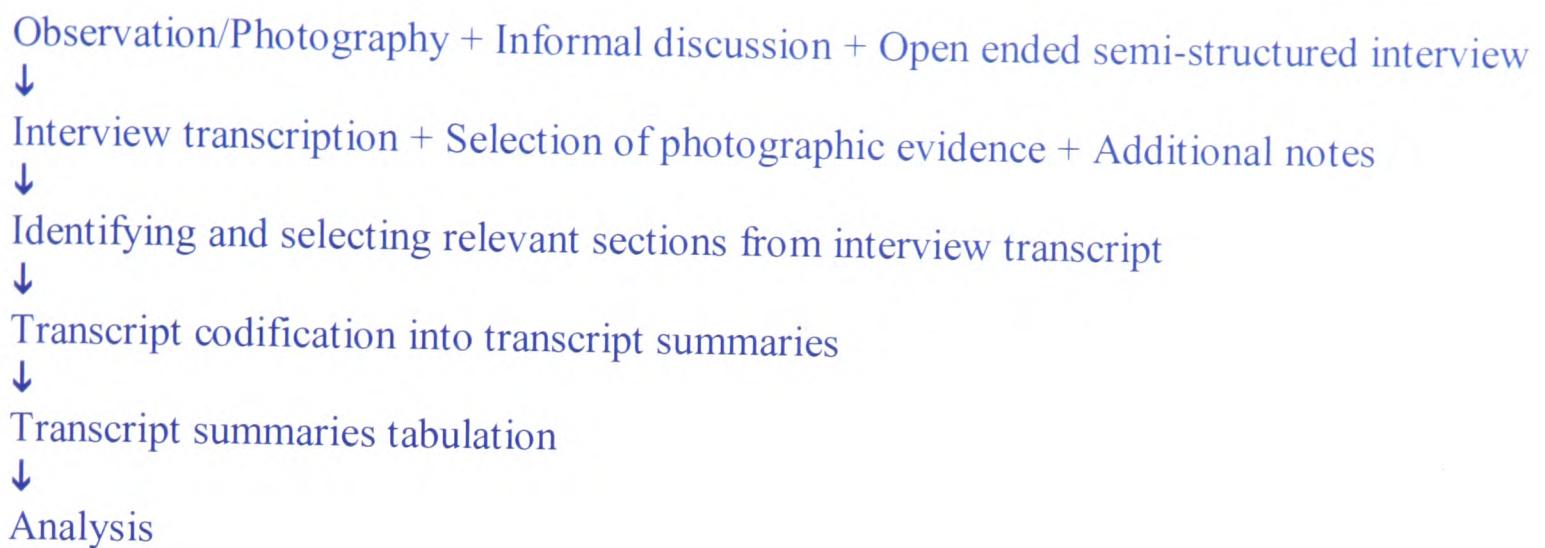
Inter-generational trajectory: this entry refers to the difference between respondent's current occupational level and the occupational level of his father expressed as the difference between the two average levels. In practice, the inter-generational trajectory indicates the social distance between the two generations and is a very important area of interest when researching the social mobility of an individual. As when describing the patterns of intra-generational social mobility, the categories describing the observed patterns of social progression, stability or regression are expressed as Short, Medium or Long Range depending of the number of levels between the two generations. Similarly, potential directions of movement can be ascending, stable or descending.

All the interview transcripts thus coded have been further condensed into two Summary Tables consisting of a number of columns for each respondent (see Figure V.1 and Figure V.2). The number of headings was further reduced from the sixteen in the previous stage to only eight. The last stage of coding summarised the data in eight columns under the following headings:

Respondent's Code, Respondent's Ethnicity, Respondent's Average Occupational Level, Respondent's Employment Status, Respondent's Father's Average Occupational Level, Respondent's Father's Employment Status, Intra-generational Social Trajectory and Inter-generational Social Trajectory.

To enhance data visualisation, the intra-generational and inter-generational Social Trajectories applying to each respondent, have been listed in graphic colour-coded format, as ascending (blue), stable (green), descending (red) or horizontal (yellow) blue and respectively red vectors. The purpose of this further coding and summary of the interview transcripts was to concentrate the available data in easily readable, ready to interpret Summary Tables (Figure V.1 and V.2). Samples of the full length interview transcripts and coded summaries are appended.

The collection and interpretation of data process thus consisted of the following stages:



Rroma occupational attainment and social mobility

As indicated above (see also the Social Structures Chapter), the GOS (Gypsy Occupational Schema) and the ROS (Rroma Occupational Schema) were adopted as the scales against which my respondents' occupations would be measured along with those of their fathers. The respective number of levels offered a wide enough list of possibilities for the categorisation of most of the Rroma occupations encountered, both modern and traditional.

In order to compare respondent's occupational level with that of his father, I had to bear in mind that often the father's higher occupational level was due to the father's longer exposure to the opportunities and incremental increases of the respective position in the labour market. In addition, my respondents' fathers' careers have often reached their apex during the years of the centrally planned economy with its nationwide programmes of literacy programmes, re-training opportunities, compulsory employment, positive discrimination and heavy influence of the trade unions (Zamfir & Zamfir 1993). By contrast, the youngest respondents had to compete in the post-revolution Romanian labour market and an increasingly decentralised economy. For them, the labour market was a far more competitive environment with far fewer job opportunities, company subsidised training programmes and instances of negative discrimination. In other words, even if apparently father and son might occupy similarly graded positions, I noted the presence of a short social ascending trajectory as the same occupation might have a higher desirability in the current competitive market than in a socialist economy.

Respondent		Neam	GOS Level	ROS Level	Employment Status	GOS Level	Father ROS Level	Employment Status	Intra-gen. Vertical Mobility	Inter-gen. Vertical Mobility
Ethnicity	Code									
Traditional	W1	Caldarari	3		Self-employed	5		Self-employed	Stable	Ascending
Traditional	W2	Caldarari	4		Self-employed	4		Self-employed	Stable	Stable
Traditional	W3	Argintari	4		Self-employed	5		Self-employed	Ascending	Ascending
Traditional	W4	Cladarari	9		Self-employed	5		Self-employed	Descending	Stable
Traditional	W5	Caldarari	6		Self-employed	6		Self-employed	Stable	Stable
Traditional	W6	Spoitori	6/7		Employee	5		Employee/Self-e	Stable	Descending
Traditional	W7	Spoitori	6/7		Employee	6		Self-employed	Descending	Descending
Traditional	W7	Spoitori	6/7		Employee	6		Employee	Stable	Stable
Traditional	W8	Pieptanari	4		Employee	5		Self-employed	Ascending	Ascending
Traditional	W9	Pieptanari	6		Self-employed	5		Self-employed	Stable	Stable
Traditional	W10	Pieptanari	4		Self-employed	4		Self-employed	Stable	Stable
Traditional	W11	Rudari	4		Self-employed	5		Self-employed	Stable	Stable
Traditional	W12	Argintari	2		Employee	5		Self-employed	Ascending	Ascending
Traditional	W13	Argintari	4		Self-employed	5		Self-employed	Stable	Ascending
Traditional	W14	Rudari	7		Self-employed	7		Self-employed	Descending	Stable
Traditional	W15	Spoitori	7		Employee	6		Self-employed	Stable	Descending
Modern	W16	Vatrasi		2	Employee		6	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W17	Lautari		2	Employee		5	Self-employed	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W20	Vatrasi		4	Employee		6	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W21	Vatrasi		4	Employee		9	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W22	Vatrasi		5	Employee		6	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W23	Vatrasi		5	Employee		6	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W24	Lautari		4	Employee		3	Self-employed	Stable	Descending
Modern	W25	Vatrasi		3	Employee		5	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern/Traditional	W26	Vatrasi		3	Employee		8	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W27	Vatrasi		3	Employee		6	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W29	Vatrasi		6	Employer		9	Self-employed	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W30	Ciubotari		7	Self-employed		7	Self-employed	Stable	Stable
Modern	W31	Ursari		6	Self-employed		8	Self-employed	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W32	Vatrasi		8	Employee/Self-en		7	Employee	Descending	Descending
Modern	W33	Ursari		5	Self-employed		7	Employee	Stable	Ascending
Modern	W34	Ursari		6	Self-employed		7	Employee	Stable	Ascending
Modern	W35	Vatrasi		5	Employee		8	Employee	Ascending	Ascending
Modern	W36	Lautari		1	Employee		4	Self-employed	Ascending	Ascending

Figure V.2 Wallachia respondents: Social inter/intra-generational vertical mobility

To investigate the pattern of social ascending or descending trajectory between father and son or the degree of inter-generational social mobility, I compared father's current position or the last occupation before retirement with the average occupation level of the son. To reach an occupation average level I have listed all the respondent's (sons') occupations, levelled them according to the GOS and the ROS and averaged the resulting levels (Appendix – Selected Samples of Transcript Summaries).

Finally, in order to further calibrate the GOS/ROS to my sample I have performed two late modifications. The first modification concerned the respondents who at the time of interviewing derived their main income from student grants. In these cases, I considered as their current occupation level as the one they would eventually attract following graduation and employment commensurate with their qualification. As an example, if respondent W12's current occupation was as a government sponsored student reading for a degree in Social Policy, his current level was taken to be 4 corresponding to the level of an administrative functionary.

In the cases where the respondent's own or his father's main source of income would be one or a combination of state benefits (child allowance, income support, disability benefit, etc.) and with a view to the very low degree of desirability for that particular predicament, I have categorised the respective occupation at a level of 11. This occupational level was used in conjunction with other occupational levels held at one time during the respective individual's working career.

Similarly, if a respondent's one time or current occupation was declared or noted by me as illegal commercial or criminal activity (illegal trading, poaching, racketeering, begging, burglary, defrauding, abuse of trust, burglary, pick-pocketing, smuggling, storing stolen goods, etc.) the respective occupation would attract a score of 11 even though occasionally these occupations might be lucrative by comparison with other formal positions in the labour market.

The codification, tabulation and analysis of my interview transcripts identified a complex pattern of social trajectories within both the Traditional Gypsy and Modern Roma segments. To list only a few, these intricate patterns of social trajectories consisted of ascending inter-generational, ascending intra-generational, stable inter-generational, stable intra-generational, descending inter-generational, descending intra-generational and various other inter-generational and intra-generational combinations of these trajectories. The overall social mobility picture among both

Rroma segments is further complicated by the various distances to which individuals travelled along these trajectories e.g. short, medium and long. In total, my analysis identified approximately ninety-six potential social trajectories¹ with over fifty of these potential social trajectories encountered within my sample alone. In addition to this myriad of potential and actually encountered social trajectories, my research identified combinations of social mobility with ethnic transition trajectories which further increased the number of directions and distances along which my respondents and their fathers have travelled.

With a view to the overall aim of my research, i.e. of ascertaining the role played by educational attainment in shaping the social and ethnic relocation of Romanian Rroma and within the confines of this thesis, I shall undertake a detailed analysis of some of the main social trajectories identified which I believe to be crucial to the understanding of the rest of the social and ethnic trajectories observed among the rest of my sample. Such understanding might explicate some of the factors impacting upon the social and ethnic dynamics of the entire Romanian Rroma community. Out of the totality of social trajectories identified among my sample I decided therefore to focus my analysis on six of them, corresponding to each of the Traditional and Modern segments and they are summarised below (Figure V.3). *I am however aware that even with a relative variety of ideal typologies (six types), there may be a danger of over-concentrating on ideal types rather than seeking causal factors in the respective social processes. To avoid this danger, I have selected and analysed in detail specific case studies, the analysis of which, would give me a better understanding of the factors which determined and/or impacted upon the respective movement.*

Type A Stable Intra-generational and Inter-generational social trajectories (Traditional): social trajectories of respondents from the Traditional Segment who did not advance or descend socially between the first point of entry in the labour market and the time of interviewing. In addition, these respondents did not register a marked social progression or regression between the position occupied at the time of interviewing and that occupied by their fathers at the time of interviewing or prior to retirement.

¹ Each quadrant: (Upwards + Downwards + Stable + Ethnic Transition) x (Short Distance + Medium Distance + Long Distance) + (Inter-generation + Intra-generation) = 24 x 4 (quadrants) = 96

Type B Stable Intra-generational and Inter-generational social trajectories (Modern): social trajectories of respondents who did not advance or descend socially between the first point of entry in the labour market and the time of interviewing. In addition these respondents did not register a marked social progression or regression between the position occupied at the time and that occupied by their fathers at the time of interviewing or prior to retirement.

Type C Ascending Inter-generational and Intra-generational social trajectories (Traditional): social ascendance of respondents who progressed socially within their own working lives and from the occupational positions secured by their fathers before retirement or at the time of interviewing. These progressions have been calculated based on the number of levels progressed along the occupational scale and in turn, their advancements can be short, medium or long range according to the number of levels travelled within a generation or between generations.

Type D Ascending Inter-generational and Intra-generational social trajectories (Modern): social ascendance within their own working lives and from the occupational positions secured before retirement by their fathers. These progressions have been calculated based on the number of levels progressed along the occupational scale and in turn, their advancements can be short, medium or long range according to the number of levels travelled within or between generations.

Type E Ethnic Transition, describing the process through which some of the respondents are shedding one or more Ethnic Practices thus initiating or continuing a process of gradual social movement further towards Modern Roma. Whilst this process should not be equated with the assimilation into the *Gadje* world, it is nonetheless a trajectory which if continued could result in the eventual assimilation of the individuals.

Type F Downwards Intra-generational trajectory of Modern Roma describe a rare but nonetheless interesting process through which respondents lose their current occupational attainment and drop a number of levels on the ROS. This trajectory is not necessarily initiated by the loss of the respondent job and there have been several other circumstances with a similar negative impact on the respondent's position.

Detailed analysis of these six key types of movement will follow in Chapter VI (Case studies: Traditional Gypsies) and Chapter VII (Case Studies: Modern Roma)

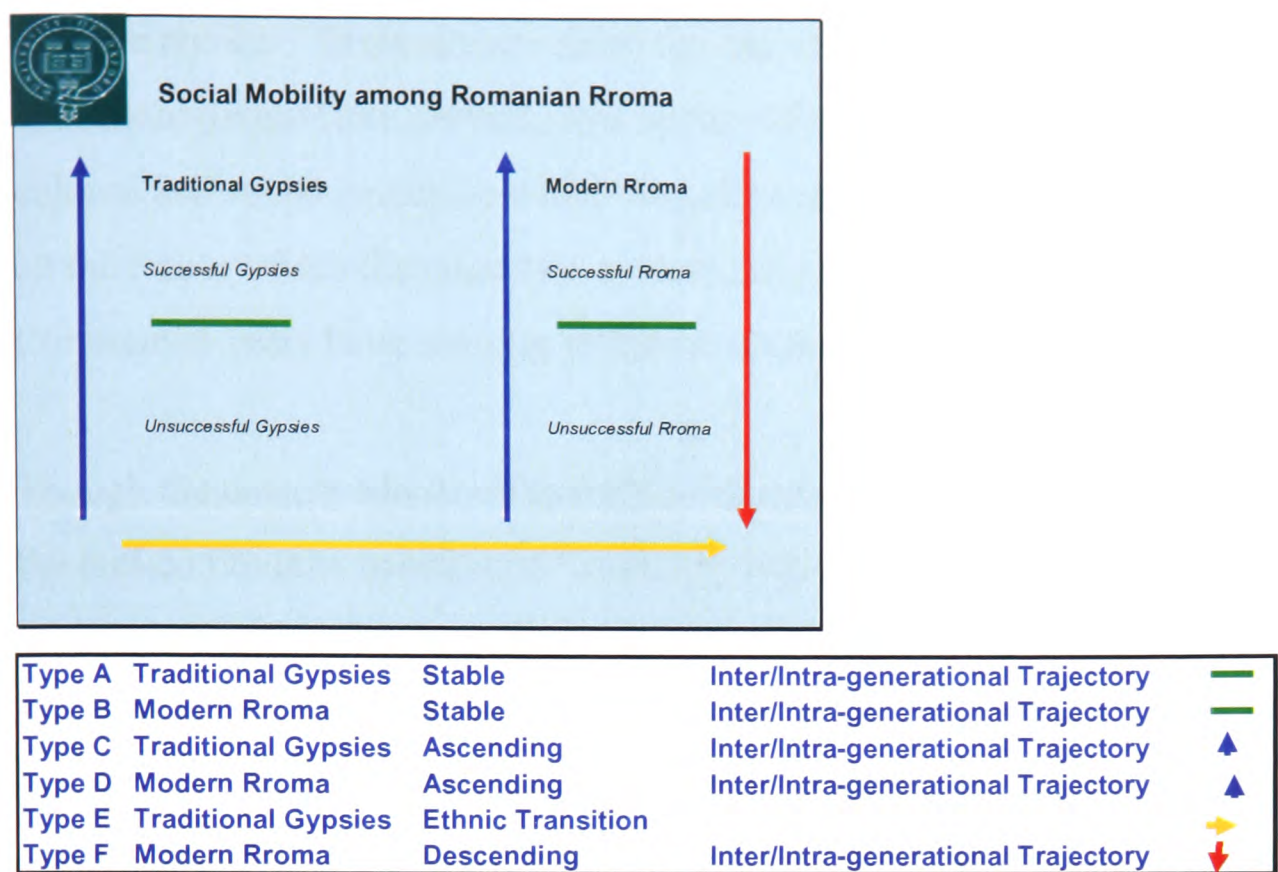


Figure V.3 Six main types of social trajectories encountered among Traditional Gypsies and Modern Rroma.

The Romanian education system

Romania prides itself on a very efficient and effective education system and despite the recent period of socio-economic and political turmoil, the attainment of higher educational echelons is held in high esteem by both the educated and lesser educated sectors of the society. Schools and colleges are usually in a good state of repair, and some of those visited by me during my field research appeared in better state than other publicly owned institutions such as hospitals or government buildings. Some of the schools I visited in traditionally Gypsy areas would rival many similar establishments here in the west (Figure V.4)

Modelled initially in the early 20th Century on the French education system, the modernised Romanian education system was established by pioneers such as Spiru Haret, the Minister for Education, was highly regarded in Europe, and compared favourably with the systems in other countries. Historically, to be educated has long been highly prized in Romania, and is still associated with an elevated status and position in society. The 1947 Educational reform which was based largely on Russian systems and methods drastically changed the scope of education, turning the schools and colleges into institutions for ideological propaganda and misinformation. Ursu & Buduru (1990) observe that the consequences included ‘an inversion of values, promotion of mediocrity and obedience and a reduction of individual responsibility, initiative

and free choice'. In the decade since the fall of Communism the attempts to radically reform the education system have seemed slow as the reformers battle with the backlog of educational, cultural and social evolution which was allowed to develop. Parents are a significant influence on the rate at which the education system can change and especially those brought up in the Communist years have a strong influence on their children education paths.

Though the current education system is the result of recent significant changes, particularly after the anti-communist uprising of December 1989, it remains an education system similar in many aspects to the French education system though unlike in the French system the type of high-school attended by the pupil does not impact on the choice of university he can apply to. The formal route to attaining formal educational qualifications is via predominantly state founded establishments and the education is compulsory from the pre-school preparatory year to the second year of Lyceum inclusively. This period is commonly referred to as 'the obligatory ten years'. Throughout all education stages, the language of tuition is either Romanian or in the



Figure V.4 Modern Roma teacher holding class in a local school in the Ferentari area of Bucharest – a predominantly Roma inhabited area, often described as a virtual Roma ghetto.

language of the majority population in the respective area. As such, in the areas inhabited predominantly by Hungarians or Germans, the tuition language is Hungarian and German respectively. There are currently no schools where the teaching takes place in Romany though in eight Roma populated areas parents can request the introduction of a special module on Romany language and culture. In addition, in Bucharest, Targu-Mures and bacau, there are schools where additional classes in 'Romany as a foreign language' take place and after graduation, the students are guaranteed a position in areas where Roma community is predominant.² Throughout my

² See discussion notes with Maria Ionescu, Government Roma Counsellor: October 2002, March 2003, Bucharest.

field research I also met and interviewed Romany teachers (W26, W35 Interviews) and been shown Romany manuals (W3 Interview)³.

The first stage consists of the pre-schooling *Gradinita* (Nurseries) centred around state owned or privately owned establishments. Enrolment of children in these establishments is at the latitude of the parents or legal guardians and begins when the children are three years old. The attendance and participation is voluntary with exception of the last year also referred to as Preparatory Year. In effect, this year facilitates the transition between the play group stage and school and introduces the children to their first experience of organised group learning. Progression to Primary Education or General School is conditional upon the child receiving a certificate confirming his or her attendance of the Preparatory Year. To teach at this level one does not require a university degree, and most teachers at the primary school level attended the *Pedagogical Schools* (Teacher Training Colleges). Increasingly however, teachers with tertiary education background are preferred, especially in urban areas where schools can choose from a larger pool of potential employees.

The primary education is provided through a Gymnasium or General School and is composed of two four-years stages referred to as *Ciclul I* or Primary School and *Ciclul II* or Secondary School. Parents are required by law to register their children with the local school and enrol them for classes from the age of six or seven. The General School would therefore be completed by the age of fourteen or fifteen, provided there are no interruptions or year repeats. *Ciclul I* classes are taught by one lecturer referred to as *Invatator* (Teacher) and the subjects provided include Reading and writing skills, Arithmetic or numeric skills, Religion, Physical education, Music, Geography, Natural Sciences, History and Foreign Languages. Most of these subjects are offered by one teacher though in some cases the foreign languages are taught by separate foreign languages teachers.

The *Ciclul II* consists of years five to eight and here additional modules are added to the curriculum such as: Physics, Chemistry, Grammar, Biology, a second foreign language, Citizenship knowledge, Latin (added in the eighth and final year). Some schools organise classes according to the preferences and abilities of the children selecting for example children

³ See also Romany Manual by Gheorghe Sarau, Bucharest - Kriterion 2000

perceived as mathematically inclined for classes with a higher input of mathematics and physics. Similarly, children perceived as linguistically inclined are being grouped into classes with a higher input of linguistics teaching. Subjects are taught by separate specialist teachers referred to as *Professors* who are university graduates with degrees in the respective modules and who in addition to the respective modules studied towards the university degree have also attended teaching training modules.

Entry to the Secondary Education or Lyceums is secured by the median between the average scores obtained by the pupil throughout the five to eight years and the mark received for a written examination. Secondary education consists of four years also referred to as '*The nine to twelve years*'. Only the first two years of the Lyceum years are compulsory, and at the end of the tenth years the students having the right to opt out of formal education. The curricula of each of these four years are further increased from the Primary Education level both in difficulty and in number. Taught modules are: Mathematical Analysis, Analytical Geometry, Spatial Geometry, Philology, Literature, Modern History, Classical History, Physical Education, Economic Geography, Physical Geography etc. Similarly to the Gymnasia level, teaching is provided by university graduates trained in addition as teachers via pedagogical modules. At the end of the four years of study at Lyceum level, students sit the Baccalaureate exam session, consisting of written and oral examinations in Mathematics, Literature, Language and History.

Pupils with entry score below the national admission level for the Lyceums are enrolled for the so-called *Professional Schools*, in effect schools providing vocational training such as Carpentry, Car Mechanics, Plumbing, Hospitality, Masonry and decoration, *etc.*. In addition to the vocational training, *Professional Schools* also provide theoretical modules such as mathematics or literature but with a lesser intensity than the Lyceums. Theoretical teaching in these establishments is provided only during two or three days weekly, the rest of the week consisting of practical skills in a specialist workshop or industrial unit. The teachers providing theoretical modules are also university graduates with specialist teaching training but the vocational modules are provided by specialists recruited from the respective trades who also attended pedagogical training. Here priority is given to their experience in the respective field rather than to their academic attainment.

Tertiary Education consists of University, Polytechnics, Conservatoires, Military and Police Academies and Colleges providing degree level courses with durations of three to six years. Entry to these establishments is conditional on the Baccalaureate diploma and on an entry exam result. The admission to various faculties is on competition basis with the most popular courses requiring high entry scores whilst the less popular course requiring only a pass grade. University graduates also have the opportunity to pursue further post-graduate study at Master and Doctorate level. Teaching at this level is provided by high calibre university graduates with specialist training and experience of related research.

In all areas where a linguistically-defined ethnic minority exceeds 10% of the total population, free state schooling is provided in that language, the teaching is done in that language, and the language and literature of the ethnic group is 'the main language studied', although Romanian is also compulsory. Thus, besides Romanian there are either schools or groups in multi-language schools in Hungarian, German, Romany, Polish, Ukrainian, Serbian, Greek, Bulgarian, Czech, Turkish, Hebrew, Slovak, Ukrainian and Russian.

Ethnic Transition

As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter, a significant social movement encountered among the sample of respondents was the horizontal movement or the ethnic transition trajectory and referred to as Type E. This is the process through which an individual with a given ethnic identity (understood here as a collection of ethnic practices) loses some of these practices and adopts those of another ethnic group. To put it in the context of my research, the reader is asked to refer to the Social Diversity Model (see Introduction Chapter) where I introduced the two main types of segmentations encountered among the Romanian Rroma and presented in relation to two categories: the vertical (ethnic) segmentation and horizontal (social) segmentation. I suggested that whilst the demarcation line between the upper and lower socio-economic quadrants might be easier to observe by agreeing on a distinct set of quantifiable criteria (e.g. employment type, wages, financial and human capital needed to access the respective position, opportunities for promotion, *etc.*), due to the intangibility of the elements making up the ethnic identity, the ethnic demarcation line is far more difficult to trace.

Respondent		Respondent		Father		Father (where available)	
Ethnicity	Age	Education Attainment (In number of years)	Education Attainment (Description)	Age	Education Attainment (In number of years)	Education Attainment (Description)	
T1	Traditional	48	10	Primary school + 2 y college	Deceased	7	Primary
T2	Traditional	64	4	Primary	Deceased	4	Primary (semiliterate)
T3	Traditional	34	10	Primary + 2 y college	48	10	Primary school + college
T5	Traditional	32	5	Primary (illiterate)	No data	No data	No available data
T6	Traditional	22	13	Primary + college + 1 y university	Deceased	4	Primary
T8	Traditional	44	0	Illiterate	82	0	Illiterate
T9	Traditional	82	0	Illiterate	Deceased	0	Illiterate
T10	Traditional	28	3	Primary + 1y private tuition	82	0	Illiterate
T11	Traditional	45	4	Primary (semiliterate)	No data	0	Illiterate
T12	Traditional	28	4	Primary (semiliterate)	47	6	Primary (semiliterate)
T13	Modern	26	16	Primary + college + university	No data	7	Primary
T15	Modern	52	7	Primary	72	3	Primary (semiliterate)
T16	Modern	22	14	Primary + college + 2 y university		4	Primary (Semiliterate)
T17	Modern	53	8	Primary	Deceased	No data	No available data
T18	Modern	26	16	Primary + college + university	No data	7	Primary
T19	Modern	67	4	Primary	Deceased	0	Semiliterate
T20	Modern	61	4	Primary + 3 y private tuition	Deceased	No data	No available data
T21	Modern	27	12	Primary + college	Deceased	4	Primary (semiliterate)
T22	Modern	29	14	Primary + college + 2 y university	No data	7	Primary
T23	Modern	62	4	Primary (semiliterate)	Deceased	4	Primary (Semiliterate)
T24	Modern	32	4	Primary	No data	7	Primary
T28	Modern	55	4	Primary (illiterate)	Deceased	0	Illiterate
T29	Modern	37	12	Primary + college	No data	4	Primary
T30	Modern	29	4	Primary (illiterate)	51	0	Illiterate
T31	Modern	62	7	Primary (semiliterate)	Deceased	0	Literate

Figure V.5Transylvania respondents: Educational attainment table



Respondent		Respondent		Respondent		Respondent		Respondent		Respondent	
Ethnicity	Age	Age	Education Attainment (In number of years)	Education Attainment (Description)	Education Attainment (Description)	Father Age	Education Attainment (In number of years)	Education Attainment (Description)			
W1	Traditional	23	7	Primary (Private tuition)	Primary (Private tuition)	No data	0	Illiterate			
W2	Traditional	32	3	Primary (semiliterate)	Primary (semiliterate)	No data	0	Illiterate			
W3	Traditional	63	8	Primary	Primary	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W5	Traditional	47	3	Primary (semiliterate)	Primary (semiliterate)	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W6	Traditional	40	9	Primary + 1 v college	Primary + 1 v college	No data	No data	No data			
W7	Traditional	39	14	Primary + college + vocational	Primary + college + vocational	No data	No data	No data			
W7	Traditional	56	8	Primary	Primary	Deceased	4	No data			
W8	Traditional	43	12	Primary + college	Primary + college	Deceased	4	Semiliterate			
W9	Traditional	58	4	Prison service - semiliterate	Prison service - semiliterate	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W10	Traditional	63	4	Prison service - illiterate	Prison service - illiterate	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W11	Traditional	30	7	Primary (semiliterate)	Primary (semiliterate)	54	0	Illiterate			
W12	Traditional	22	14	Primary + college + 2 v tertiary	Primary + college + 2 v tertiary	43	8	Primary + 2 v college			
W13	Traditional	43	8	Primary + 2 v college	Primary + 2 v college	No data	4	Semiliterate			
W14	Traditional	54	0	Semiliterate	Semiliterate	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W15	Traditional	37	0	Illiterate	Illiterate	No data	0	Illiterate			
W16	Modern	26	17	University degree + MA	University degree + MA	64	7	Primary			
W17	Modern	26	17	University degree + MA	University degree + MA	No data	8	Primary			
W20	Modern	20	14	College + 2 v tertiary	College + 2 v tertiary	49	7	Primary			
W21	Modern	24	14	College + 2 v tertiary	College + 2 v tertiary	42	0	Semiliterate			
W22	Modern	29	14	College + 2 v music school	College + 2 v music school	64	7	Primary			
W23	Modern	39	15	College + 3 v education	College + 3 v education	61	7	Primary			
W24	Modern	23	14	College + 2 v tertiary	College + 2 v tertiary	No data	8	Primary + 1 music school			
W25	Modern	20	14	College + 2 v tertiary	College + 2 v tertiary	No data	10	Primary + 2 v vocational			
W26	Modern/Trad	28	17	University degree + 2 v tertiary	University degree + 2 v tertiary	No data	10	Primary + 2 v vocational			
W27	Modern	22	14	Primary + college + 2 v tertiary	Primary + college + 2 v tertiary	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W29	Modern	49	0	Illiterate	Illiterate	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W30	Modern	43	10	Primary + 2 v college	Primary + 2 v college	No data	0	Illiterate			
W31	Modern	42	7	Primary	Primary	No data	4	Semiliterate			
W32	Modern	58	7	Primary	Primary	Deceased	4	Semiliterate			
W33	Modern	28	10	Primary + 2 v college	Primary + 2 v college	52	No data	Semiliterate			
W34	Modern	21	4	Primary	Primary	52	No data	Semiliterate			
W35	Modern	64	7	Primary	Primary	Deceased	0	Illiterate			
W36	Modern	54	17	University degree + MA	University degree + MA	Deceased	12	University degree			

Figure V.6 Wallachia respondents: Educational attainment table

Thus, the picture emerging is one of two segments (Traditional Gypsy and Modern Rroma), distinct in their cores but with overlapping edges and porous borders. I prefer the term porous borders to Alba's 'blurred boundaries' (Bendix & Lispet 1959, Alba & Nee 1997, Alba 2005) because it reflects in my view the dynamic nature of the movement between one ethnic segment and the next. What I wanted to capture is not so much the lack of clarity between who belongs to one group or another though as it will be seen this is a very important aspect of my study too, rather the individuals' transition between segments, in a way similar to the water penetrating through porous rocks. I proposed the concept of Ethnic Practices contributing to the core identity of an individual and the more Ethnic Practices specific to an ethnic group an individual would possess, the more his or her identity would be identified as a member of the respective cultural and ethnic entity. Recall that the relevance of each respective Ethnic Practice to determining individual's identity is relative to the weight attached to that practice by the individual himself thus cannot be externally weighed.

The adoption or rejection of some of these Ethnic Practices by each individual can only be observed in the context of that particular individual identity. For example, I described that for one respondent (T11 interview) the significance of traditional clothing can be secondary to the man's role in the family. By contrast, another respondent (W14 interview) regarded the nomadic lifestyle as the linchpin of his Gypsy identity and regarded the knowledge of Romany as irrelevant. Whichever Ethnic Practice an external observer would adopt for determining whether an individual is or not ethnically distinct, it would inevitably present a distorted picture. Taken separately the language or the life-style might be significant to observer, but they might not hold the same degree of relevance to the respondents themselves who in this particular case were both Traditional Gypsies. The concept introduced here was that Rroma individual's ethnic identity is neither clearly defined nor easily quantifiable and that each Rroma interviewed was positioned on an Ethnicity Spectrum ranging from Ultra-Traditional Gypsy to Fully Assimilated Rroma.

The process of Ethnic Transition does not end once the respective individual has reached the Modern Rroma segment. Indeed in at least one case (W36 interview) through various mechanisms (inter-ethnic marriages, geographical relocation, education, etc.) the process of Ethnic Transition began in the inter-generational plan, continued in the intra-generational plan up to the point where virtually full assimilation in the majority ethnic group was reached. The considerable number of *Gadje* ready to admit to having some degree of Gypsy ancestry is a

confirmation that the ongoing Ethnic Transition process is indeed present⁴. Observing some of the cases where such processes have been identified, the table below lists case studies where I identified inter-generational Ethnic Transition i.e. between father and son (Figure V.7).

The process of abandoning various Ethnic Practices is also observed both among the Traditional Gypsy and Modern Roma and it appears that several respondents have in the course of their life abandoned at least one or two Ethnic Practices. In other words, irrespective at what point on the Ethnic Spectrum a respondent's father would be located, in most of the cases, the son can always transit a step further towards assimilation. According to my findings, in the case of the Modern Roma, the most commonly shed Ethnic Practices were the fluency in Romany language and intra-ethnic marriage. Indeed, I have encountered many Roma who did not speak Romany at all and some who undertook the learning of the language as a foreign language⁵.

In the case of the Traditional Gypsies the most commonly abandoned Ethnic Practices were found to be the nomadic lifestyle and wearing of traditional Gypsy clothes. The only cases where I encountered examples of Traditional Gypsy clothes worn by men were among the most Traditional Gypsies, the 'Ultra-traditional' *Neams* of the *Gabors* and the *Caldarari*. Even there, the wearing of traditional clothing consisted only in a few elements such as the black velvet hat or the leather waistcoat. Interestingly however, I found that Gypsy women were wearing traditional clothes far more often than the men including the gold coin necklaces and silk aprons. The disappearance of the nomadic life style as a common Gypsy Ethnic Facet is something that undoubtedly began as a process with the forced settlement of many Roma *Neams* several centuries ago.

⁴ Throughout my field research, many *Gadje* I have interacted with and to whom I described the theme of my research, appeared supportive of my topic. Once reassured of my views on the matter and that I would not look down upon them, several confessed that one of their great-grandparents were Gypsy 'though settled, civilised Gypsies – you understand!'

⁵ One of the issues most vigorously campaigned for by the Roma Party and by many Roma activists, was the introduction of Romany language classes in schools with a significant Roma presence. This positioning of Romany at the top of Roma Civil Society's agenda may reflect a concern with the absence of linguistic skills among many young Roma. See conversation with CB Director-Romani CRISS, Bucharest 2003 and W33 interview with Romany language teacher - Ferentari School Bucharest 2003

Ethnic Practices														
Respondent			Father											
Code	Stated Ethnicity	Stated Neam	Romany Fluency	Gypsy Clothes	Gypsy Values	Gypsy Skills*	Nomadic Lifestyle	Gypsy Marriage	Romany Fluency	Gypsy Clothes	Gypsy Values	Gypsy Skills*	Nomadic Lifestyle	Gypsy Marriage
T11	TR**	Corturari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T15	MO	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
T16	MO	NN***	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T19	MO	Geambasi	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
T24	MO	NN	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T31	MO	NN	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W01	TR	Caldarari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W02	TR	Caldarari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
W03	TR	Argintari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W04	TR	Caldarari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
W05	TR	Spoitori	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W06	TR	Spoitori	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W16	MO	Vatrashi	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W26	MO/TR	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W27	MO	Vatrashi	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W30	MO	Ciubotari	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W35	MO	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓

* Refers to whether the respondent's main income earning activity is a traditional or modern occupation.
 ** Traditional or Modern
 *** No stated *Neam* affiliation

Figure V.5 Ethnic Transition Table: respondents' and their sons'/fathers' observed and reported Ethnic Practices

My research found that among the respondents interviewed and discussed with informally, the nomadic life style does not appear to constitute an Ethnic Practice central to their Gypsy identity. Some of the nomadic *Rudari* Gypsies interviewed (W11, W14 interviews) regarded themselves ‘less Gypsy’ than the settled *Caldarari* Gypsies and looked up to these as the most faithful custodians of the ancient Gypsy traditions. For a full discussion on the weight attached to these Ethnic Practices see Chapter III. In order to be able to analyse the various Ethnic Practices making up the Gypsy identity, I selected a couple of case studies, one from the Traditional Gypsy (W03) segment and one from the Modern Rroma (T19) segment, with similar ages (67 and 63 respectively) and from the two provinces.

As elaborated in the Traditional/Modern Dimensions Chapter, Gypsy Identity does not consist of a homogenous collection of elements according to which, external observers can classify individuals' ethnic identity. According to my research findings and related literature (Okely 1982, Fraser 1992, Liégeois 1998, Guy ed. 2001) it would be risky to attempt to define the extent to which an individual belongs to the Roma community, let alone seeking to draw a sharp

dividing line within the Rroma community, dividing the Traditional Gypsies from the Modern Rroma segments. Rather, we can accept that each Rroma individual identity is made up of independent plans corresponding to each Ethnic Practice, and the resulting collective positioning of the individual in each of these plans. Each Ethnic Practice plan can stretch from a hypothetical absolute value signifying complete awareness and adherence to that respective practice, through a gradual fading of the value and culminating in a total unawareness and/or disregard of it. The closer in the respective Ethnic Practice plan an individual would be positioned towards the absolute location; the more significant that respective practice would be in the individual's ethnic identity.

My research also supports the theory put forward by [Gordon \(1964\)](#) according to which the loosening of contacts with the primary (ethnic) group takes places concomitantly with the engagement in frequent and sustained contacts across ethnic lines, creating what Gordon describes as 'the marginal man'. The marginal man is the person who stands on the borders or margins of two cultural worlds but is fully a member of neither. He may be the offspring of an ethnically mixed or interfaith marriage, or he may venture away from the security of the cultural group of his ancestors because of individual personality and experiences, factors which predisposed him to seek wider contacts and entry into social world which appeared more alluring ([Gordon 1964](#)). The usefulness of Gordon's propositions and its subsequent influence of the scholarship on assimilation and ethnic change is also highlighted by other sociologists ([Waters 1994](#), [Alba & Nee 1997](#))

Education impact

During Communism, the compulsory enrolment of all Romanians children into education establishments extended to the Gypsy children too and whilst the Rroma attendance might have been sporadic, their knowledge of Romanian at least would have inevitably benefited. With increased contact with the *Gadje*, school attendance, eventual mixed marriages and access to Romanian channels of mass communications, the Traditional Gypsies from both lower and upper quartiles would have began or continued their ethnic transition trajectories whilst improving their occupational position through better educational attainment.

Significantly for the understanding of the value of education attainment for individuals from the various echelons of both the Traditional Gypsy and Modern Roma segments, is placing it in the context of the current Romanian legislation. Discussions with Deputies in the Romanian Parliament⁶ (members of the Lower House of the Romanian Parliament), Government officials, Roma human rights activists (W17, W23 interviews) and Roma social workers (W16, W23, W27 interviews) confirmed that the current Romanian legislation requires a certificate confirming the attendance of between six and eight years of school for the obtaining of certain documents such as a driving license, a market stall holder permit, an authorisation for selling agricultural produce and even a small trader permit. I was often explained that whilst these requirements might appear an unnecessary administrative burden, their rationale lies within the need of the applicants to be able to read and write thus familiarise themselves with the Romanian equivalent of the Highway Code, read road signs, understand and adhere to health and safety regulations, changes in the market and work environment, the need for greater transparency and accountability in fiscal and tax operations, etc. Roma and *Gadje* local authorities' representatives⁷ reminded me that with a view to the anticipated accession of Romania into the European Union, a greater transparency and dissemination of legal and financial information will be required from all the sectors of the Romanian society, including Roma.

Nonetheless, these requirements placed the Roma, particularly those individuals positioned on the lower echelons of both segments at a considerable disadvantage as without the prerequisite certificate of school attendance they could not prove their basic literacy and numeric skills thus could not be eligible even to apply for such documents, indispensable for their operation in the Romanian economy. In some cases the basic literacy skills of some individuals would have been sufficient for them to read the Highway Code and/or the Official Bulletins or local government dispatches but at the time of my research I was unable to identify mechanisms through which they could demonstrate their literacy in the absence of a school certificate. Time and time again, respondents referred to their lack of adequate certification as more damaging to their economic prospects than the actual lack or poor literacy skills.

⁶ See discussion notes with: Gheorghe Paun and Madalin Voicu (Roma Deputies) and Maria Ionescu (Romanian Government Roma Counsellor), Bucharest September 2002 and May-June 2003

⁷ See discussion noted with Cluj-Napoca Local Council representative, Cluj-Napoca, June 2003 and Law No. 300 of 28/05/2003 published in Monitorul Oficial - Part I No. 576 of 29/06/2003. Also Directive Nr 40 of 31/05/2002 published in the Monitorul Oficial - Part I No. 493 of 07/06/2002.

Having described briefly the Romanian education system including the various stages available to pupils (Chapter V), including the availability of teaching in Romany in areas where the percentage of Rroma exceeds 110% of the overall population, the reader was referred to Tables V.5 and V.6 which listed the various education levels attained by my respondents; recall that in the Romanian legislation, illiteracy and/or a less than six years of education precludes individuals from applying for driving licenses etc.

Respondents where I encountered Types A, C and E trajectories were present in both upper and lower echelons of the Traditional Gypsies. Some of these I referred to as Ultra-Traditionals and they were among the most ethnically distinct Gypsies of the entire Rroma community. As described in Chapter III, they wore traditional clothes, spoke Romany fluently and were using it at home on regular basis, their jewellery and life style was undeniably Gypsy yet they drove their own cars, they had large homes with all the modern appliances and also spoke Romanian and often a third language.

Having asked all the respondents in the Traditional Segment about their educational attainment, I noted that very few of them have progressed further than Secondary stage or *Ciclul II* of the Gymnasia school. They all claimed to be literate but some of them appeared to be just about able to read the road signs. Respondents in the lower quartile of the Traditional Segment have attended in average less than seven or eight years of school sporadically. The sporadic nature of their attendance appeared to have been dictated by two main elements. Firstly, children of nomadic families accompanied their parents in their seasonal migration which often began as early as Easter and returning to their winter villages as late as November. Naturally, in these circumstances, the children's school attendance was severely disrupted (W10, W11, W12, W15, T8, T9, T10 interviews). The learning continuity would have been fragmented with growing gaps between the education level of the Rroma children and that of the *Gadje* children.

Secondly, the limitations imposed by a low socio-economic background of these Rroma families imposed further challenges on children attending school regularly. Insufficiency of material resources had inevitably impacted on parents' ability to provide their children with uniforms, manuals and stationery. In some cases I was told that lack of shoes and appropriate clothing also hindered the children's school participation (W11, W15, T8 interviews) though some of the Modern Rroma respondents also reported a negative impact of the insufficiency of material

resources (T28, T30, T19 interviews) and on many occasions I have been told that this aspect affects Rroma from both segments and all quartiles⁸. As a result, in some instances, elements of the child's education took place within the family environment (T14, T15, T16 interviews).

Indeed some sociologists have argued that the family environment is far better placed to provide the Rroma children with the right combination of support and skills they will require later in life (Liégeois 2001). It is often argued that children learn better through immersion in the family and Rroma values and that they learn this way invaluable concepts such as respect, initiative, exploration, responsibility and so forth, concepts which they would not learn through the formal education establishments. The separation of the traditional Gypsy children from their family or *Shatra* environment can be traumatic for some of the children particularly that some of the respondents confessed that they were brought up to distrust the *Gadje* world (W5, W7, W13, W14 interviews). As one of my respondents intimated, he was brought up in the knowledge that:

'I knew for as far as I can remember that as a Gypsy, you can carry a Gadje on your back for all your life. As you have put him down he will still call you a bloody Gypsy.'
(W13 interview, *Argintari* Gypsy, Alexandria 2003)

In this context, the Gypsy view of the public education taken in its formal structures is occasionally one of combined mistrust and using it to fit one's own purposes and designs in life. My Gypsy and Rroma respondents did not perceive the formal schooling experience as an opportunity to gain valuable information which otherwise they could not access though I feel it is important to underline that out of the entire batch of interviews conducted during all the stages of the research and all the informal discussions carried with other Rroma, I have not come across one single case of Rroma individual, Traditional or Modern who regarded the school as a useless experience. Rather, school is perceived as beneficial for two reasons:

- a. a means of learning a set of skills accepted and used by *Gadje* and without which Rroma cannot access the world of the *Gadje* e.g. literacy and numeric skills,
- b. a means of securing the necessary documents without which the traditional Gypsy environment (consisting of practising traditional occupations, nomadism) cannot survive

⁸ See conversation notes, tapes and field notes of discussions with Madalin Voicu (Rroma Member of the Romanian Parliament), Maria Ionescu (Romanian Government Rroma Counsellor), Barbu Magureanu (Headteacher - Ferentari School), Bucharest 2002, Bucharest 2003

For example, some of the Traditional Roma regarded school as a necessary means to secure a much needed certificate of literacy needed for a driving license:

'All I wanted was to be have a driving license so that I could drive my own car and people will look up to me. I left school after four classes (years) without being able to read or write but at the age of 32 I decided to pay the local teacher to come home and teach me privately. My wife and brothers were laughing at me but I stuck with it and eventually learned to read and write. I then got my certificate form school and then learned to drive. They stopped laughing when they saw me driving around in my car...'

(W1 Interview, Caldarari Gypsy, Branceni, June 2003)

Other Gypsies I have interviewed regarded the school as the means of unlocking the language of values, norms and behavioural requirements demanded by the *Gadje* from all those who would wish to access their world. Among these values I have been often quoted 'the way to speak properly' with *Gadje*, meaning in fact not the language itself as the Roma do often speak good Romanian or at least as good as many unskilled and uneducated Romanians. What they actually meant was that school helped them speak Romanian in a way that would differentiate them from other Gypsies and other Romanians who could not speak it as well thus gaining the recognition and acceptance of the *Gadje*. I noted in these example not a perception of the school as an enlightening tool rather an empowerment tool, a method through which they the formerly oppressed classes could manage to transcend their condition and that of their forefathers.

'...of course if you don't speak properly and don't know how to hold the fork in your hand people will look down on you and no matter what you've got in your head they would give you a second look, that's why we must send our children to school to learn all this.'

(T2 interview, Transylvania, Sibiu, April 2003)

Some Gypsies in the Traditional segment accept the need to go to school for gaining access to a degree of formality and officialdom in their traditional careers otherwise denied to them. I refer here to the Gypsies who even though very successful in their jobs such as small scale commerce, manufacturing copper and zinc household items or collecting scrap metal, still require a formal certificate to set up business and to pay tax, thus operate in legality.

'To be honest with you, I never learned anything at school that helped me earn my daily bread. Me and my old man have always done it and will always do it but now they want all sorts of papers and permits and I suppose you can get somebody to do it for you but it works out very expensive so you might as well go to school and learn to do it yourself'

(T12 Interview, Gabor Gypsy, Transylvania, Hunedoara, May 2003)

Indeed Gypsies appeared to be well versed into going about their daily tasks and earning their living in time honoured fashion but with different degrees of success and profitability.

Individuals located in the lower quartile of the Traditional segment earned their living through manual, individual commercial activities or involving other members of their immediate family or community.

It appeared to me that the choice of whether they are successful and prosperous in pursuing their traditional occupation or whether they merely survive on a combination of small weekly state benefits (average £2.00 weekly) and additional sources of income generated in the informal economy such as begging, palm reading, seasonal farm work, etc., was not a function of the extent of their participation in formal education. Rather, the presence of a profitable occupation guaranteeing lucrative niches in the market such as flowers selling, music playing, copper and tin welding, horse breeding reinforced or facilitated an increased participation in the school process.

According to my respondents' explanations and my observations, the reasons for this duality are two-fold. Firstly, the presence of an already lucrative traditional occupation ensured that the sons of these individuals had a greater access to resources which would have allowed them to pursue school for longer. In practical terms, their better standard of living would have translated in books and stationery, better food and health, less need for them to help their fathers in earning an income and better and cleaner clothes and footwear enabling them access to school. To exemplify: the children of *Argintari*, *Caldarari*, *Florari* and *Gabors* in general, had a higher standard of living than the children of say *Caramidari*, *Corturari* or *Rudari*.

Secondly, with the liberalisation of the Romanian economy and the significant amounts of capital available to some Rroma from bullion restitutions and compensations for the Trans-Dnestr war time deportations, Traditional Gypsies with lucrative occupations such as the coppersmiths, the silversmiths, the horse breeders, the circus people and to a lesser extent the blacksmiths, would have been quick to identify that school certificates facilitated better prospects for diversification and expansion of their small business. The market opportunities and the available capital would have been the best recruiting mechanisms for once semi-literate Traditional Gypsies who now saw themselves an education certificate away from driving their own cars (W02 interview) and expanding their business (T1, T2 interviews).

The liberalisation of the market would have brought forward very few prospects for some of the Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma specialising in dying trades and manufacturing products with little market demand such as bricks which were now produced on industrial scales and available on much reduced prices. These Traditional Gypsies would have seen very little incentive to return to education since they did not have money to buy cars (W5, W6 interviews), could not expand their businesses (W14 interview) and had very little information on diversification to begin with (W15 interview).

Some of the traditional Gypsies interviewed saw themselves as finally in a position of being able to take on the *Gadje* on occupations where they felt they were very good at but where traditionally they felt at a disadvantage on account of poor education and lack of necessary documents. Under this category I observed *Gabori* Gypsies who now owned passports and trade certificates and were now able to travel as far away as China to buy goods directly from the source⁹. This theme was addressed in my interview topic schedule with the question: '*Do you think that there are certain jobs out there only for the Roma and others only for the Gadje?*' It was interesting to note that whilst some of the respondents stated that in certain traditional Gypsy occupations (*Argintari*, *Caldarari* and *Lautari* were the most quoted) *Gadje* could eventually learn to compete on a par with Roma but that they would have an unfair advantage because they would have papers allowing them to get that job. Other than that, Gypsy would always be 'better than a *Gadje* at it'.

Not only was the education attainment made more possible by the presence of a traditional occupation with market appeal but in turn, the respective lucrative traditional occupation would encourage education participation and would trigger either an ascending or stable social trajectory. Traditional Gypsies with profitable skills found it easier to diversify and expand with the aid of education certificates and in consequence their social ascendance was faster and more pronounced. The education attainment levels for this segment were however relatively low and the highest education level I encountered among a Traditional Gypsy was post-high school professional college (T1, T3 interviews).

⁹ See field notes and photographs taken at market fairs in Wallachia and Transylvania, March - June, 2003

This was clearly explained to me as a direct consequence of the fact that in traditional occupations, success was aided by the education attainment but only up to a certain level equivalent to seven classes of full-time school, sufficient to allow the recipients to apply for a driving license or a trade certificate. Traditional Gypsies were methodical in identifying that thereafter, school participation can have a detrimental effect as too many years in school would take the individuals away from the market place, delay and worsen his marriage prospects and increase education related costs beyond a profitable ratio.

Significantly, even the Traditional Gypsies identified with secondary level education (T1, T3 interviews) did not use these higher education levels towards pursuing traditional occupations as for that area of their activities, their seven classes certificates were sufficient. Rather, their additional years of education were undertaken in pursuit of non-traditional occupations such as political activity (T1, T3 interviews) and legal professions (W17 interview).

Modern Roma by contrast showed a different tendency to embrace the formal education process generated as it will be seen by different circumstances of the environment in which they operated. As described elsewhere, Modern Roma operate in the *Gadje* environment, in conditions akin to those prevalent in all the modern industrialised economies where education qualifications tend to play a significant role in the individuals' social mobility.

Due to the process of Ethnic Transition, (see above) and historical circumstances most respondents associated with this segment have lost their proficiency or never had one in a traditional Gypsy skill. Subsequently, their entire lives and presence in the labour markets were conditioned by the same set of rules governing the Romanian society with the consequent acceptance of the role and usefulness of formal education. As such, the highest levels of education attained by my Modern Roma respondents were similar to those encountered in the rest of the *Gadje* society. Indeed, here I encountered on regular basis Roma individuals with secondary education levels, many with university degrees (W36, W20, W21, W23, W24, W25 interviews) and some with post-university degrees (W16, T21 interviews).

Modern Roma respondents with trajectories Types B, D and F were all found to be operating in modern areas of activity and whilst some of them claimed still to be proficient in a traditional Gypsy occupation (W22: musician, W29: welding, W30: shoemaker, W32: animal breeder), they

were all deriving their main source of income from modern occupations. Among these occupations, I noted factory workers (W23), accountants (W23), government officials (W36), teachers (W26), shop assistants (W30), lawyers (W17), human rights activists (W20, W21), fashion designers (W24) and many more. Indeed, throughout my field research, my difficulty in interviewing Roma from the various echelons of this sector was not in identifying them but in persuading them to be interviewed as Roma.

Another significant difference between the occupation attainments of these individuals and those from the Traditional Gypsy segment was that with several exceptions (W29, W30, W31 interviews) most of the respondents where I observed ascending or stable trajectories were earning an income from a combinations of roles as formal employees with employment contracts (W26), students (W27, W21, W24) and benefits or were retired following long periods of formal employment. All these occupations were taking place in the state or private sectors though I encountered several respondents in the voluntary sector (W25, W24, W21). All the positions whether as self-employed or employees required to a different degree, the attainment of a certain level of education and it was thus not surprising to note that in the Modern Roma segment too, education was held in high esteem. Some of the Modern Roma perceived education as a useful tool for attaining various documents or minimum prerequisites without which they understood they could not operate in their field of activity (T13, T15, T16, T17 interviews). Others regarded education as an effective mechanism through which they could genuinely enlarge their horizons and achieve higher levels on the social spectrum (T18, T29, W21, W06, W20).

The difference between these two different takes on the role of education was given by a combination of factors such as the already existing human capital in the respondents' family environment (W36 interview) and the level of esteem in which education was held within the respective family. Though a large number of respondents who have completed or were in the process of completing their tertiary education told me that whilst they have benefited from positive discrimination schemes and government grants (W21, W23, W24, W25, W26, W27, T13) the deciding factors in ensuring their longer school attendance was in fact the family environment, specifically the persuasiveness and support of their parents towards their studies.

Researcher: Tell me a bit about your school and high school experience...

Interviewee: I will be honest with you, in all the period I went to school I never felt discriminated against. Maybe because I was an above the average pupil. During the school and during the high school and during the university. All the time. So I never had these types of

problems. God forbid. At the primary school there were two of us. In a class of 28-30. At the high school I was the only one in a class of 25 people. And at the university we were four who were stating that we were Rroma.

R The other Rroma kid at the primary, did he not have marks as good as yours?

I Oh yes he did, but he chose to go into business, his parents had small shops and he took this route to take care of his parents business. But I was pushed from behind by my parents to go to school. I remember after the end of the eight year of primary school, I wanted to go to an Elementary College (vocational) And I remember Mum slapped me twice in the middle of the town that I did not know what's happening to me, but now I think those were the best two slaps I ever got. She said to me I had to work hard for you and now you want to go to a vocational college? And slap – slap. (He laughs)

R The vocational college was perceived as...

I Vocational college gives you a job maybe a welder, maybe a key cutter something like that. That's why one goes to a vocational college to learn a trade: joiner, carpenter, this kind of stuff.

R So your mother thought that it would be embarrassing for you to end up with a trade like that?

I Yes my mother thought that would be a waste of her work to keep me in school and that's why she slapped me to wake up to reality and she took me by the hand and handed in my dossier for the Theoretical College.

R Have you got other brothers too?

I Yes I have three brothers

R And did your parents have the same attitude towards their studies too?

I Yes, we all finished the high school with the exception of one who did ten years and a vocational college after that. We all finished the theoretical College in parallel with the music college. We all have two colleges, this was my mother's ambition. My mother is illiterate, she did not do one single year in school you see and maybe this is why she wanted us all to go to school. Have you read Ion Creanga? (a Romanian writer whose illiterate mum pushed him hard to go to school)

R Yes.

I Well this is exactly how our mother was. Sometimes we were a bit lazy and we would have preferred to go a kick the ball in the street but my mother was hunting us and whacked us telling you go straight to your books right now, are you more stupid than the other kids or what? Yes this is how my mother was.

(W16 interview, Bucharest, March 2003)

This is not to say that in the Modern Sector, formal education qualification is universally hailed as the answer to all the existing problems or that indeed it was embraced unquestioningly by all the Rroma. Some of them do indeed question its relevance and as we have seen above, some have been given little opportunity to question it. Overall, having discussed and formally interviewed dozens of Modern Rroma, my understanding was that the general acceptance of the value of education in the modern segment is partly due to the experiences encountered by Rroma of this sector whom, as we have seen, having lived all their lives among *the Gadjé*, have adopted many of the *Gadjé* norms and values including the recognition of the role of education.

Another reason for which Modern Rroma tend to undertake more years of formal education than their Traditional Gypsies brethren could be that unlike the Traditional Gypsies, the Modern Rroma do not have traditional skills and informal markets to exploit let alone lucrative niches in the market which they could expand or diversify such as the *Caldarari* or the *Gabors* have. At the same time, the Modern Rroma do not have the supporting networks of the *Neams* to sustain them during difficult times or to provide them with cheap or free spare labour during peak times. In the Modern Rroma world, as well as in the *Gadje* world, informal working relations and unofficial arrangements come as the last resort and often at a very high price thus the Modern Rroma have learned to avoid them at all costs but mainly by securing themselves against the potential market vicissitudes through formal education.

Researcher: You were saying that there were some moments when...

Interviewee: Yes there were some moments when I felt that it did not have any point...to put so much effort and to do all that studying...I put so much hope in this educational system which some time it was the first one to de-humanize you...there were moments when after the high school I was forced to interrupt the university course, I was then at a private university because I could not afford to pay for private tuition so that I could gain a place at a state university (considered as the elite among the providers of tertiary education in Romania) really speaking I was frightened to approach it I did not think I would stand a good chance, now I don't think it was that way it was just a matter of wrong perception...and I enrolled to a private university, I still sat an exam and I was the third on the list, and this motivated me and I assumed the responsibility for taking it to the end. Unfortunately my precarious family circumstances did not help me, my father went from bad to worse he died eventually, and I interrupted it all, I tried to look for a job and I had already good education because I had a good Baccalaureate diploma and I also a qualified accountant and despite this I could not find anywhere to work.

R This was the moment when you said you started to doubt the purpose of all your education...

I Yes at the beginning I was asking myself what was the point in being the best at the primary, the best at high school, what was the point of being respected by people, of having a certificate of accountancy if all this does not help me with anything at all...

R How do you see things now, do you see them the same or you have changed your views a bit?

I No of course, I am more confident now that I will finish a college degree, the affirmative measures assist me to get a grant as a Rroma and all these background problems that normally hinder you are no longer there. And the moment has come when I re-evaluate the importance of the education in a positive way...

(W16 interview, Bucharest, March 2003)

Instances where Modern Rroma have failed to protect themselves though formal education qualifications can result occasionally in abrupt demotions on the social ladder such as the cases described by the social trajectory Type F. This type of social trajectory describes instances when without an adequate portfolio certificates to prove their skills, Modern Rroma found themselves vulnerable to adverse circumstances. As I will show in Chapter VII that some of these

circumstances could emerge without or against the individuals' actions but they result nonetheless in placing these Roma (and indeed *Gadje*) in critical situations from whence only their versatility in the labour market and/or social capital could save them. Unfortunately, despite the generally held view that formal education can be useful, the large number of Roma shanty-towns and homeless Roma confirm that these views are not unanimously accepted and/or that despite their acceptance, many Roma still are unable to pursue them.

'Yes Sir, there are Gypsies who went to university and who are now doctors and lawyers and all sorts. Gypsies are not stupid you know, but we are poor we can't go many years to university like you white people do, who will feed our children?'
(T04 interview, Transylvania, Cluj, April 2003)

To summarise, most Roma respondents, irrespective of the segment with which they were associated with, indicated an understanding of the role of formal education and a general high esteem of their brethren who did go to school. They differed however between the extents to which they perceived the formal education as a useful experience. These perceptions were directly linked to the respondents' aspirations in the Romanian economy the higher the aspiration the higher their perception of the role of the education would be.

Conclusions

I have shown in the previous chapters that far from being ethnically and socially homogenous, the Roma community of Romania is very diverse and segmented along ethnic lines in two major Ethnic Segments e.g. Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma. In turn these Ethnic Segments are further sub-divided in smaller sub-groups centring on the *Neam* structures but the divisions are more pronounced within the Traditional Segment than in the Modern Segment where the distinctions are much more blurred.

This chapter described the main social trajectories observed and with the aid of the available data, the chapter explored the multi-directional and multi-dimensional pattern of social trajectories identified among my respondents and reported on various social specificities identified. In particular, the chapter identified the propensity of some individuals from particular *Neams* e.g. *Caldarari*, *Gabori*, *Lautari*, *Vatrashi* to advance socially at a faster rate than individuals from other *Neams* e.g. *Rudari*, *Caramidari*, *Ciubotari*, *Spoitori*. In the Traditional

Gypsies segment, the *Neam*'s social mobility tended to be a function of the availability of social and financial capital and of the marketability and adaptability of that particular *Neam*'s skills.

Secondly, the chapter proposed the theory that some of individuals positioned at various locations in the ethnic spectrum are engaged voluntarily and/or involuntarily in a process of Ethnic Transition. The process of Ethnic Transition appears to be unidirectional e.g. individuals moving from the Traditional Gypsies segment towards Modern Roma segment and to takes place with various speeds and intensity e.g. individuals shedding one or more Ethnic Practices within their own or across several generations.

The chapter described the current Romanian educational system, in particular of the various stages of study available to Romanians whether *Gadje* or Roma. The description of the Romanian educational system aimed to facilitate a better understanding of the educational routes available to Roma. This overview assisted the reader to locate the respondents' stated educational attainment on the full educational spectrum available to the entire Romanian society. In doing this, I did not intend to invite comparisons between the respondents' education attainment and that of the wider Romanian society, rather it encouraged the reader to observe the Roma educational choices in the context of what it is available to them as Romanian citizens.

The chapter explored these social processes by listing and describing briefly six main social trajectories regarded by me as revelatory for the entire pattern of social dynamics prevalent among the Roma community. The six social trajectories listed here were the Stable inter/intra-generational Trajectory of Traditional Gypsies (Type A), the Stable inter/intra-generational trajectory of Modern Roma (Type B), the Ascending inter/intra-generational trajectory of Traditional Gypsies (Type C), the Ascending inter/intra-generational trajectory of Modern Roma (Type D), the Ethnic Transition trajectory (Type E) and the Downwards Intra-generational trajectory of Modern Roma (Type F). The next chapters will use case studies to explore these trajectories in detail and to investigate the presence and impact of various levels of educational attainment upon the speed and direction of the Social Mobility and Ethnic Transition trajectories thus addressing my main research question e.g. what is the role played by education in Roma social mobility and ethnic transition trajectories?

Chapter VI

Case Studies: Traditional Gypsies

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Introduction

So far, the thesis has presented to the reader the codification and summary of the interviews (Chapter II: Methodology), the various dimensions distinguishing the Traditional Gypsies from the Modern Roma (Chapter III), the social structures identified among both segments (Chapter IV) and the main social trajectories identified (Chapter V: Social Trajectories and education impact). Chapter V also introduced the reader to the current Romanian education system and the various educational stages available to *Gadje* and Roma pupils.

This chapter will explore in detail the main social trajectories identified among respondents selected from the Traditional Gypsy segment and will investigate the extent to which the attainment of various levels of educational attainment have impacted upon the subsequent occupational levels reached by the respective respondents. Specifically, the chapter will focus on the three main types of social movement identified among the Traditional Gypsies namely the Type A: Stable inter/intra-generational trajectories, Type C: Ascending inter/intra-generational social trajectories and Type E: Ethnic transition.

The chapter will select a number of case studies perceived as typical of the respective segment and the respective trajectories and will explore the relation between the social positioning of the respective respondents, their social trajectory and the respective level of education attained. In each of the case studies selected, I will present the educational choices and progression strategies selected by the respondents as reported to me by the respondents themselves. Where available, I will also introduce to the reader data obtained through triangulation methods. Each case study will analyse the social trajectory of the respective individual by focussing on a number of elements selected by me as essential in understanding the respective social mobility pattern and the impact of the educational level. The full rationale for selecting these elements was presented in the previous Chapter V: Social trajectories and education impact.

Type A: Stable intra/inter-generational social trajectories (Traditional Gypsies)

This particular type of social trajectory identified by me among the sample of respondents, refers to the social trajectories of respondents from the Traditional Segment who did not advance or descend socially between the first point of entry in the labour market and the time of interviewing. In addition, these respondents did not register a marked social progression or regression between the position occupied at the time of interviewing and that occupied by their fathers at the time of interviewing or prior to retirement.

I will now select a sample of Transylvanian and Wallachian Gypsies who fall in the above category, i.e. have secured for themselves positions of consistent desirability and material benefits compared to both their occupation of entry in the labour market and that of the occupation prior to exiting the labour market of their fathers. I identified at least six cases where respondents' entry into the labour market had GOS/ROS Level similar to that of their occupation at the point of interviewing and to that of their fathers prior to retirement: W02, W04, W07, W10, W11 and T05. Figure VI.1 below, summarises their respective interviews transcripts.

Stable Intra/Inter-generational Social Trajectories					Traditional			
Subject		Father			Intra		Inter	
		GOS	Job		GOS	Job	Generation	Generation
Code	Ethnicity	Level	Status	Ethnicity	Level	Status	Trajectory	Trajectory
T05	TR-Gabori	5	SE	TR	5	SE	————	————
T12	TR-Gabori	5	SE	TR	4	SE	————	————
W02	TR-Caldarari	4	SE	TR	4	SE	————	————
W04	TR-Caldarari	5	SE	TR	5	SE	————	————
W07	TR-Spoitori	6	EE	TR	6	EE	————	————
W09	TR-Pieptanari	6	SE	TR	5	SE	————	————
W10	TR-Pieptanari	4	SE	TR	4	SE	————	————
W11	TR-Rudari	4	SE	TR	5	SE	————	————

Figure VI.1 Social Trajectory Type A: stable intra/inter-generational trajectories of Traditional Gypsies

The first thing that emerges is that in the selected sub-sample, the stability occurs not only in respect of the respondent's and father's occupation, but also with regard to the ethnic segment to which both belong. The ethnic stability of the Traditional Gypsies is not necessarily an obvious

occurrence as the field research revealed a small number of Traditional Gypsies who in the course of their life migrated ethnically nearer or to the Modern Roma segment (T16, T31, T11).

Back to my selected sample of respondents with stable trajectories, I also note that stability and continuity also occurs in respect to father and son's employment status. In all cases, whether the father was Self-employed (SE) or an Employee (EE) the son adopted the same work arrangements. This occurred most visibly in the case of T12, a *Gabor* Gypsy I met and interviewed in a Sunday market in the Western Transylvanian town of Hunedoara and who specialises in manufacturing tin rain gutters for houses in the rural areas¹. T12 like his father before him belongs to the *Neam of Gabors*, one of the most traditional and closed to the outside world Gypsy *Neams*.

T12 claimed to have a semi-nomadic life-style based on the fact that he was offering his services at various locations spread around a region with a radius of over 200 km. His travels would not follow a precise pattern as he would remain in a village for as long as there would be demand for his trade after which he would relocate to the next point on his *ad hoc* itinerary. T21 did nonetheless own a house in a county in the Centre of Transylvania where his wife and three children would normally live except for the periods when the work demand would require them to join him in a particular village².

Ethnically speaking, T12 was one of the many very Traditional Gypsies I encountered and his traditionalism was manifested by speaking perfect Romany (and not so well Romanian), by wearing traditional Gypsy clothes with the distinct *Gabor* velvet hat and leather waist coat, by his traditional moustache and above all by his firmly upholding Gypsy practices, particularly being against marriages outside his *Neam* (see Chapter III).

In terms of Employment Status, one of the elements in GOS's classification schema, T12 and his father never held a formal job in the strict sense of the word and as understood in the industrialised world: with an employment contract, finite number of hours a week or with a clearly defined outcome of their labour. Instead, T12 and his father before him, would learn one

¹ See field notes and photographs: Transylvania/May/Hunedoara/2003

² See field notes and photographs: Transylvania/July/Hunedoara/2003

or several trades and would roam the villages in search of customers. Most of T12 and his father's work would be paid in cash or products and they would not pay tax, national benefit, insurance or pension contribution from their income. Whilst this arrangement would allow them to cash in their entire profit, they would be heavily dependent on a constant demand for their labour as there would be no alternative backup systems for them to rely on such as income support benefits, housing assistance, medical care and so forth³. As such T12 and his father were both self-employed and self-reliant.

T12 and his father's commercial activity would focus primarily on metal work and they would specialise in manufacturing tin rain-gutters, zinc roof ornaments, buckets as well as roof repair work, welding, metal sheet work. As such, positioned along the GOS Schema, T12 approximate occupations would level as follows:

GOS: 4 (Metal working craftsman) + 6 (Sheet metal worker) + 6 (welder) + 6 (Street vendor) + 6 (Commercial traveller) Average Level = 5

In addition to the above trades, T12's father would also earn an income as a bear tamer and stall holder at fairgrounds, (something that in the mean time T12 abandoned as unprofitable) thus T12's father's approximate occupations, would average as follows:

GOS: 4 (Metal working craftsman) + 6 (Sheet metal worker) + 6 (Commercial traveller) + 6 (welder) + 6 (Street vendor) + 6 (Stallholder at fairground) + 5 (Circus artist) Average Level = 5

Education: T12 explained that his education consisted of four classes which means that he went to school from the age of six and finished by the time he reached ten. It would be difficult to ascertain without a great deal of investigative work whether that claim was accurate but during my field research some of the respondents tended to exaggerate their education level. If so, this could be in itself an indication of the high esteem education had in their view. The actual school experience was a positive one for T12 and he explained to me that with hindsight he wished he had spent more time in school but that now in view of his personal circumstances, he could not return to school.

³ See conversation notes with gatekeeper confirming T12's predicament

Researcher: Did you go to school?

Interviewee: Yes I did go. 4 classes

R: I see, and how was it, was it good?

I: Oh it was good alright, teachers were ok...

R: So after you have completed those four years why did you not stay on?

I: Well, since I was 7-8 years I went with Dad with the Bear (circus people) I had to deal with work from early age. I was both a trades man and was doing my home work

R: Can you read and write now?

I: No

R: Can your parents read or write?

I: No, we were making tin roofs you understand

(T12 Interview, Hunedoara – Transylvania, June 2003)

Despite the general perception that Traditional Gypsies tend to resist the *Gadje* education institutions for fear of having their cultural identity diluted (Liégeois 1992) and also put forward by some *Gadje* I have encountered during my field research⁴, T12 was convinced of the value of education and was very keen to send all his children to school. Interestingly, T12's view of the role of the education and its benefits were stated in very general terms initially, referring to education's enlightening role but as the interview progressed, the concrete example of benefits to be derived from sending his children to school, referred to their ability to be their own bosses and to find their way in travelling as far a field as Constanta which is located at the other end of Romania on the Black Sea (see Chapter II: Methodology). During the interview, it became very clear that whilst T12 was aware of the general benefits of schooling, what he really appreciated school for was the sense of empowerment and freedom that his children would get from being educated, something that being illiterate, he did not have.

Researcher: And the 4 classes that you went for at school, were they worthy or not?

Interviewee: Well they were worthy, something did get into my head, I became a bit more civilised you understand. People and nations with school are different...You understand me? Different! if the man has got some school he gets more in life, different...

R: Aha...

I: So the school does not harm and now I am sorry I haven't done more.

R: So if you are sorry for not having done more school, is it too late now to return to school?

I: It is too late for that, I have three children...they'll all go to school, I'll see to that I am pushing him and putting into his head that with school is different, he will have a different head knowing to read and calculate, to respect the people, the world, to do more, to know more, you understand me (...) This is it...

R: How do you mean?

C: Well the way I said, that will be his own, something that other people don't have. They will be his own bosses you understand? Without school he couldn't even get a friend he will be alone in the world. So that will be a shame not to go to school. With school he can look up in life. He

⁴ See conversation transcripts with teachers at Ferentari school, Bucharest – Wallachia, March 2003

can say: look I go to Bucharest or Constanta or wherever I want, nobody asks me how long will I stay, I can buy a newspaper read and walk further you understand?
(T12 Interview, Hunedoara – Transylvania, June 2003)

In practical terms and despite his stated beliefs about the role of the school, T12 felt that in his particular case and that of his family, as *Gabors*, only a limited amount of schooling would really be beneficial. T12 felt that ‘at least’ 8 years of school would be the best for his children, sufficient to allow them to read and write and be able to travel without having to ask other people for direction or to read for them the contents of a particular document.

R: What is the best for the Gabors, how long should they to school to be good for them?

I: Well if they do 8 classes... but there are some that did 10...the child should have at least 8. 8 classes to know stuff because in our Neam they get married at 15 -16 and then... that man does no longer have to ask other people where he goes ...or what it is written there.

(T12 Interview, Hunedoara – Transylvania, June 2003)

The minimum of 8 years of desired schooling applied however only to his boys who would be expected to travel around the country as far as possible in search for work. For his daughter however, indeed for the *Gabors* girls in general, his views were somewhat different as in their case a similar amount of schooling not to mention more, would be detrimental. As shown in Chapter III: Traditional Gypsies / Modern Rroma dimensions, *Gabors* girls are often expected to marry young and schooling is perceived to be detrimental to their marriage prospects.

Researcher: I met many Gabors who went to school for a long time, how do you explain this?

Interviewee: Well how can I explain it to you, at an age...there are some, but that is a shame, particularly for the girls? The Gabors girls hm... it's a shame. To keep them in school up to 15-16 years old...shame...(he used the Romanian word 'Rusine' meaning dishonour)

R: It's a shame for whom, for the girls to go for many years to school?

I: Yes, yes, so if we keep them too long at school, you understand? Those who are at school at 12 or 14 is already shame or if they stay at home until 15-16 like the Romanian girls that is also shame for us you understand? But you know among us Gabors too there are people who did school and women too, you understand me? Some went to school and now have driving licences... So she must marry at 12 or 14 but there are some that marry at 11.

R: They get married at 11?

I: Well if this is the way has been left for us you understand? This is our inheritance, if the girls stay at home after 11 people starts to talk that she is old and there are some that...

R: That's why they don't go to school?

I: Well some do go to school, there are some that go to school yes,... there are some that go 5 classes, 7 classes, 8 classes, it depends but it's a shame, you understand?

(T12 Interview, Hunedoara – Transylvania, June 2003)

Looking at T12's current and past occupational level from the education point of view, it is clear that the four classes of school he claimed to have attended had very little impact on his literacy

skills as he was still illiterate and subsequently on his social trajectory. As a semi-nomadic illiterate father of three, earning his living from tin-welding and copper-cauldron making in the same way his forefathers have done, T12 has according to his own views, benefited little from the four years of schooling. Indeed he felt that the most important things he learned in life such as 'the respect for others' and his occupational skills were those learned from his parents.

R: If I were to ask you now at the age of 28 where in life did you learn the most, what would you answer? What formed you as man?

I: From my parents... Yes, (...) my parents taught me how the things are... You understand, they taught me my job and how to respect people whether he is poor or rich

(T12 Interview, Hunedoara – Transylvania, June 2003)

Over the Carpathian Mountains, into Wallachia I encountered a larger sample of Traditional Gypsies with stable intra/inter-generational positions. Among them was W11, a *Rudari* Gypsy I met on the outskirts of the Central Wallachia town of Titu (See Chapter II: respondents' distribution map). Like his Gypsy fellow in Transylvania, W12 was a semi-nomadic traveller who, unlike T12 who travelled alone, roamed the Wallachia villages with his entire family in horse pulled carts (Figure VI.2)⁵. His itinerary was decided mostly *ad hoc* too. He claimed to have a house somewhere in the South of Wallachia, consisting of one room used as both bedroom and a kitchen where all the eight members of his family including the elderly would gather together during the winter months. Though in terms of the lifestyle W11 was 'more nomadic' than T12, ethnically speaking he was less Traditional. His lesser Traditionalism was manifested firstly through not speaking Romany, a central part to the ethnic identity of any 'Real Gypsy' as the Gypsies themselves often explained⁶. In not speaking Romany, W11 was not alone among his family nor indeed among his *Shatra*; as they belonged to the *Rudari Neam*, the only Traditional Gypsy *Neam* that does not speak Romany.

W11 was also less traditional than T12 as neither he nor his family wore any traditional clothes, he did not wear a traditional hat or any other traditional self-identification signs. Most

⁵ See field notes and photographs: Wallachia/June/Titu/2003, also W11 Interview

⁶ I recognise the apparent contradiction that an individual cannot be regarded as less traditional whilst preserving the traditions of his ancestors i.e. one cannot be 'less traditional' by not speaking a language if one's forefathers did not speak it either. The contradiction actually stems from the fact that in adhering to his ancestors' traditions, the respective respondent might be a traditional *Rudari* but the absence of language as well as the other ethnic characteristics makes him overall, a less Traditional Gypsy. I recognise that this confirms the existence of a *de facto* scale of Gypsy *Neams* traditionalism, a controversial observation particularly for those not part of the *Caldarari* and *Gabors Neams*. This is however something that Gypsies from other *Neams* pointed out to me, confirming that in their own views they regarded themselves as less Traditional if language and other traditional ethnic characteristics were not present.

importantly, when interviewed, he did not seem to attach great weight to the collective norms and values that define the Gypsy culture. Among these norms, marrying outside of one's *Neam* is anathema to a Traditional Gypsy and was strongly rejected as a possibility by T12 but by contrast W11 stated that he would not mind his daughter marrying a *Gadje* though he would not like her to marry a *Caldarari*. The absence of strongly held Gypsy norms and values was also shared by his father (W14) whom I later interviewed as part of my research of their *Shatra*.

Researcher; If your daughter would like to marry a Caldarari, what would you say?

Interviewee: No she shouldn't really, she should get one of ours... a Rudari...

R How about a Romanian, can she marry a Romanian?

I She can if she wants...

R Why can she marry a Romanian but she shouldn't marry a Caldarari?

I Because if they marry her, the Caldarari will not let her come and see us, they will want her to move away and to forget about her family and her Neam, I don't like that...

(W11 interview, June 2003, Titu-Wallachia)

Investigating the employment status of W11 and his father I noted that they were both self-employed. I will explain below the precise nature of their income earning techniques but I must highlight an interesting fact: whilst W11 and his father's current employment status is self-employed, and whilst W11 was indeed self-employed for all of his productive life, his father was firstly a nomadic self-employed basket maker then became a sedentary worker at some point as an employee in a manufacturing plant and only recently after redundancy and retirement opted for a life back on the road. At the time of interviewing, neither W11 nor his father (W14 interview) paid any tax on their income and like T11 they could only rely on themselves to identify sources of raw materials, manufacture the items and sell them at various markets or along the roads. They said they did not benefit from any form of job protection, income support benefit or sickness or disability allowance and they reported that they have only themselves and their immediate members of their family to rely on.

In terms of their occupational attainment, both respondents (W11 and T12) generated their income through a number of trades and occupations passed on from generation to generation. Though traditionally the *Rudari* were used by the *Boyars* as coal miners, gold prospectors, wooden kitchen utensils makers and basket weavers, at the time of my research only a handful of these traditional occupations survived and brought the *Rudari* an income. W11's list of occupations was therefore relatively traditional but unlike T12's, it was far more labour intensive and less cost effective. Though I found it difficult to categorise some of W11's occupations such

as ‘Scrap metal collector’ and I had to approximate his ‘Wooden spoon maker’ occupation as ‘Wood carver’ his main occupational levels along the GOS were:

GOS: 5 (Wood carver) + 5 (Basket maker) + 5 (Odd job) + 6 (Street vendor) Average Level = 5

His father, whom I interviewed later, earned his living in the almost identical way as W11 with the almost negligible difference that due to his age and frail state, W14 could not undertake any ‘Odd jobs’ and would instead make willow brooms. Other than these two small differences, like his son, he would weave baskets and sell them along the road or at village fetes; he would spend the winter months carving large amounts of wooden spoons and kitchen utensils for sale in the spring and summer and he would walk along the road by the side of his cart and collect scrap metal, (preferably non-ferrous metals as they were better paid for) he could find for selling later at special scrap metal collection points (see Chapter III). For my classification exercise I can replace the ‘Odd job man’ with ‘Willow broom maker’ thus the overall GOS level of W11’s father occupations were:

GOS: 5(wood carver) + 5(basket maker) + 5(broom maker) + 6(street vendor) Average Level: 5



Figure VI.2 W11 and his family in the process of earning their living through traditional *Rudari* Gypsy occupation: selling willow brooms (stored by the side of the cart) and collecting scrap metal (hanging at the back of the cart)

Having spent considerable time with both W11 and T12’s families and having observed them within their own environment for over two days, I was struck firstly by how quintessentially Gypsy they and their families were. In addition to all the distinct features of their ethnic identity listed above and their strong claim to the same effect there was an unmistakably yet intangible attitude they both harboured, stemming possibly from being aware of being the ‘others’. Both T11 and W12 also represent a classic Gypsy pattern of ‘occupational’ inheritance with the son

learning his father's trade and almost literally 'following in his father's steps'. Despite having in common this pattern and both being Rroma, T11 and W12 were surprisingly distinct from each other in almost every other respect.

Education: Looking at W12's educational attainment, I observed that he claimed that he attended eight full years of education which is unusually high for a semi-nomadic Gypsy. This would have taken W12 to the end of the secondary level and his schooling took place in his native village school among Romanian pupils which might explain his fluent Romanian. W12 remembered that he had a positive experience of the school years and that his teacher did not discriminate against him on account of his ethnicity. This admission, together with his frank admission that he left school against his parents' wishes is confirming that education must have been held in a relatively high esteem by his family, despite being Traditional Gypsies and thus expected to disregard and/or fear the role of *Gadje* education. A reflection perhaps of the fact that his parents too went to school, W12's perception of education for girls was far more accommodating than that of the *Gabori* Gypsies I have before and after him.

Researcher: Let's talk about school: did you go to school?

Interviewee: Yes...Eight classes (he seems very proud)

R What were the teachers?

I They were Romanians it was alright...the head teacher was nice man...

R So now you can read and write?

I Yes I can read the tariffs for example or the road signs but I am not very fast...I can read the paper but not very fast...I am good at counting too but not so good...

R How do you manage when you share the money?

I I get by...We do it, we do it...slowly but we do it...

(W11 interview, Titu – Wallachia, June 2003).

Furthermore, despite being *Rudari* Traditional Gypsies and leading a semi-nomadic life-style, W12's family also encouraged his sisters to attend school regularly, in sharp contrast with the attitude of *Gabori* Traditional Gypsies as seen above. It is interesting however to note that W12 described his literacy and numeracy skills in terms of his ability to read and write the road signs and to divide their earnings something with direct relevance to his semi-nomadic life-style.

Researcher: So was it good to go to school?

Interviewee: Yes it was good...the school was good but ...errr. Once we got a bit bigger we didn't like it anymore...we went to school in the morning but then we went away from school.

R And what were your parents saying?

I They did not know, they thought we went to school...

R And you think that your parents would have liked you to go to school?

I Yes sometimes they were giving us the stick only to go to school but what can they do...they kept telling us to go to school because we need to learn to calculate, if we go shopping with a banknote and if we don't know how to calculate they give us the wrong change...

R Did you parents go to school?

I Yes they both had school...

R Tell me please the girls, did they go to school? Your sister I mean?

I Yes she went to school, she did...

(W11 interview, Titu – Wallachia, June 2003).

W12 explained to me that he would like his daughter to go to school as long as her intellectual abilities allow her and he placed no restriction as to the number of years he would like her to study, nor did he express a concern that her prolonged study might jeopardise her marriage prospects. In fact W12 expressed his commitment to supporting his children to stay as much as possible in school, signalling a willingness to support them up to 12 years which would in fact equate to the end of high-school or Lyceum years. In terms of the usefulness and the role of education and the concrete ways in which education would assist his children progress in life, W12 referred to their increased chances of obtaining a driving license thus implicitly earning a better standard of living.

Researcher: So who will you send your children to school? The boy and the girl?

Interviewee: Err.. the girl goes later as she is younger...she goes at seven years old...

R How long will you want to keep her in school?

I Well.. after me... it how her head helps her...if her head helps her I would like her to go even 10 classes or even 12 if she can.. I would work hard for them to stay at school...

R Why would you want them to stay in school for so long?

I From school they can learn to read and write they can learn how to get a good job, they can even go and do the driving school and get a driving license, yes they can, they earn an easier bread if they have school. I will not let them not go to school, I will help them as much as I can
(W11 interview, Titu – Wallachia, June 2003).

Significantly, I found it difficult to corroborate W12's statement of having completed eight years of full time education with his own statement that he could read and write with difficulty; furthermore, according to the Romanian system, the attainment of eight classes of full-time education would have entitled him to apply for a driving licence, something he did not have and that he aspired for his children. Similarly difficult to reconcile, I found his stated enthusiasm for formal education with his subsequent statement that in fact most of his personal development occurred on the back of his informal learning received on day-to-day basis from his parents. One would expect from an individual with similar experience to display a greater confidence in the

informal learning provided in the family environment rather than to express enthusiasm for a formal education system from which he felt he benefited little.

R Tell me where in life you learned the most?

I From my parents...they told me don't do that, don't do the other, do like this or like that and day after day I learned a lot from them...

(W11 interview, Titu – Wallachia, June 2003).

In the context of a stable social trajectory, W12's occupational attainment appeared to have benefited very little from his exposure to formal education be that eight years or less and despite the little impact the school had on his life, it was nonetheless interesting to note his views on the usefulness of formal education both for his sons and daughters. Whilst in some case (see below), the attainment of various education levels did at least played a protector role against 'social demotion', in W12's case did not apply either for at the time of interviewing his occupation GOS level was one of the lowest possible and I had no evidence that the difference between the lower GOS levels and that occupied by W12 was related to his school attendance.

Type C: Ascending inter/intra-generational social trajectories (Traditional Gypsies)

This Type refers to the social trajectories of respondents from the Traditional Gypsy segment who progressed socially within their own working lives and from the occupational positions secured by their fathers before retirement or at the time of interviewing. These progressions have been calculated based on the number of levels progressed along the occupational scale and in turn, their advancement can be short, medium or long range according to the number of levels travelled within a generation or between generations.

Having observed the nature of the stable intra-generational and inter-generational social trajectories encountered among my sample of Traditional Gypsies, let me now turn my attention to those Transylvanian or Wallachia Traditional Gypsies who experienced ascending trajectories. Several clarifications might be necessary here, in particular concerning the size of the Traditional sample. As can be seen from the table below, only six Traditional Gypsies were identified within our sample with ascending double trajectories (intra-generational and inter-generational), three for each of the regions researched. This small number cannot be taken as representative of the entire Traditional Gypsy population in Romania. Within the sample itself, I identified many more Gypsies who ascended socially either within their own life or from the social position

occupied by their fathers. This sub-sample of six concentrates only those Gypsies in Transylvania and Wallachia with double-ascending trajectories i.e. both intra-generational and inter-generational. I selected them in particular because I believe that a prolonged process of social ascendance, manifested both across generations and within a generation might reveal with the various elements in each environment which together, trigger social advancement.

Ascending Intra/Inter-generational Social Trajecto				Traditional		Gypsies	
Subject		Father		Intra		Inter	
		GOS	Job			Generation	Generation
Code	Ethnicity	Level	Status	Ethnicity	Level	Status	Trajectory
T01	TR- Caldarari	2	SE	TR	3	SE	↑↑Long
T02	TR- Caldarari	3	SE	TR	5	SE	↑↑Short
T06	TR- Gabori	4	EE	TR	6	SE	↑↑Long
W03	TR- Argintari	4	SE	TR	5	SE	↑↑Short
W08	TR- Pieptanari	4	EE	TR	5	SE	↑↑Medium
W12	TR- Argintari	2	EE	TR	5	SE	↑↑Long

Figure VI.3 Ascending intra/inter-generational Trajectories of Traditional Gypsies Type C

The analysis of my sub-sample reveals immediately that unlike the cases of Stable Trajectories observed within the Traditional Gypsies sample where I noted stable employment status across generations, here in the case of the Traditional Gypsies with ascending trajectories, sons do not always maintain the same employment status as their fathers. Naturally, this is not to say that among the wider Gypsy population of Romania there are no individuals who experienced stable trajectories and an inter-generational change of employment status. I believe that where such transition can be noted, it would be useful to observe it in more detail.

As explained in more detail in Chapter III, I found that an important though not conditional element of the Traditional Gypsy identity is the attainment of an occupation based on traditional Gypsy skills e.g. coppersmith, blacksmith, silversmith, woodworker, musicians etc. These occupations are by no means encountered only among the Gypsies but it appears to us that Gypsies have practised these occupations for centuries as it favoured an independent style of living. Though not proportionally significant, my sub-sample indicates that whilst all the fathers worked as Self-employed, some of the sons opted for Employee status. I believe that the inter-

generational shift of a Traditional Gypsy respondent from Self-employed status to Employee status signifies more than a change in preference; i.e. it indicates the beginning of a horizontal ethnic movement from fundamental traditionalism to a more dilute ethnic identity comprising strong traditional values but beginning to accept certain aspects of the settled *Gadje* community, one of them being the acceptance of working fixed hours in somebody else's service.

The second interesting aspect revealed by the analysis of the sub-sample, is that the pattern of social mobility is very diverse with ascending trajectories taking place at various distances i.e. Short, Medium and Long (Figure VI.3). In addition to their variety and as another interesting aspect to note, there also seems to be a certain degree of consistency of social movement across generations. In other words, the speed of the social ascendance experienced by some of the respondents within their own lives was matched by that of the social advancement from their fathers' occupation. This might be significant in my view as it may reflect upon the existence of a certain degree of social inertia. By this I mean that once embarked upon a social trajectory an individual movement may continue along that path due to its own momentum unless exogenous or endogenous forces come into play and impact upon the existing course.

Let me now present two cases of Traditional Gypsies with ascending trajectories from both Transylvania and Wallachia and try to place their ascending social movement in the context of their Ethnic Identity, Employment Status and Occupational Attainment. The case studies selected are of the *King of the Gypsies* (T1) in Transylvania, and the elected *Bulibasha* (W8) of a Traditional Gypsy village in Wallachia.

Perhaps one of the most recognised faces and names of a Romanian Traditional Gypsy both in Romania and abroad is that of (T1), the *King of the Gypsies*. Once the *Bulibasha* of the *Caldarari Neam*, T1's father decided after the Romanian Revolution of 1989 to upgrade his position to 'King' by claiming and receiving allegiance from other *Neams* and their *Bulibashas*.⁷

⁷ Acton (Thesis comments and Conversation at Greenwich University, 2007) feels that both the title of king, and the crown itself must be seen as part of an adaptive modernism, harking back to Romani artisan support for the constitutional monarchist party in Romania in the period 1860 – 1949 when there was continuing persecution by the Ceausescu regime of Roma members of the underground constitutional monarchist movement. Acton's analysis of Caldarari's attempts to use the monarchical motif would be that they start with the attempts of the Kwieks Poland in the 1920s to appropriate the residue of the relation of the Polska Roma Shero Rom with the former Polish monarchy, made possible by the retreat of the Shero Rom from any engagement with the Republican state. The Cioaba king-bid took a similar strategy. Its point was precisely to offer a non-threatening negotiating partner for the state.

Upon his father's death, T1 inherited the 'Crown' and became himself the King. *King of the Gypsies* is a strictly ceremonial role with no real political or legal recognition, limited mostly to settling Rroma civil disputes, presiding over community meetings and campaigning for the welfare of the Rroma community⁸.

Having interviewed the *King* and several of his family members including a *xhanamik* (co-parent-in-law: one of his children married one of the late King's children) of the late *King* who in 2001 appointed himself as the *Emperor of the Gypsies* (T2) and the *Crown Prince* (T3) I observed that whilst the family itself and a significant number of the *King's Neam*, the *Caldarari* are keen to recognise the institution, many other Gypsies outside the *Caldarari Neam* and especially among the Modern Rroma communities do not recognise him as their 'ruler'⁹. Despite this, T1 has gained a degree of international prominence and is currently invited and consulted by various international forums on Rroma matters¹⁰.

The ethnic identity of T1 is clearly one of a Traditional Gypsy. Despite not having a nomadic lifestyle as his ancestors and his father once used to, and not wearing traditional Gypsy clothes on a daily basis T1 is by definition one of the most Traditional Gypsies I have encountered during my research. Having discussed with T1 on several occasions and having visited his home and his office it was interesting to note that T1 was keen to retain certain features of Traditionalism. His heavy golden crown, sceptre and chain underlined not only his status but his wealth too. T1 was wearing indeed a suit and a tie and his office was equipped with modern technology like a fax machine and computers etc. yet his secretary was not allowed to cross in front of him on account of being a woman¹¹.

At home, with family and with friends he was speaking only Romany, and as a symbol of his traditionalism, despite living in a luxurious villa on the main street of Sibiu City (Figure VI.4)

Acton feels (and I would agree with respect to the 'Gypsy Monarchy institution' itself that fascinating as it is, one thing the Cioaba monarchy is not is an example of Romani traditions except in so far as adaptability and innovation can be represented as the key traditions which enable Roma survival.

⁸ See field notes and photographs, Transylvania - Sibiu July 2002 & May 2003

⁹ See field notes with Gabori Gypsies in Transylvania – Dej, May 2003 and informal discussion with 'Getuta' market stall holder Bucharest – March 2003

¹⁰ King Cioaba is also the Romanian Rroma spokesman and represented them at a meeting on Roma rights in Budapest 2004 sponsored by the World Bank, George Soros' Open Society Institute, and the European Commission.

¹¹ See field notes, Transylvania Sibiu, King Cioaba's office, May 2003

and driving a large Mercedes Benz limousine he still had a Gypsy tent erected symbolically in his courtyard.

In addition, T1 was indeed seeing himself and being regarded as the upholder of Traditional Gypsy values, not surprisingly perhaps, considering his entire position rested upon precisely the preservation of these values T1's employment status was that of a Self-employed business man. Due to his several business interests he was hiring on permanent basis a small number of employees. As a self-employed businessman he was indeed wholly independent and self-reliant in terms of his sources for generating income. He was not receiving any central or local government subsidies, he was not qualifying for any income support benefit, child support or paying into a state subsidised retirement plan. Due to his economic independence and the size and scope of his business ventures and with a view to his large number of employees (over 25), T1 was placed in GOS's higher self-employed echelons.

T1's occupational attainment was among the most diverse I have encountered among both the Traditional and Modern segments. His core business was very much in keeping with the traditional skills of his *Caldarari* background. The *Caldarari* would traditionally manufacture copper cauldrons and stills (see Chapter III). After generations of working with copper, their niche in the market grew to secure most of the small manufacturing sectors dealing with non-ferrous metals (Achim 1998).

Aided undoubtedly by their status in the community and by the availability of capital, T1's family diversified their activities and from manufacturers of copper items expanded into the non-ferrous scrap breaking business. Semi-nomadic *Caldarari* Gypsies from the lower quadrant of the Traditional Gypsy segment as well as other Roma categories would collect scrap copper, zinc, brass, etc. and would sell it to companies such as that owned by T1. In turn, such companies would either sell further in bulk or would diversify in melting and casting business. In the case of T1's family, expansion and diversification appear to have been successful and allowed the penetration of other sectors of the market, further away from the Traditional Gypsy occupations such as car dealership and property leasing. At the time of the interview, T1 reported that he derived his main income from owning and directing a cluster of commercial enterprises e.g. car dealership and leasing business, non-ferrous metal buying and selling, non-ferrous metal melting and casting, lending money, etc.

Parallel with these strictly commercial activities, T1 also informed me that he was pursuing political interests as he founded and was actively involved with campaigning on behalf of the Rroma Party of Romania, a mainly Gypsy party drawing support from the Rroma community. Though his electoral base was not large enough to secure him a seat in the Romanian parliament he was nonetheless deriving an income as the Party President. Finally, T1 was also a fervent religious practitioner and after taking his vows he became a Reverend for the local Pentecostal community, preaching in a prayer house financed partly with aid from the international Pentecostal movement.

Discussions with T1 and his family revealed that during the communist years, as a *Bulibasha* of the *Caldarari*, one of the most successful traditional *Neams*, his father was rewarded for his peace-keeping services in the Traditional Gypsy preferred method of payment, i.e. in gold coins. Depending on the particular function he performed for the community, he would be paid various amounts of gold coins of different denominations. Possession of gold bullion was strictly forbidden during the communist years and most of these coins were either handed over to the authorities voluntarily by the family whilst others were confiscated. In either case, adequate paperwork was issued specifying the respective family's name¹².



Figure VI.4 The interior of T1's villa situated on the main street of Sibiu City – Transylvania.

¹² See field notes and photographs. Transylvania – Sibiu, May 2003, also informal discussion with Romani Criss, Human Rights organisation, Wallachia – Bucharest, March 2003

Decades later, after the collapse of the communist regime in Romania, the new regime undertook the restitution of all previously nationalised property including means of production, land, buildings and all the Gypsy's gold as against the available paperwork. *Bulibashas* of Gypsy communities of various *Neams* and sizes were compensated for the loss of their gold and during my research I have met several who confirmed the restitution of their confiscated bullion (T1, T2, W1, W2, W3, T8). In certain cases I was shown papers related to still ongoing claims for bullion restitution (T2) and in other cases I have been shown large amounts of gold coins successfully recovered by the descendants of previous owners from the authorities.

As I have noted above, at the time of the interviewing, T1 earned his living through a variety of occupations ranging from the director of a holding company, reverend for the local Pentecostal community, political leader and activist, scrap metal merchant, owner of melting furnace, businessman, etc. The equivalents of these occupations provide us with the following levels:

GOS: 2 (company director) + 1 (scrap metal merchant) + 2 (parochial clergy) + 2 (party agent)

Average Level = 2

Comparing T1's GOS Average Level (2) with that of his father (3) I observed a small advancement along T1's inter-generational social trajectory. The respondent intimated to me during the interview and the subsequent informal discussions¹³ that during the communist years when he could not officially hold a business licence, he began his career as market stall holder and copper still maker, position which on the GOS scale would attract a level of 6 and respectively 4. In light of this significant jump between his position of entry into the labour market and his occupation at the time of interviewing I can conclude that having ascended approximately 3 GOS levels, T1's intra-generational social trajectory as well as his inter-generational trajectory was a long distance one.

Education: T1 explained to me that his formal education consisted of eight years of primary school plus 'several years of college' though he refused to explain what exactly type of college he attended and for how many years. Despite being the custodian of the Traditional Gypsy values and the *Bulibasha* of the *Caldarari Neam*, and being thus expected to be reluctant to fully

¹³ See post-visit notes (from memory) Transylvania - Sibiu, May 2003

embrace the modern Gadge education institution, T1 appeared very keen on the concept of education, indeed he later explained that he was one of the leaders of the Traditional Gypsy community who campaign vigorously for Rroma education.¹⁴

Researcher: Let's talk about school Sir: did you go to school?

Interviewee: Of course ...eight classes and college

R What college did you attend?

I It was a college with evening classes, I went to it later because when I was young I couldn't you see, there were different times those days...

R So what type of college was that

I College like all the colleges only some people do it in the evening (he seems irritated)

R I see...and now you can read and write?

I Of course I can read and write who do you think deals with all these (he shows me many files around his office)? What, the fact that I have a secretary and an accountant? They only help me and the accountant deals with the legal matters. My family campaigned long and hard for the Gypsies to have all these positive discrimination laws these days...

(T1 interview, Sibiu – Transylvania, May 2003)

T1 also regarded education not only as a means to enlighten his people but as the safest route to help them out of the poverty and marginalisation trap. In his view only the literacy and numeric skills could help his 'nation' out of the 'poverty slavery'. Throughout the interview, it was interesting to note how T1 referred to the Rroma community as his nation and on a number of occasions he even described his aspirations that one day the Rroma could have a state of their own though he did not wish to expand where exactly this state would be located. He explained his dreams that one day, the way the world assisted the Jews to create a state of their own out of desert, the same way, the world might help the Gypsies too¹⁵. These plans involved in T1's view an educated population, able to sustain a viable state and he was adamant that without education a Rroma state would remain a chimera.

Researcher: What is in your view the role of education?

Interview: Education is light and the air and water you give to the plants: take the water away from them and they turn week and die. Why do you think my father the late King also pushed us all to school? Yes you might have heard that he disowned my sister for going to university and writing those love poems but they made peace before he died. It's not that he did not want her to be smart and to write those poems of hers but the Gypsies are not advanced like that and for him as a King it was difficult to explain to people why his daughter is not married with children...He forgave in the end and I am sure in his heart he was pleased that she was smart and could beat Gadge in school.

¹⁴ See field notes and interviews with Rroma development worker W16, (March 2003 – Bucharest) and Rroma human rights activist W17, March 2003 - Bucharest)

¹⁵ His aspirations for statehood were also echoed by his son 'Crown prince DC' (T2 interview) and uncle 'Emperor IR' (T2 interview) May 2003 – Sibiu.

R So you would encourage the rest of the Rroma to go to school then?

I Of course I would, I am always telling them off for taking their kids from school. They should keep them there, something will rub off them in the end. What's the point of us campaigning for education if I then go to communities and don't encourage them to school? Those days are gone when the Gypsies could go by without reading and writing, now even if you only want a driving license you need to read and write. That's what I keep telling them: Oy! Aren't you ashamed to buy yourselves cars and then ask the Gadge to drive it for you 'cause you're too stupid to drive them yourselves? Do you think Gadge look at you and say wow! Look at the Gypsy-man, he's got a car now! No! They go look at the Gypsy man how stupid he is, he can't even drive his own car! (T1 interview, Sibiu – Transylvania, May 2003)

When asked about his plans regarding the education of his children he was very clear to describe to me the pressure he put on his son to return to education and continue his unfinished study towards a Baccalaureate. His son, whom I later also interviewed¹⁶ later confirmed to me that had it not been for his father he would not have bothered to return to complete his studies.

Researcher: What was your father's view on your return to education at the age of 34?

Interviewee: well it was him who actually nagged me to do it, I did not want to do it initially...it's difficult you know...family, business...mind doesn't work as good when you're getting old. When I was younger it was different...I was the best in my class. In those days it wasn't like today when people call you names for being a Gypsy. It's difficult for the kids these days, Gadge keep telling them that they shame Romania, that they steal and do that and the other...rubbish! They should look at Romanians in the government...who sold the fleet? Who sold the steel plants for nothing only to get themselves rich over night with the bribes? Eh? You tell me! All that is because we don't have our country, or because we don't have anybody to stand up for us like the Hungarians...if we had our own country nobody would tell us dirty Gypsies anymore...

(T2 interview, Sibiu – Transylvania, May 2003)

Looking at T1's career progression and bearing in mind his ascending social mobility, in particular his occupational attainment at the time of interviewing, it is difficult to imagine how he would have succeeded in his current roles without reading and writing skills. His involvement with politics and the creation of his own Rroma party would have been very difficult without education and whilst I could not discount the benefits T1 must have derived from being his father's son, I can only speculate that his social ascendance from semi-nomadic cauldron maker to party chairman and Pentecostal Minister would have been far more difficult to undertake. I could not identify however from T1's explanations whether in addition to the literacy skills and general knowledge acquired at primary and secondary school, the college he was now attending was assisting him with acquiring additional knowledge or skills required by his position or

¹⁶ See T2 interview, May 2003 - Sibiu

whether his late return to education was part of his role's responsibilities in particular with a view to his campaign for promoting education. His sister however, to whom he referred in the interview and whom I have also met though in view of my sample parameters I could not interview (see Chapter II Methodology) was a university trained writer and she showed me a couple of books published under her name.

Researcher: If I were to ask you now at the age of 48, where in life did you learn the most, what formed you as you are now, what...

Interviewee: My father! He taught me my job, I was good at making perfect stills you know, we were wandering the villages and people were asking us in advance for orders because they knew we were honest people and doing good work. Dad wasn't a King then but people still respected him. Going with him through the country I learned about people, who to trust and how to smell a rat from a distance...these days people think that they're smart if they go to universities but the best university is the life you understand me?

(T1 interview, Sibiu – Transylvania, May 2003)

Across the Carpathian mountains and over the Wallachia plain, at the other end of Romania, I encountered and interviewed another *Bulibasha* of a Traditional Gypsy community named Targu Bujor located socially this time in the lower quadrant of the Traditional Segment (see Respondents Location Map - Methodology Chapter). Heading the village was W08, a Traditional Gypsy who very kindly agreed to talk to me, informally first then following the semi-structured topic schedule. He also introduced me to the rest of the community where for two days I collected valuable data through interviews, photographs and observation notes. Perched on the outskirts of the Targu Bujor Village, W08's settlement did not benefit from electricity, running water, sanitation or a sewage system and is among the poorest I visited during my field research. There was virtually no local economy to observe and the entire¹⁷ community was surviving on a combination of child benefits, unemployment benefits and illicit commercial activities consisting of felling trees in the nearby wood and selling the logs to *Gadje*.

I was also told¹⁸, though I could not confirm, that their state benefits were heavily 'discounted' by the local officials on account of anonymous reports that certain individuals engaged occasionally in 'cash in hand' jobs, something illegal if on state benefits. The houses were in a very poor state of repair with roofs patched with plastic sheets, broken windows covered with planks of wood and the furniture inside placed without boards, tiles or rugs directly on the ground. Despite their poverty, the Gypsies of Targu Bujor welcomed me in their midst with

¹⁷ See field notes and photographs, Wallachia - Targu Bujor, March 2003

¹⁸ See field notes reflecting the discussion with my guide during the journey between Galati and Targu-Bujor

warmth and without any requests for payment or rewards, without reservations they agreed to let me interview some of them and showed me their homes. W08 was like his fellow *Bulibasha* in Transylvania an archetypal Traditional Gypsy speaking fluent Romany to his family and friends, wearing with pride the black velvet hat, a symbol of his authority and ethnic identity and expecting his wife and daughter to dress according to Rroma traditions (Figure VI.5).



Figure VI.5 W08 and his Traditional Gypsy wife and daughter. His wife later explained to me that faced with the choice between sending her daughter to a free school and marrying her at 14 to the son of another *Bulibasha* she would opt for the arranged marriage.

His traditionalism was also manifested in the way he upheld the traditional Gypsy values and concepts even though in some instances he actually disagreed with some of them. For example, when asked whether he would prefer to send his daughter to a free school so that eventually she might end up a doctor or accept a 15 gold coins offer from the *Bulibasha* in the village next door for an arranged marriage to his son, he replied that in his heart he disagreed with the concept but as a *Bulibasha* he could not be seen as undermining the centuries old Gypsy tradition so he would arrange his daughter's marriage.

W08 became the local *Shatra*'s leader in place of his older brother who should have been the rightful *Bulibasha* but on account of his conversion to Jehovah's Witnesses felt that he could no longer represent the community. I interviewed later his brother too (W10) and learned that as part of his duties, a *Bulibasha* was expected occasionally to lie on behalf of his followers, something that as a Jehovah's Witness he could no longer do. As such his brother (W08) was chosen by the community to represent them and he took his role very seriously indeed. During my research I have met and interviewed over seven *Bulibashas* (W1, W2, W3, W8, T1, T2, T8) and W8 struck me as one of the most committed to his community.

W8 was earning an income from working as Rroma representative for the local authority district and was employed by the local council to represent and mediate when necessary between his community and the authorities. He was also assisting various individuals in their appeals against local decisions and was campaigning for funds towards the connection of his settlement to running water and electricity. The modern equivalent of his position would be somewhere between a social welfare worker and a trade union official and his employment status appeared to be somewhere between that of an employee and a project/task manager with an occasional contract or set of terms of reference. This was in contrast to that of his father the late *Bulibasha* who earned his living as a self-employed nomadic wooden spoon carver and basket maker.

In terms of W8's occupation grading along the GOS scale, the equivalent of his occupations could be listed under social welfare worker (GOS Level 3) in view of his involvement and work for his community and local trade union official (GOS Level 4) in view of his role as an elected representative of the community. Though the income he derived from his 'official role' was modest, he reported nonetheless that he was the only inhabitant in the village with a regular/occasional income other than the state benefits and pensions.

GOS: 3 (social welfare worker) + 4 (local trade union official) Average Level = 4

W8 entry into the labour market was as a agricultural worker (GOS Level 6) and as a cowman (GOS Level 7) thus in view of the considerable distance between the GOS level of his current occupation and that of his entry into the labour market (GOS Level 7) I can observe a long distance ascending inter-generational social trajectory. As mentioned above, W8's father earned a living as the *Bulibasha* of a nomadic spoon (GOS Level 7) and basket making *Shatra* and as commercial traveller (GOS Level 5). Together all these occupations would attract a GOS level 6, indicating that W8's social trajectory registered both intra and inter-generational ascendance.

Education: W8 was a particularly interesting case as his social ascendance was specifically assisted by his role in representing his community but this role was assigned to him not in virtue of him inheriting the *Bulibasha* role from his father. In fact the role would have been assigned to his brother who declined the position on account of his religious beliefs and the community elected W8 to succeed his father in place of his brother. W8 told me that he attended eight years of primary and secondary school plus two years of secondary college and that being an educated

man he was ideally equipped to represent the community. Before allowing me to interview him he asked to see my recommendation letter and I noted that he read it very fast indeed.

Researcher: Let us now talk a bit about school Sir, did you go to school?

Interviewee: Yes I did. I did eight classes and I also went to college...social workers college...when they came and asked us the Rroma who wants to go to school I went for it, why not I said to myself, it turned out alright...school is good, I wished I did it when I was younger...these days you can't do anything without school. That's why the Majoritars (he means the Gadje) have the bread and the knife: because they're educated and our people are not. But you go tell the community and sometimes they laugh at you...

R Did you find it useful? The college and school?

I Of course it was useful, I learned how the world goes, about laws and about what is legal and what it ain't. That's why I want to send my children to school, for them to have a better life...

R You mean both your son and your daughter?

I Yes of course both of them. But the girl got to marry so she doesn't need it that much.

R How do you mean?

I We're Gypsies you see, for us is different, the girls got to marry early otherwise they don't get married at all and people speak behind your back...Look at my wife, she only went to school for four classes but she isn't stupid, she had to marry, her father was the Bulibasha from the next door village, how could she go to school and shame her father?

R But you just said school is good...

I Yes but school is not everything, family and home are more important...

(W8 interview, Targu Bujor – Wallachia, April 2003)

W8 was the first Gypsy I have met during my research who, despite having an openly supportive view of the role of education, also openly admitted that he would not contemplate his daughter becoming a doctor for the risk of ending up unmarried and shaming him¹⁹. It was interesting to note that his role as *Bulibasha* and the implicit duty of upholding the Gypsy values came before his own views on education and its potential to benefit his own children's life. His wife, with whom I also spoke informally, a woman who by hers and her husband description would have benefited from more education, also supported him in his choice. The fact that she was now semi-literate and unable to undertake basic tasks in the society came in her view second to her having fulfilled her role as a Gypsy woman.

W8 described his children's good performance at school with pride yet he could not contemplate a situation where as *Bulibasha* he would challenge the rest of the community in recommending them to send their daughters to school. He perceived this as his duty to the community and as

¹⁹ Using the 'Doctor' as an example might not have been a good choice as Acton proposes that W8's reluctance to allow his daughter to become a medic might be related to the role of doctor as physically *Marime* for both men and women, especially the latter. See conversation notes with Acton, M, University of Greenwich, London.

the son of the late *Bulibasha* he regarded his obligations of upholding the Gypsy values as more important than pursuing progress through education. It was interesting to note his inner conflict between his personally held views and his official position. During the interview I had the impression that the dilemma was made more difficult for W8 because he was the community's second choice, after his brother relinquished the role on account of his religion. I felt W8 did not want to be the second son of his father, the late *Bulibasha* who disappointed the community by challenging their age old traditions and setting a 'bad' example .

I later asked W8 what in his view shaped him as an individual and I was not surprised to hear that his role and his understanding of his obligations were most influential in determining his current outlook in life.

Researcher: What would you say thought you the most in life?

Interviewee: You mean like school, family, life experience ...

R Yes this is what I mean, what do you think formed you into what you are today?

I The army. In the army I learned to follow orders, and to be obedient and to listen to those who are bigger than me, before that I was like a wild horse...my father would go travelling with my brother, we were basket makers and wooden plate carvers and they were going with the horse around the villages...I was left to help my mother with the children but I was ashamed of that and was running away to the river with other kids...when Dad was coming home my mother was crying and telling him I did not help and he was beating me with the horse whip but then as soon as he'll go away I would run away too...when I went to the army all that changed...

(W8 interview, Targu Bujor – Wallachia, April 2003)

It was interesting to observe W8's clear social ascendance and though initially I felt that his ascendance was a combination of his role in the community and his education, I found it very difficult to decide whether after all, his inheriting the title of *Bulibasha* did not, in the wider perspective actually hinder his social progression. W8 struck me as a spirit torn between his beliefs in the potential role of education to raise his community from abject poverty (Figure VI.6) and his duties to safeguard their cultural values. Whilst enjoying his hospitality and observing him going about his duties in the *Shatra*, I could not but speculate where might his social trajectory have ended had he been free of his 'responsibilities' towards his community.

As a general comment here, it is interesting to note that in several cases such as those described above, individuals experienced upward mobility through moving up the Gypsy ranking to positions of authority in the community. Nonetheless, the progression in their own community could not have taken place without a minimum of educational attainment and I noted that their

respective communities too preferred their informal leaders to be educated men thus a further confirmation that education is perceived as worthwhile by the Traditional Gypsies.



Figure VI.6 Traditional Rroma children from the Targu Bujor village - Walalchia

Type E: Ethnic transition (Traditional Gypsies)

This type refers to the process through which some of the respondents from the Traditional Gypsy segment have been observed as shedding some of their own or their father's Ethnic Practices thus initiating or continuing a process of gradual movement closer towards the Modern Roma segment. To put it in the context of my research, the reader is asked to refer to the Social Diversity Model (see Introduction Chapter) where I introduced the two main types of segmentation encountered among the Romanian Roma and presented in relation to two categories: the vertical (ethnic) segmentation and horizontal (social) segmentation.

I suggested that whilst the demarcation line between the upper and lower socio-economic quadrants might be easier to observe by agreeing on a distinct set of quantifiable criteria (e.g. employment type, wages, financial and human capital needed to access the respective position, opportunities for promotion, *etc.*), due to the intangibility of the elements making up the ethnic identity, the ethnic demarcation line is far more difficult to trace.

Thus, the picture emerging is one of two segments (Traditional Gypsy and Modern Roma), distinct in their cores but with overlapping edges and porous borders. I proposed the concept of Ethnic Practices contributing to the core identity of an individual and the more Ethnic Practices specific to an ethnic group an individual would possess, the more his or her identity would be

identified as a member of the respective cultural and ethnic entity. I further explained that the relevance of each respective Ethnic Practice to determining individual's identity is relative to the weight attached to that particular practice by the individual himself.

The adoption or rejection of some of these Ethnic Practices by each individual can only be observed in the context of that particular individual identity. For example, I described that for one respondent (T11 interview) the significance of traditional clothing can be secondary to the man's role in the family. By contrast another respondent (W14 interview) regarded the nomadic lifestyle as the linchpin of his Gypsy identity and regarded the knowledge of Romany as irrelevant. Whichever Ethnic Practices an observer would adopt, it would inevitably present a distorted picture. Taken separately the language or the life-style might be significant to observer, but they might not hold the same degree of relevance to the respondents themselves who in this particular case were both Traditional Gypsies. The concept introduced here was that Roma individual's ethnic identity is neither clearly defined nor easily quantifiable and that each Roma interviewed was positioned on an Ethnicity Spectrum ranging from Ultra-Traditional Gypsy to Fully Assimilated Roma.

The process of Ethnic Transition does not end once the respective individual has reached the Modern Roma segment. Indeed in at least one case (W36 interview) through various mechanisms (inter-ethnic marriages, geographical relocation, education, etc.) the process of Ethnic Transition began in the inter-generational plan, continued in the intra-generational plan up to the point where virtually full assimilation in the majority ethnic group was reached. The considerable number of *Gadje* ready to admit to having some degree of Gypsy ancestry is a confirmation that the ongoing Ethnic Transition process is indeed present²⁰. Observing some of the cases where such processes have been identified, the table below, lists case studies where I identified inter-generational Ethnic Transition i.e. between father and son (Figure VI.7).

The process of abandoning various Ethnic Practices is also observed both among the Traditional Gypsy and Modern Roma and it appears that several respondents have in the course of their life abandoned at least one or two Ethnic Practices. In other words, irrespective at what point on the

²⁰ Throughout my field research, many *Gadje* I have interacted with and to whom I described the theme of my research, appeared supportive of my topic. Once reassured of my views on the matter and that I would not look down upon them, several confessed that one of their great-grandparents were Gypsy 'though settled, civilised Gypsies – you understand!'

Ethnic Spectrum a respondent’s father would be located, in most of the cases, the son can always transit a step further towards full assimilation. According to my findings, in the case of the Modern Roma, the most commonly shed Ethnic Practices were the fluency in Romany language and the intra-ethnic marriage. Indeed, I have encountered many Roma who did not speak Romany at all and some who undertook the learning of the language as a foreign language²¹. In the case of the Traditional Gypsies the most commonly abandoned Ethnic Practices were found to be the nomadic lifestyle and wearing of traditional Gypsy clothes. The only cases where I encountered examples of Traditional Gypsy clothes worn by men were among the most Traditional Gypsies, the ‘Ultra-traditional’ *Neams* of the *Gabors* and the *Caldarari*. Even there, the wearing of traditional clothing consisted only in a few elements such as the black velvet hat or the leather waistcoat.

Respondent's Ethnic Practices

Father's Ethnic Practices

	Stated	Stated	Romany	Gypsy	Gypsy	Gypsy	Nomadic	Gypsy	Romany	Gypsy	Gypsy	Gypsy	Nomadic	Gypsy
Code	Ethnicity	Neam	Fluency	Clothes	Values	Skills*	Lifestyle	Marriage	Fluency	Clothes	Values	Skills*	Lifestyle	Marriage
T11	TR**	Corturari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T15	MO	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
T16	MO	NN***	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T19	MO	Geambasi	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
T24	MO	NN	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T31	MO	NN	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W01	TR	Caldarari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W02	TR	Caldarari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
W03	TR	Argintari	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W04	TR	Caldarari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
W05	TR	Spoitori	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W06	TR	Spoitori	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W16	MO	Vatrashi	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W26	MO/TR	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W27	MO	Vatrashi	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W30	MO	Ciubotari	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
W35	MO	Vatrashi	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓

* Refers to whether the respondent's main income earning activity is a traditional or modern occupation.

** Traditional or Modern

*** No stated *Neam* affiliation

Figure VI.7 Ethnic Transition Table: respondents’ and their sons’/fathers’ observed and reported Ethnic Practices

²¹ One of the issues most vigorously campaigned for by the Roma Party and by many Roma activists, was the introduction of Romany language classes in schools with a significant Roma presence. This positioning of Romany at the top of Roma Civil Society’s agenda may reflect a concern with the absence of linguistic skills among many young Roma. See conversation with CB Director-Romani CRISS, Bucharest 2003 and W33 interview with Romany language teacher - Ferentari School Bucharest 2003

Interestingly however, I found that Gypsy women were wearing traditional clothes far more often than the men including the gold coin necklaces and silk aprons.

The disappearance of the nomadic life style as a common Gypsy Ethnic Facet is something that undoubtedly began as a process with the forced settlement of many Rroma *Neams* several centuries ago. My research found that among the respondents interviewed and discussed with informally, the nomadic life style does not appear to constitute an Ethnic Practice central to their Gypsy identity. Some of the nomadic *Rudari* Gypsies interviewed (W11, W14 interviews) regarded themselves ‘less Gypsy’ than the settled *Caldarari* Gypsies and looked up to these as the most faithful custodians of the ancient Gypsy traditions. For a full discussion on the weight attached to these Ethnic Practices see Chapter III. In order to be able to analyse the various Ethnic Practices making up the Gypsy identity, I selected a couple of case studies, one from the Traditional Gypsy (W03) segment and one from the Modern Rroma (T19) segment, with similar ages (67 and 63 respectively) and from the two provinces.

I met W03 during the preliminary visit to Romania and he very kindly agreed to see me and answer many questions on both occasions. W03 was a Traditional Gypsy of the *Argintari Neam*, the oldest son of a *Bulibasha* and the current leader of a small Rroma Party. W03 shared a large French style villa in a sought after area of Bucharest with his wife and children and another Romanian family. W03’s apartment was lavishly decorated with a large colour television set and three computers (Figure VI.8).



Figure VI.8 W03’s wife, a Traditional *Argintari* Gypsy woman at home with some of her computers funded by an European NGO initiative aimed at introducing computer literacy skills to Romanian Rroma children.

I contacted W03 at the recommendation of Gatekeepers who, when asked about a Traditional Gypsy to interview, have suggested W03. Having observed and interviewed many Traditional Gypsies I felt that in fact W03 was far from being the most traditional of all the Gypsies in the sample. However, observing and interviewing W03 I noted that from the list presented in Table V.16: several Ethnic Practices were indeed present to W03:

Fluency in Romany: W03 was fluent in Romany and I noted that when he was addressing his wife or his mother he was doing it in Romany. Reputedly, W03 was among one of the best speakers of Romany and his knowledge of it was often sought by other Rroma activists. W03 was also in the process of writing a Romany textbook for children which he proudly showed me. However, when he was addressing his children (two of whom I also met) he was speaking in Romanian. Asked whether his children do understand Romany he was evasive at first then he eventually confirmed that he chose not to teach them.

Researcher: Does your wife speak Romany?

W03: Yes

R: Is she from the Argintari Neam?

W03: Yes she is. Of course she is...

R: Do your children speak Romany?

W03: Well they do...sort of... if I were to teach them a particular word but to be fluent, no they are not... They understand but they don't speak because I wanted to protect them from these things that I were subjected to, I wanted them to go to school.

(W03 interview, 29 March 2003, Bucharest -Wallachia)

Gypsy clothes: Neither W03 or his wife wore any Gypsy traditional clothes, they were both dressed as any Romanian family with average income would be. W03 was wearing a suit and tie and the only Gypsy item I was able to observe was an extra-large gold ring decorated with several rubies and diamonds though I could not tell whether they were real or not (Figure VI.9). Having met two of W03 children and one of his son-in-laws I noted they were not wearing any traditional Gypsy clothes either; rather they were wearing modern clothes adorned with western logos. Most importantly, in contradiction to W03's stated beliefs regarding the Gypsy customs, neither his wife nor his daughters wore Gypsy scarf and apron. By contrast, W03's parents did wear immaculate traditional clothes; his mother especially was wearing long pleated skirts, apron, scarf and gold coins necklace.



Figure VI.9 W03's ring

Gypsy values: W03 appeared to be passionate and fully aware about the meaning, the role and importance of Traditional Gypsy laws and customs. He spoke at length about these laws and the paragraph below reproduces only a fragment of his strongly held views. Surprisingly for somebody with such strong opinions on the matter, neither his mother, wife or daughter did not seemed to observe these customs nor did W03 seem concerned about applying them in real life.

Researcher: So when you say traditional, what does that mean?

W03: Traditional Gypsy means a Gypsy who respects the traditions when you are indoors, in your family, but when you go to your work or somewhere else, then you adjust yourself to the respective job...

R: Give me some examples of the laws that Rroma have and the Romanians don't.

W03 Yes of course I can give you a few examples. For example: in all the world they say that the woman has equal rights with the man. This is wrong. This is one of the greatest mistakes of the world. How could a woman be equal when she, excuse my expression, has a (...) and I have a (...)? That is impossible. They are opposite sexes, it does not work. I can give her every position but for her to come and judge? That is a stupid thing. It is not possible. What, the fact that you have a dynasty and a Queen? That is something else but even that it is not accepted to us to have a woman Queen.

R: Could you have a woman as a Bulibasha?

W03: Never! Something like this does not exist. It does not work. This is one of our laws. Err... if a woman made a mistake and she loved another man, that man knows he is disrespected by everybody if he continues his life with her.

R: You mean if her husband knows he will be ashamed in the Neam...

W03: Oh my God...(...) I also have our values well established and that is gold, this is what I are fighting for. In addition our children are very important, there are some laws I have. If one of our children, a girl, if she is not virgin when she marries that is big danger, big shame.

R: I understand.

W03: There are many rules, like the one with the horses...

R: What's that?

W03: The woman is not allowed to walk in front of the horse, or in front of the man, this is another law. The woman is not allowed to walk in front of the man, she was supposed to defend

his back, just in case somebody wants to attack the man from behind, the woman is supposed to be there to warn him.

R: How about the trials...

W03: Yes the trials are another one, it was after our trials that the modern society implemented the judges and the accuser, lawyers and so forth. When I organise a trial I do it properly. If there is a possibility that I am talking about a crime, then the judges reach an understanding so that the situation is not made worse. I as a judge sometimes apply my flexibility and give more to somebody who is poorer and take from somebody who has enough. And I say that he is right and he is right too and all this to make peace.

R: And what are these people called?

W03: They are called Crissinitori, this means judges, Criss means trial.

(W03 interview, 29 March 2003, Bucharest -Wallachia)

Gypsy skills: W03 was an *Argintari* and as the recognised *Bulibasha* of the entire *Neam*, W03 appeared to be skilled as a jeweller and he proudly showed me his tools and one of his finished products. W03 was however no longer working as a semi-nomadic jeweller as he no longer found it a profitable career, choosing instead to concentrate on more lucrative occupations such as Rroma NGO work and Rroma political activity. Such was his conviction that jewellery is no longer a profitable career that he did not train any of his children as jewellers.

Researcher: Your children, are they all *Argintari*? I mean do they still have your traditional skills, are they silversmiths?

W03: No, none of them still does it...They never worked...

R: Why did you not teach them, you are *Argintari* right? Isn't it a pity to lose the skill?

W03: They didn't like it to learn and I didn't want them either...Silversmithing does no longer work there is no longer a future in this job...man has to live in this world, can't you see these days they ask for a Baccalaureate diploma everywhere... or even a University degree...Why do they need it I don't understand...

(W03 interview, 29 March 2003, Bucharest – Wallachia)

Nomadic lifestyle: As described above, W03 lived as a fully-settled Rroma, in a luxuriously decorated apartment, the bathroom in particular being extensively decorated with marble and gold plated trimmings. His parents used to work as semi-nomadic *Argintari* but W03 no longer travelled anywhere other than on 'Rroma political matters'. He lived among Romanians; his modern car was a far cry from his parents' once owned caravans and neither himself nor his children would contemplate ever returning to a semi-nomadic lifestyle.

Gypsy marriage: W03's marriage was intra-ethnic and intra-*Neam*. His mother and father were *Argintari* Gypsies and he married an *Argintari* Gypsy woman adhering in this respect to the customs so passionately advocated previously. The adherence to the Gypsy tradition of marrying

only with other Roma and only with members of the same *Neam* stopped with himself as he did not hold equally strong views on his children's marriage.

Researcher: What would you say if your daughter would like to marry a Romanian?

W03: Well actually I have a daughter who is married to a Romanian...

R: I see and how does it work?

W03: No problem, they are happy, is their business...

R: How about if you have a boy who comes home with a Romanian girl?

W03: I also have a boy married to a Romanian girl.

R: You have one of them too...

W03: Of course and there is no problem.

R: Didn't you ask them to find one of yours to marry?

W03: No, if they liked each other is their problem.

(W03 interview, Traditional *Argintari* Gypsy, 29 March 2003, Bucharest - Wallachia)

Despite being reputedly one of the most Traditional Gypsies of the *Argintari Neam* and despite his passionate advocating of the Roma traditions, W03 himself did not embrace many of the Ethnic Practices I identified. Furthermore, having earned their living as semi-nomadic *Argintari* with due observance of the Gypsy dress code W03's parents possessed all the Gypsy Ethnic Practices I listed, therefore I can observe a beginning of an inter-generational Ethnic Transition process. Finally, having observed and discussed with W03 children i.e. the third generation of *Argintari*, I observed a further dilution of the Gypsy Identity as W03's children held none of their parents and grandparents Ethnic Practices. W03's sons and daughters appeared to me as being Gypsies solely because their parents and grandparents were so and having also married inter-ethnically, their children would continue the Ethnic Transition process began by their father, thus becoming ethnically and racially only half Roma or would enter what Gans describes as state of 'Symbolic ethnicity' (Gans 2004). Gans' study focussed on the American Jewish community and found that similar to my case studies, across an observation period of 20 years, intermittent, home-centred and religious practices have either been stable or declined. Likewise, when the sum of ethnic practices has declined, the importance attached to being Jewish declined too.

Education: W03 told me that his education consisted of eight to ten classes but given the general tendency of this interviewee to exaggerate (see previous quotes) I would not be surprised if in fact this claim was an exaggeration too. My suspicions were confirmed by other prominent

members of the Rroma community²². At any rate, his description of his brilliance in school and his ability to undertake two or three years of normal study within one academic year should be taken with caution. His tendency to exaggerate his academic abilities should however be taken as an indication of the importance W03 attaches to the role of education: clearly, he would not feel the need to overstate his school results if he would not perceive the school experience as something to be admired.

R Let us speak a bit about your school about your school experience, your primary school first. I OK let me tell you that I was deported in Transnistria²³ in 1942, and I started the school in 1952 as a twelve year old boy. I was such a good pupil that in one year I went straight to the third year, I gained two years. When I started the fourth class and when the teachers had a meeting I was holding all the classes in their place from the first class to the fourth. And when I was entering the class I could not hear even a fly. This is how respected I was.

R Where there other Rroma in your class?

I Of course there were many, I was then Unity Commander as Pioneer (Communist Youth Organisation) I had 780 pioneers under my command, I was known as an extraordinary boy, I had no equal. I then postponed a year (he probably repeated the year) and later I did four more classes in total I did seven. I had to study you see, I liked the studying enormously. And I did few more classes at evening school. In total, I did about ten classes. But those four classes I did at the beginning, I was able to debate with university professors. But I studied more than that because I felt so. My school experience is vast, I can speak and discuss at every level.

(W03 interview, Bucharest - Wallachia, March 2003)

My perception of W03's view on the role of formal education was reinforced by his insistence that all his twelve children attend school. Again, his claims to be a parent keen on education are difficult to corroborate with the fact that out of all his twelve children, only one completed college. Furthermore, his stated high regard of the enlightening role of education does not extend to his daughters to the same degree as to his sons as on the topic of his daughters being educated, he attached conditions to the extent that they should not in effect out-class their husbands. In this area of the interview as well as under previous topics, W03 manifested a very discriminatory approach towards women including those in his own family and whilst hearing his comments on the role of education, I could not but wonder whether his elaborate descriptions and vocal support for education had not more to do with his public role and his sense that support for education is indeed a useful and convenient position to adopt.

R Do your children go to school? Have you got many children?

I I have twelve children... They all went to school..

²² See conversation notes with MI (Bucharest - September 2002) and GD (Bucharest - March 2003)

²³ Ukrainian territory annexed by Romania during the WWII and later populated with Gypsies deported there from all over the Romanian territory

R Do your girls go to school?

I Yes of course but they don't really went too far. They did seven or eight years. They got married, even if I don't want to give it to that guy he runs away with her.

R Say the girl has graduated from college with a Baccalaureate diploma, in the eyes of the husband, is she more valuable?

I Oooohhhh, the wagon breaks down. If she starts correcting him in public and telling him how to speak then he goes Oy! you woman are you smarter than me, go to hell. If on the other hand she belongs to that group of women who respect their husbands then yes. It doesn't matter that she went to school. But if she starts showing off that she is smarter, than the wagon breaks down. The man must always be a MAN!

(W03 interview, Bucharest - Wallachia, March 2003)

Overall, having interviewed W03 on two occasions and having spent almost two days in his company and meeting several of his family members and friends, I was left with a sense of suspicion on many of W03's statements including those made on the topic of education. W03 appeared to me a clear case of an interviewee trying to shape his answers to match the researcher's intention and there was very little relation between some of his statements and my subsequent probing questions. At the age of 63, W03 claimed that he learned a great deal from school and that this learning has helped him in life. Looking in detail at his career progression, it was difficult for me to explain his social trajectory, his ethnic transition on the basis of his exposure to full time education. Rather, triangulating his responses with data collected from other sources in the community I was persuaded that in fact his ethnic transition had more to do with a favourable conjuncture of circumstances and his ability to capitalise on them such as his initial position as a *Bulibasha* of the *Argintari Neam*, a growing Roma civil society movement in the Romanian society encouraging (and funding) Roma informal leaders to formalise their roles, Romania's government compensation granted to Roma deported to Transdnistria during the war and their relatives and as in the T1's and other cases, restitution of previously confiscated gold bullion (See Chapter III). In my view, it was a combination of these circumstances that encouraged W03 to buy a villa in a fashionable district of Bucharest and to stop wearing traditional Gypsy clothes. The other indications of his ethnic transition, namely not teaching his children Romany and the traditional Gypsy occupation of silversmith and encouraging them to marry inter-ethnically must have occurred before some of the developments I have described above but these too, appear to have very little to do with W03's education.

R Tell me how useful did you find the school? How much of what you are today is due to the school you attended?

I Had I not go to the school I would not have succeeded, the school, the education is exactly like an armour somebody is wearing and helps him in a dense forest. School for me meant a lot, if I

did not have the school I would have been left only with my intelligence, which OK was a lot but no point if I could not read. The school helped me find my way, took me out of the darkness, I began to understand what a police commander could mean, what a mayor means, what does a secretary mean, what does a president mean or a King. I began to understand what a group of people means. What does it mean to manage and to control. Of course, it was all because of the school. For what I need I don't need universities, or anything. My experience is equal to three or four universities. I don't need degrees. I only need it if I need to get a job and they ask me for a certificate, only then I need a degree. I don't need it though. I can manage a country not a house. If I were the president of Romania this country would come out of the ground like a flower. I would make it that every man would be happy. And there would not be so many robberies and so many... Not that I would really want to become a president...
(W03 interview, Bucharest - Wallachia, March 2003)

In Transylvania, one of the Modern Roma I interviewed (T19) presented me with a case of near full assimilation. Though T19's case was not unique among the batch of recruited respondents, I felt that his characteristics and Ethnic Transition trajectory would be interesting to observe here in detail. I was introduced to T19 by one of my local Gatekeepers (T13) in Transylvania (see Respondents Recruitment Chart - Methodology Chapter) and I interviewed him in his home, in the Northern Transylvanian village of Reteag (See Respondents Geographical Distribution Map - Methodology Chapter), a medium size village consisting of approximately 350 households. Having worked most of his life as a self-employed agricultural entrepreneur (small holder, owning and renting horses for daily farm labour, home based alcohol production) T19 was now a 67 years old semi-retired villager living in a prosperous looking brick farm house comprising of several buildings, animals shed, tin roofed and very tidy looking. The interior of the house was clean, comfortable with colour TV, fridge/freezer, radio and various china-sets in a display cabinet. The interviewee did not ask for money, did not request any favours for the time, appeared keen to share his life experiences with me (Figure V1.10).



Figure VI.10 Modern Roma (T19) from Reteag Village in Transylvania in front of his home

T19 was one of the few Rroma interviewed who did not appear to be particularly concerned about the specific ethnic group he belonged to. When asked 'what he is' he responded initially that he is a hard working man, then he clarified that sometimes he appears on the town hall documents as Romanian and finally he explained that he is a Rroma. Whilst I could not discount the possibility that his evasiveness might be a result of his intention to guess and meet my 'expectations', I found T19's ambiguous attitude interesting nonetheless.

Researcher: The first question I would like to ask you Mr XX, is what would you say you are if somebody asks you?

T19: I am hard working person, I am family man...

R: No I mean what, what nation do you belong to...

T19: Rroma I am, what can I do...

R: When people from the Census come to check, what do you say you are?

T19: I don't care what they put down, they can put how they want. They put me Romanian.

R: But how can they put you down as Romanian when you say you are Rroma...

T19: Yes they see me as Romanian and they put me as Romanian...

R: So what do they register you as?

T19: Rroma sometimes, Romanian sometimes...

R: I see. Have you ever travelled abroad?

T19: I went to Serbia and Hungary.

R: If somebody asks you in Serbia what you are what do you tell them?

T19: Well they see our passports and they know where I are from...

R: I know but if they ask you what do you tell them

T19: I tell them I am from Romania.

(T19 interview, Reteag Village Transylvania, 18 May 2003)

Romany fluency: T19 was unconcerned about Romany language though he did state that he is fluent. At home, with family and relatives he claimed he spoke both Romanian and Romany but whilst I was in his home, he only rarely addressed his family in Romany. This, of course might be a result of his intention to be hospitable towards his *Gadje* visitor and not offend me by speaking a language I could not understand. T19 explained that his children did not speak Romany 'very well' and he motivated it as 'they don't need it really'.

R: Do you speak Romany?

T19: Yes of course but I are not like the Caldarari or those Corturari Gypsies, we are different... we were always respected here in the village, all our village knows were hard working people...

R: How do you say Let's have something to eat?

T19: Berite na pernemo (not sure this is what he said) Our children learned it too...but they don't use these days..

R: Why?

T19: Where would they use it in their jobs?

R: I see... Tell me what language do you speak in the home with your family?

T19: Gypsy and Romanian.

R: Both languages?

T19: Yes

R: Which one do you speak better?

T19: Both of them

(T19 interview with T19, Reteag Village Transylvania, 18 May 2003)

Gypsy clothes: T19 did not wear any items of Traditional Gypsy clothing and I have observed that neither his son nor any other members of his family wore any Gypsy Traditional clothes. Indeed the entire T19's family were dressed as a Romanian family living in a rural area and earning their living from rural occupations.

Gypsy values: T19 seemed very keen to explain to me his hardworking approach to life, his reliability and the respect he gained from the rest of the Romanian community amidst which he was born and lived for his entire life. When asked what does the Gypsy ethnic identity consists of, many respondents in my sample mentioned several of the Ethnic Practices discussed above. Some respondents however, responded like T19, indicating either a lack of awareness of these Ethnic Practices or an awareness of their existence but disregarded them as irrelevant.

Researcher: Tell me please do you belong to a particular Neam?

T19: I belong to the Vatrashi Gypsies I are the first ones who held land and homes...

R: Tell me when was the first time you realized you are Gypsy?

T19: My Dad took me aside and said look son I are Gypsies...

R: So you are from here from Reteag?

T19: Yes I was born here and lived here all my life...

R: So the rest of the neighbours know that you are Rroma right?

T19: Yes but they don't have any problems with us...

R: Tell me how are the Gypsies different from the Romanians?

T19: ...well that's how God wanted to be some of us are Gypsies like you are Romanians, and there is not much difference I are all people

R: Yes but what is different between us?

T19: There is not big difference really, I go to the same church, I eat the same food...only that some of us speak Gypsy so I are Gypsies

R: But if some Gypsies don't speak Gypsy are they not Gypsies anymore?

T19: Well they are but... yes they are but they did not learn to speak Gypsy...

R: So how are they different from Romanians then if they don't even speak Gypsy?

T19: Not much really, some Gypsies just did not learn Gypsy but they are still Gypsies...

(T19 interview, Reteag Village Transylvania, 18 May 2003)

Gypsy skills: T19 and his family earned their living from a combination of *Gadje* occupations (distilling alcohol and selling it under a business permit at the market and exploiting a small plot of land) and fairly traditional Gypsy occupations (breeding horses for selling and renting, commercial travelling). The traditional Gypsy skills he exploited were passed down his family

in the traditional Gypsy way of informal apprenticeship style training. Tradition was continued as T19 was training his children in businesses similar to those practiced by T19's elders.

Researcher: So how does your work go? Please explain it to me.

T19: I can sell pure alcohol on the market up to a certain quantity.

R: How does your work actually go? Do you buy raw materials from a wholesaler?

T19: I do all sorts, I are certified dealers, I buy jeans for example in bulk and then I go to the market and sell them individually. But is tough these days, police stops us all the time to check our papers and if they find us in the wrong they give us heavy fines, sometimes they take your load away to check it and mess things up for you.

R: And who helps you with all this work, do you have employees?

T19: No, I work with my sons and sons-in-law?

R: And how did you learn this job, who taught you?

T19: My elderly (he meant parents), they started it and they taught me everything... they did not work with authorisation though, during the communist years you could not get authorisation, I were all working for the Party (he means the collective farm.) I were keeping their animals.

R: And where was it better?

T19: There it was good too, but now the animal prices really went up you cannot make a business out of it...people can't afford it anymore...

(T19 interview, Reteag Village Transylvania, 18 May 2003)

Nomadic lifestyle: Far from leading a nomadic lifestyle, T19 took pride in being fully settled and living in full harmony with the rest of the Romanian village community. Like many other Modern Rroma respondents in my sample, T19 traced his roots back to the *Vatrashi* Gypsies. T19 was explicitly distancing himself from the nomadic *Neams* with which he did not wish to be associated. It seemed unlikely that T19 and his descendants would contemplate a return to a traditional semi-nomadic lifestyle.

Gypsy marriage: In this respect too, T19 did not seem to hold strong views. In marriage choices as in adopting a particular ethnic identity, his attitude appeared to be that it is up to the people to opt one way or the other and that as long as the individuals are satisfied with their choices he, T19, cannot object. I know that T19's parents were married intra- ethnically, that T19 himself was also married intra-ethnically but at least one of his children was married inter-ethnically, confirming a slow but continuous process of Ethnic Transition.

As elaborated in the Traditional/Modern Dimensions Chapter, Gypsy Identity does not consist of a homogenous collection of elements according to which, external observers can classify individuals' ethnic identity. According to my research findings and related literature (Okely 1982, Fraser 1992, Liégeois 1998, Guy 2001) it would be extremely risky to attempt to define

the extent to which an individual belongs to the Rroma community, let alone seeking to draw a sharp dividing line within the Rroma community, dividing the Traditional Gypsies from the Modern Rroma segments.

Rather, we can accept that each Rroma individual identity is made up of independent plans corresponding to each Ethnic Practice, and the resulting collective positioning of the individual in each of these plans. Each Ethnic Practice plan can stretch from a hypothetical absolute value signifying complete awareness and adherence to that respective practice, through a gradual fading of the value and culminating in a total unawareness and/or disregard of it. The closer in the respective Ethnic Practice plan an individual would be positioned towards the absolute location; the more significant that respective practice would be in the individual's ethnic identity.

In this section I have also shown that my research also supports the theory put forward by [Gordon \(1964\)](#) according to which the loosening of contacts with the primary (ethnic) group takes places concomitantly with the engagement in frequent and sustained contacts across ethnic lines, creating what Gordon describes as 'the marginal man'. The marginal man is the person who stands on the borders or margins of two cultural worlds but is fully a member of neither. He may be the offspring of an ethnically mixed or interfaith marriage, or he may venture away from the security of the cultural group of his ancestors because of individual personality and experiences factors which predisposed him to seek wider contacts and entry into social world which appeared more alluring (Gordon 1964). The usefulness of Gordon's propositions and its subsequent influence of the scholarship on assimilation and ethnic change is also highlighted by other sociologists ([Waters 1994](#), [Alba & Nee 1997](#)).

Education: Looking at T19's social trajectory, in particular his ethnic transition towards the *Gadje* community in the context of his education attainment it clear that the four years of full time education could not have had a great impact on his shedding some of the traditional ethnic practices. T19 attended four years of primary school in his local village surrounded by Romanians and taught Romanian by a Hungarian teacher. These years and the subsequent years of working have taught him to read and write though he admitted that he sometimes experienced difficulties. His memories of the school experience were positive and he sounded regretful that he was not able to continue his education for longer.

Researcher: I want to ask you a bit about school...did you go to school?

Interviewee: Four years...yes in those days you would not go much more to school... few years and then I worked with the rest of the family. It was good, I had a good teacher a Hungarian woman...Yes it was good at school

I went to school here in the village

R And now can you read and write? When you watch TV can you read the writing?

I Yes I can, not always but I can...

R Was it worthwhile to go to school?

I Yes of course, how can you go through life if you don't have any school?

(T19 interview, Reteag - Transylvania, June 2003)

Despite a limited number of years spent in full time education and low literacy skills, T19 was supportive of the concept of full time education for Rroma and he told me that he would have liked his children to go to school for longer but he was resigned to accept their decisions to abandon the school earlier and concentrate instead on earning money. I suspected that his resignation might have stemmed from his own limited exposure to school and feeling unable to be too persuasive in an area where he had limited experience.

Without being as elaborate in his description of the role of education as W03 above, T19 had a quiet and reserved way of explaining that school was in his view important. His views were particularly persuasive as he was now a retired farmer in a remote Transylvanian village without political ambitions and with nothing to expect from me, the researcher. He explained to me his disappointment about his children not wanting to continue their school in a very 'matter of fact' way though with a sense of pride for having at least one child who went as far as to obtain his driving license. For T19 as for many Rroma I have interviewed, school success was measured not so much in the number of years spent in full time education or the number of books read rather in concrete and tangible outcomes with direct impact on their daily livelihoods. As animal breeders, street vendors and market traders for T18 and his family, the relevance of school was measured in the ability of the individuals to obtain trade permits and driving licenses

R How many children have you got? Did they go to school?

I Four children...Of course all of them went to school... one of them has got his driving license!

R How many years did they go to school?

I Some seven some less ...

R So why did you not keep them for longer at school?

I I would have kept them in school but they did not want to go for much longer...what can I do? They wanted their authorisation to keep animals and get in business to earn some money...

(T19 interview, Reteag - Transylvania, June 2003)

As in W03's case, he seemed less concerned with his daughter's limited exposure to education and he regarded this as a fact of life also a reflection of the fact that as a woman, his daughter would not be expected to 'feed the family' it was her husband who would be responsible for that. Unlike in W03's case however, the thought of an educated woman did not bring about concerns about the dignity of the man in the household. I could not ascertain whether this was a reflection of T19 being placed further ahead than W03 on the ethnic integration trajectory or simply because T19 was a more enlightened individual.

R Tell me do you have daughters? Did you send them to school too?

I Yes I have one and I did send her to school but not too much, she did not like it. She wanted instead to get married, what can I do?

R What are your plans with your children?

I I would like them to get married to have children to mind their own business...

(T19 interview, Reteag - Transylvania, June 2003)

T19 had a short ascending intra and inter-generational mobility as at the time of interviewing he practiced virtually the same occupation as he always did and as his parents did before him. The only difference, T19 explained to me, was that they were doing it now legally and were earning more money but other than that and a occasional furthering of their areas of operations to the neighbouring Serbia and Hungary T19's occupational attainment did not change much. At the age of 67 however, T19's ethnic identity was a continuum of transition from distinct ethnicity to a dilute form of ethnic identity culminating with him declaring himself Romanian and/or seeming unconcerned with whether he was perceived as a Roma or Romanian. It was in T19's view, a natural outcome of a process of 'sedetarisation' began by his ancestors many generations before him and likely to be concluded by his own children. In many ways, being married to a Roma woman, speaking fluent Romany and practicing a traditional Roma occupation, T19 represented the last truly Roma link with his ancestors. His children had lost in the course of one generation four ethnic practices (language, dress, marriage and values) and his grandchildren were likely to be described as Romanians with a Roma parent.

Did education play a role in T19's ethnic transition? I would propose that it did not because there was very little of it and because as a child, by the time school years began, T19 was already living among Romanians, playing with Romanian children and was to be later working with Romanians thus the process of ethnic transition must have been well on its way. Had T19 attended school for more years this process might have been accelerated by T19 pursuing a non-

Rroma occupation or even moving away from his village and marrying inter-ethnically. The same can be observed among T19's children too, who despite attending several more years of school than their father, they continued the process of ethnic transition. Furthermore, and similarly to case studies observed above, T19's own description of what formed him mostly in life, was not his education, rather his work: the work he learned from his father and which he practiced among Romanians in order to raise his family.

Researcher: If I were to ask you what played the greatest role in making you what you are now, what would you say? Was it the army, the school, the family?

Interviewee: Work made me what I am, I worked hard to make a home, to feed my family, to get the respect of the people around me...

R And how did you learned this job, who taught it to you?

I My elderly, they started it and they taught me everything... they did not work with authorisation though, during the communist years you could not get authorisation, we were all working for the local collective farm, we were keeping their animals.

(T19 interview, Reteag - Transylvania, June 2003)

Conclusions

This chapter has focussed on three specific types of social mobility observed among the Traditional Gypsies. Firstly, the chapter focussed on the social trajectory Type A: the stable inter/intra-generational trajectories. Secondly the chapter analysed the social trajectory Type C: the ascending inter/intra-generational social trajectories and thirdly the analysis focussed on the social trajectories Type D: the ethnic transition of Traditional Gypsies towards the Modern Rroma segment. Each of these types of social trajectories were analysed by selecting two case studies from each of the Romanian provinces under observation: Transylvania and Wallachia. In total, six case studies were selected and in selecting these case studies, I identified, individual respondents from the respective ethnic segment (Traditional) with similar characteristics: age, occupational level and education level, employment status and ethnic background.

The respondents' social trajectories were observed in the context of the changes in their occupational attainment and the changes observed in their ethnic identity. When observing the changes of the respondents' occupational attainment level, I have classified their positions according to the specifically created Gypsy Occupational Schema (GOS) and observed the progression or regression of their various occupations on this schema since the respondents'

beginning to earn an income up until the time of interviewing. Concomitantly with the observation of the respondents' social trajectory within their productive life, using the same Gypsy Occupational schema, I have also observed the difference between the respondent's occupational attainment and that of his father at the point of interviewing (if still economically active) or prior to the retirement or death.

In previous chapters, using the respondents' suggestions and related literature research, I have proposed a number of practices which collectively but not exclusively form a typical Gypsy identity thus creating an ethnic spectrum ranging from ultra-Traditional Gypsies (individuals who displayed all and other of these ethnic practices) to Modern Rroma (individuals who displayed few or none of them). Using this range of ethnic practices, the chapter investigated the ethnic identity of each respondent by deconstructing it along a number of practices making up their Gypsy identity. Each of the respondents' ethnic identity was then compared with that of his father in order to observe whether the number of ethnic practices increased or decreased between generations thus observing a process of ethnic transition from traditionalism to modernism.

Thirdly, the chapter observed the educational level attained by the respondents. The individual educational attainment levels consisting of various numbers of years of full time education completed were augmented with the respondents' recollections of the experiences they encountered during school years and their perception of the overall role of the education. The education subsections also explored the respondents' perception of the usefulness of their own education experience and sought to corroborate their views with their stated encouragement for their children to attend full time education. Here, special discussion was encouraged on the differences between respondents' views on the role and usefulness of education for boys and girls separately. The last element of analysis in this subsection was the respondents' perception of the most influential experiences in their development as individuals. This showed that education attainment was not always perceived by the respondents as the most influential factor in shaping their development. The section concluded with a discussion of the role of education upon the respondents' social trajectories, perceived this time from the researcher's perspective.

In analysing the case studies in the context of the above occupation, ethnic and education coordinates, the chapter demonstrated the view proposed in Chapter V: Social trajectories and the role of education, namely that in general, my respondents did not manifest a hostility towards

formal education, on the contrary, they appeared to hold it in high regard. In some cases respondents' subsequent social trajectory did not appear to have benefited markedly from those respective years of education. In some other cases respondents told me that it was not education that really changed their lives rather there other experiences: prison, religion, travelling abroad. Similarly, respondents told me that their most useful lessons in life came from their parents, from prison or from the working environment. Despite these different experiences and sources of learning, respondents did not manifest hostility to education.

Looking at their social trajectories and hearing their life experiences I had the impression that nonetheless, in some cases it appeared to have changed completely some of the lives and in some cases in had less of a defined impact but the impact was present nonetheless even when it only ensured social stability and not necessarily ascendance. This was further confirmed to me by the fact that respondents acknowledged the need for formal education in their lives and those of their children but they differed in their views of the optimum level of education required.

Chapter VII

Case studies: Modern Rroma

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Introduction

This chapter will explore in detail social trajectories identified among respondents selected from the Modern Rroma segment and will investigate the extent to which, the attainment of various levels of education have impacted upon the occupational levels reached by the respective respondents. Specifically, the chapter will focus on the three main types of social movement identified among the Modern Rroma namely the Type B: Stable inter/intra-generational trajectories, Type D: Ascending inter/intra-generational social trajectories and Type F: Downwards social trajectories.

The chapter will select a number of case studies perceived as typical of the Modern Rroma segment and the respective trajectories and will explore the relation between the respondents' social trajectory and the respective level of education attained. In each of the case studies selected, I will present the educational choices and progression strategies selected by the respondents as reported to me by the respondents themselves. Where available, I will also introduce to the reader data obtained through triangulation methods. Each case study will analyse the social trajectory of the respective individual by focussing on a number of elements selected as essential in understanding the respective social mobility pattern and the impact of the educational level. The full rationale for selecting these elements was presented in the previous Chapter V: Social trajectories and education impact.

Type B: Stable intra/inter-generational social trajectories (Modern Rroma)

This type of social trajectory refers to the social trajectories of respondents selected from the Modern Rroma segment who did not advance or descend socially between the first point of entry in the labour market and the time of interviewing. In addition these respondents did not register a marked social progression or regression between the position occupied at the time and that occupied by their fathers at the time of interviewing or prior to retirement.

Let me now select a group of respondents from the Modern Rroma segment who, according to my categorisation have registered a stable intra/inter-generational social trajectory. Similarly to the Traditional Gypsies observed in the previous chapter and who experienced stable social trajectories, the Modern Rroma I will investigate next had secured for themselves positions overall consistent to those firstly secured by them at the point of entry into the labour market and to those of their fathers either at the time of interviewing or prior to retirement. As before, I was interested in those Modern Rroma located either in Wallachia or Transylvania and whose both intra-generational and inter-generational social trajectories would be graphically represented by a continuous horizontal line.

The table presented below (Figure VII.1), lists five Modern Rroma identified from either the Wallachia or Transylvania samples whose social intra-generational and inter-generational trajectories have been found by us to be stable. The ROS level has been reached by categorising all the occupations currently attained by the respective respondent and averaged. This method was adopted in recognition of the fact that each respondent indicated a number of jobs he would normally undertake in order to provide an income. Whilst there would be inevitable variance between the ROS Levels of each of these occupations, I believe that overall, they are likely to fall within similar categories. For the purpose of my investigation, stability of the intra-generation social trajectory is therefore given not by the close resemblance of a respondent’s sum of occupations, rather by the similarity between his occupation at the point of entry into the labour market and the occupation attained at the point of interviewing or prior to retirement.

Stable intra/inter-generational Social Trajectories							Modern	
Code	Subject			Father's			Intra	Inter
	Ethnicity	ROS Level	Job Status	Ethnicity	ROS Level	Job Status	Generation Trajectory	Generation Trajectory
T15	MO- Vatrashi	7	EE	MO	8	SE		
T23	MO- Vatrashi	7	EE	MO	7	SE		
T28	MO- Ungro-Rom	9	EE	MO	8	EE		
T30	MO- Ungro-Rom	8	EE	MO	7	EE		
W30	MO- Ciubotari	7	SE	TR	7	SE		

Figure VII.1 Stable intra/inter-generational Social Trajectories of Modern Rroma: **Type B**

An important finding and one that differentiates the Stable Modern Roma sample from the Stable Traditional Gypsies sample is concerning the Employment Status. Employment Status was central to ROS final categorisation thus it is worth me paying particular attention to this aspect of respondent's occupations. In the case of the Traditional Gypsies, social stable trajectories were reflected by the inter-generation stability of the Employment Status too. In other words Traditional Gypsies had identical Employment Status as their fathers in most cases self-employed (SE). Looking at the Modern Roma sample, I note that this is not necessarily apparent. I note two cases (T15, T23) whose current Employment Status is EE but whose father's was SE.

A first possible explanation for this occurrence i.e. stable social trajectory over all, but change in the field of Employment Status, is that it might hide in effect a shift across the ethnic spectrum rather than a simple preference of employment styles. As explained elsewhere, Traditional Gypsies are defined among other things by the degree of traditionalism in their occupation e.g. the closer to and the more reliant on a traditional occupation the more likely would it be that the respective individual is a Traditional Gypsy. In turn the traditional occupations tended to attract a self-employed status which would give the individual freedom of movement and flexibility in working patterns.

Looking at the interview transcripts of the two specific examples I have identified with inter-generation shifting of the Employment Status, I note that whilst both T15 and T23 appeared to me and indeed presented themselves as Modern Roma, the description of their parent's occupations and life style, adherence to the specific codes of behaviour within the family and within the community would indicate an ethnic positioning located much closer to the Ethnic Segment rather than the Modern one. Indeed T15 recollected that his parents were travelling around village in search of work and that they had their own wagon and horse, thus they must have been semi-nomadic Traditional Gypsies at some time in the past.

Next, I have selected one Modern Roma with stable social trajectory from Transylvania (T15) and one Modern Roma from Wallachia (W30) and began studying them from three perspectives significant to my overall research: Ethnic Identity, Employment Status and Occupational Attainment, the three areas focussed on in the observation of the two Traditional Gypsies above.

In choosing the respective two, in addition to the stable social trajectory, I also looked at their geographical location and their age which I sought to be as near to each as possible. This last characteristic was chosen in order to ensure that the socio-economic and political environment in which the two developed was as similar a possible.

I met T15 whilst conducting field research at a Rroma career fair sponsored by the Cluj Municipality and organised by the local branch of the Rroma Party (Figure VII.2). T15 was there in official capacity as he was accompanying the local Rroma Party leader for whom he was working as a driver. T15 agreed to let me interview him only on the condition that his boss would not see us doing it. Throughout the interview which I conducted in a separate room, T15 was looking nervously towards the door but the interview itself turned out to be a very successful one, in which interesting data was collected.



Figure VII.2 Modern Rroma career fair Transylvania

T15's ethnic identity was that of a Modern Rroma, indeed the only two things that suggested to me that he was indeed Rroma were firstly the fact that he recommended himself as such and the fact that he spoke Romany though I was unable to verify the extent of his fluency. Other than these two elements, T15 had a very smart western style appearance wearing an immaculate suit and tie, polished shoes and very neatly cut hair. As he himself explained it to me, he was always going to be Rroma because this is what his parents were and because he spoke the language. When I asked him however whether he would still be Rroma if he would forget the language, or whether in his view other Rroma who do not speak Romany can be considered Rroma he was not very convinced. Asked whether he would marry his daughter and son with a *Gadje* he appeared quite happy to agree, in fact I had the feeling that he would actually prefer such a situation.

Overall, T15 appeared very keen to be seen as Rroma as long as it was perfectly clearly understood that he was 'different' from the Traditional Gypsies.

Researcher: How would you describe yourself?

Interviewee: I am like every citizen of Romania earning my living honestly and on top of everything else I am a member of a political organization who campaigns...

R: No I mean ethnically what would you describe yourself as?

I: I am a Rroma. Yes I am Rroma as both my parents are Rroma...

R Do you belong to a particular Neam? I mean like Caldarari like Argintari etc

I Err... No I know what you mean, I do not belong to such a Neam, we are some Rroma how should I say, a bit more civilized...I do not belong to a Neam like the Caldarari or anything else

R How would you explain to somebody what you are? Imagine you are talking to somebody who has never met a Rroma before, how would you explain what that is?

I I wouldn't know what to explain...

R OK, if they ask you how are you different from the rest of the Romanian population?

I I could not tell that I aren't really that different, honestly, I personally...look if I were not speaking the language I don't think that I would be very different from the Romanians...

R If you were not speaking the language, would you still be Rroma?

I Yes, yes...I would still consider myself Rroma...

R OK but if this person would ask you further, what does your ethnicity consist of, if you do not speak Romany, what would you answer?

I I consider that the language is the most important, if I weren't a speaker of Romany, there would be really no point in me claiming that I am Gypsy if I couldn't speak it...

R Yes but there are many Rroma who do not speak Romany...

I Yes they don't speak it...there are all sorts of Gypsies who do not speak Romany, the Hungarian Gypsies for example they speak some sort of Hungarian

R But in your view are those still Gypsies?

I They consider themselves as Gypsies...

R Yes but you; what do you think they are?

I Err...well... if I knew them I guess I would consider them Gypsies too...if I knew them...

R If your daughter would wish to marry her Romanian boyfriend, what would you have to say?

I Yes I would agree...

R How about if you had a son, would it be the same thing?

I It would be even better...

(T15 interview, Cluj-Transylvania, May 2003)

T15's Employment Status was as an Employee of the local Rroma Party working closely with the local Rroma Party leader whom I have later also interviewed. When I asked him how he secured his job he explained to me that he knew Mr X for a long time and that helped a lot. Rather than going through a selection process, his nomination was apparently put to the vote of the local branch and he was duly elected to be the driver of the newly set up organisation.

Researcher: Who recommended you to work for the Party? How did you get your job?

T15: Mr AR used to be a counsellor there at the local town hall (see AR's interview) and he needed some guys to help him carry on his job...

R Oh so you knew him before, you were acquainted already right?

T15 Oh yes I knew him well.

R So how did it go, did he just give you the job?

T15 No I organized a meeting and all of us the local Party Members came together and he proposed me for this job and people approved and there were other proposals and people approved those too and this is how it went, it all went democratically...

R I see...so what is the future, what would you like to do in the future?

T15 I am thinking to get a Counsellor position with the Party, I am thinking...I am well regarded, I will fight to get it...if I am supported by the right people it should be ok...

(T15 interview, Cluj-Transylvania, May 2003)

T15's occupation was formally as driver/chauffeur of the local party boss but he also appears to work as a political activist and as an organiser for various events planned by the party. Before his current position, T15 used to work as a hydroelectric manual maintenance worker a position that would attract a score of 8 on ROS schema. According to his own account, due to T15's hard work, he was recommended to take part in a re-skilling programme that would see him qualified as a driver, an occupation scored as 7. Since between T15's occupation of entry into the labour market (Hydroelectric maintenance worker – ROS Level 8) and his current position at the age of 7 (Chauffeur/driver) is a small distance of only 1 level and since it took T15 almost all of his entire working life, I can categorise his intra-generational social trajectory as Stable. This might actually change in the future with T15's plans of becoming a Rroma Party official and a Counsellor, then he would experience a much higher position ascendance that would see him reaching positions levelled as high as 4 on ROS occupational scale. For the moment however T15's positions levelled along the ROS scale would average a level of 8.

ROS: 7 (Hydroelectric maintenance worker) + 8 (Chauffeur/driver) Average Level= 8

His father's social trajectory was even more stable than T15's, as he worked all his life either as unskilled manual worker or as a semi-nomadic agricultural worker. The last occupation in particular is one that I have encountered quite often among the Modern Rroma located in the lower quadrant of the Social Diversity Model (see Methodology Chapter). Such socialist working arrangements would involve uprooting entire families from their permanent, state provided, apartments or houses and relocating them at various times in the seasonal calendar at different locations according to the seasonal demands of the various regional cooperative farms¹. As such, large Rroma families including children would be located in the early spring around the

¹ See interview notes with Gheorghe Paun, Rroma Member of the Romanian Parliament, Bucharest July 2003

large agricultural complexes where they would be provided with living quarters and group cooking facilities. In return they would be expected to participate in all the farm activities as directed by a farm manager. Strictly speaking, it is difficult to categorise such working and travel arrangements as semi-nomadism as the relocations logistic (including the provision of travel documents and the negotiation of a collective rate) were often organised by the local county administrations. Nonetheless, there were years when T15's family did go out in search for agricultural work individually in their family owned horse pulled caravan.

Across his life therefore, whilst T15's father's ethnic identity must have began shifting from border line Traditional Gypsy to border line Modern Roma, his intra-generational social trajectory, from agricultural worker (ROS Level 9) to unskilled manual worker (ROS Level 8) registered a stable continuum. This stable trajectory is furthermore negligible as similarly to T15's case, it took place over an entire working life spanning over fifty decades.

In addition to these stated occupations, T15's father might well have undertaken other income generating activities such as fruit farm worker (ROS Level 9), cowman (ROS Level 9), hedger and ditcher (ROS Level 9), jobbing gardener (ROS Level 9) and a few more. In addition, even if additional occupations were to be added and averaged, they would not level collectively over ROS Level 9 thus they would not influence the overall T15's father average level or T15's inter-generational stability. The allocation of ROS Levels to each of the occupations attained by T15's father was therefore much more a straightforward matter with equivalent positions identified as follows:

ROS: 9 (agricultural worker) + 9 (unskilled manual labourer) Average Level = 9

Education: T15 explained to me that he went seven years to school which means that he finished school by the age of 13. His school experience appeared to be positive and T15 did not allege discrimination on account of his ethnicity. He even mentioned that in the classroom Roma and Romanian children were sitting together and I had the impression that he remembered with pleasure his school years despite the fact that the school attendance during the socialist era was made compulsory thus likely to be resisted by Roma.

R Tell me please did you go to school?

I Yes I did...Seven years...I have got a certificate to show... the situation was different in those days...also they maybe saw the things differently...people did not think about school like now...

R Tell me a bit about your school, how was it? Where did you go to school?

I Locally in Gilau...with ...the Romanian together to the same schools next to each other... there were not any problems... there were some problems only recently...after the Revolution..
R How did you enjoy the school and how did you get on with each other?
I Very well...they were forcing us to come to school...
R Why was that?
I Well to help people to get an education...
(T15 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

T15 was evasive when asked why if he liked school so much he did not carry on for longer; most Roma interviewed explained their early exit from full time education through a combination of family responsibilities, poverty, the need to learn a trade rather than carry on with an education system concentrating on general knowledge. Significantly, T15 did not dismiss the years he spent in school as irrelevant which is important for understanding his perception of the role of the school in his development (see below also) rather, I sensed a degree of regret for having exited the full time education after only seven years.

Researcher: Why did you not go further with your school?
Interviewee: This is how it was in those days, people were doing only seven classes...
R Would you have liked to go for longer to school?
I That was how it was, I then got married...
R You would not have liked to go further?
I Yes but this is how it was in those days...it was a bit difficult...now people go to school longer.
(T15 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

In view of his future political aspirations (see above) T15 gave the clear impression that he would have liked indeed to be able to show a higher educational attainment but his hindsight wish to have had a higher educational attainment was not only career motivated; he gave me the impression that he was genuinely appreciative of the role of education and that he saw himself a better person because of his seven years of education and the impact it had on him.

R How useful did you find the school?
I A lot, a lot, a lot...
R Was it worthwhile for you to go to school all those years...
I Of course...there is no point in having money...if I did not have school I would have been different even with money...
(T15 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

Asked whether he would send his sons and daughters to school he was very convincing that he did encourage and support his children to go to school and was genuinely disappointed that they were not able to stay in school for longer. I detected a sense of embarrassment that he was not in a position to tell me that he had been more effective in ensuring that his children had a higher

educational attainment. Whilst T15 had attended seven classes and his children had attended eight or nine classes, in reality, considering the time difference between T15 and his children and the different expectations and general school attainment of the two generations, if T15's claims to have finished seven classes were accurate he was in fact better educated than his children.

T15 suggested that marriage was the main factor that impacted negatively on his daughter's limited education but later in the interview he explained that they got married at seventeen and twenty years old respectively. Marriage alone therefore could not have been the main factor as his children could have completed the Baccalaureate and still have time to marry at twenty years old. Discrimination on account of being Rroma also could be discounted as potential reason because T15 explained that his children were actually treated the same as other *Gadje* children at school. One of T15's children though was still in full time education at the time of interviewing and it was noteworthy to hear his readiness to support her in school even up and including university if his daughter's abilities helped her.

R Ho many children have you got?

I Three girls, two are married and the other one is still at home with me...

R And did you send them to school?

I Yes...

R How many classes?

I Eight classes each...one did nine classes though...

R Why only eight classes...

I This is how the situation was in those days...What could I do if they did not want to go for longer? They wanted to get married...

R How old were they when they got married?

I One was seventeen and another one was twenty...

R Did they like it in school?

I Oh very much, this younger one in particular who is in the ninth class, she wants to continue...

R How far would you like her to go?

I If her head helps her I would like her to go up to university...

R What faculty would you like her to attend, what degree?

I Law

R Why would you like her to do that...

I Is something that she could benefit later in life...

(T15 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

By his own description, T15 benefited greatly from learning to read and write and from attending seven years of education and gaining a certificate to prove it. The son of an unskilled semi-nomadic manual labourer and seasonal agricultural worker, T15's occupational attainment was not very different than that of his father as he was a driver, an occupation that attracted a similar

ROC level. His education actually helped him as it ensured that at least he did not descend beneath the ROS level attained by his father a generation before him. As explained in Chapter V, T15 could not have become a driver without having a certificate showing his completion of the seven years of full-time education. Furthermore, I speculate that ROS's level could be likely to increase further particularly if his political aspirations materialise; again without the seven years of full-time education and their impact on his life, such aspirations could not be considered

R If you could change your life and start all over again, what would you do differently?

I I would prepare myself better for life...

R How would you do that?

I Through school...

(T15 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

Having observed T15's ethnic identity, employment status, occupation and education attainment, let me now turn my attention to another Modern Roma with a similarly stable social trajectory namely W30. I met W30 whilst visiting for research purposes a suburb of Bucharest inhabited mainly by Roma from both the Traditional and Modern segments. The area was very run down and the living conditions there were very basic. Entire blocks of flats have been disconnected from water and electricity supply for not paying the bills and for the same reasons, the local council no longer assumed responsibility for refuse collection².

W30 was casually dressed with clean clothes and though he looked younger he said he was 43. He was selling carnations from a bucket placed in front of him by a bus stop looking rather bored and was initially suspicious about my request for a discussion and an interview. Eventually however, after I showed my student card he became more trustful and agreed to be interviewed. W30 did not speak Romany and he did not wear any traditional clothes. Some of the Roma I met in the course of my research attempted to justify their lack of knowledge of Romany together with their modern ways and this was particularly prevalent among the activist Roma. W30 however was at ease with not having many elements of Gypsy identity to present. He was nonetheless clear about being Roma even though when asked what did his ethnic identity consist of he could not elaborate. Naturally, the respondent's unawareness of the main elements of the Gypsy identity cannot be automatically taken as meaning that the individual does not possess those elements or that he is not ethnically akin to the rest of the Roma community.

² See field notes, Ferentari - Bucharest - May 2003, and informal discussion with local school headmaster

W30's ethnic identity however seemed to rest on his genealogy as he referred repeatedly to his parents being Gypsy and on a shared underdevelopment and collective marginalisation of the rest of the Gypsies. Naturally, as this research has shown, not the whole of the Roma community taken in its entirety are economically disadvantaged, nor are those who are materially well off feeling less Roma on account of their wealth and higher socio-economic position. With these notes in mind I categorised W30 as a Modern Roma who began a process of ethnic transition towards assimilation. W30 did not follow any traditional ethnic practices such as observing the Marime Code or practising a traditional occupation though he did claim 'distant' membership to the *Ciubotari Neam*.

W30's Employment Status was as self-employed even though technically he was occasionally undertaking casual work on behalf of his brother in law who owned a grocery shop similar in size and contents to traditional British corner shops. W30 did use to be employed at some stage as a semi-skilled manual worker in transport, communications and services, an occupation that would place him at level 6-7 along ROS. That arrangement was however stopped when W30's employer went into receivership and eventually closed down. Following that, W30 never got a full time job again and he worked occasionally in various casual, informal jobs without a contract or firm working arrangements, pension plan or sickness and/or disability protection plan. In many respects, his Employment Status was not entirely dissimilar to that of the semi-nomadic rain gutter maker T12 observed above: self-reliant.

Occupational Attainment for W30 consisted of a series of casual jobs taken sometimes separately and sometimes overlapping e.g. during some busy periods like the seasonal festivities, W30 rented a car from a friend and works as a taxi driver (ROS Level 7) during the evenings whilst during the day, he works as a grocery shop assistant (ROS Level 8). Among other jobs currently done by W30, he also worked as odd job man (ROS Level 9) and as a market trader (ROS Level 9). Together his job classifications would appear as follows:

ROS: 7 (Taxi Driver) + 8 (Shop Assistant) + 9 (Trader) + 9 (Odd Job) Average Level = 8

His first entry into the labour market was as a semi-skilled manual worker in transport (ROS Level 7). Therefore I can conclude that as was were only one level between his first position and his current average ROS Level of 8, W30's social intra-generational mobility was stable.

Based on W30's recollections and explanations, his father on the other hand had a less varied working life apparently due to his complete illiteracy. W30's father began his working life with one of the most traditional Gypsy occupations namely rag and bone collector. W30 would walk along the residential areas and call for recyclable materials: metal, bottles, old clothes, paper, etc. He would then resell these materials to a recycling centre or similar.

W30's father's other position and the one that he actually retired from was as a shoe repairer, another Traditional Gypsy skill and one that would describe him as a member of the *Ciubotari Neam*. Traditionally, the *Ciubotari* were profitable trades but faced with competition from industrially manufactured products as well due to the general progress of the village environment in which the peasants began to reject the rudimentary *Ciubotari* products, the demand for their trade and their *Neam* identity began to dissipate (Achim 1998). I have therefore classified W30's father's position as skilled manual worker in manufacturing and assigned to it the corresponding ROS Level of 9. W30's father's occupations would be as follows:

ROS: 9 (Rag and bone collector) + 8 (Skilled manual worker) Average Level = 8

Accordingly therefore, considering the social distance between W30's average ROS Level and that of his father prior to retirement, consisting of less than two levels and also considering the distance between W30's occupation of entry into the labour market and his occupational ROS Level at the time of interviewing, also spanning over maximum three levels, I can categorise both W30's inter-generational and intra-generational social trajectory as stable.

Both respondents observed under this social trajectory were in effect 'modern' in the sense of not belonging to a *Neam*, not following ethnic practices and working 'modern' occupations in an urban setting but at a very low level. I can therefore propose that they were 'doubly marginal': marginal to Rroma ethnicity and marginal to modern economy.

Education: I discussed at length with W30 about his education and he was keen to explain to me that though he earned his living through a basic occupation he was as he described himself 'an educated man'. He told me that attended the primary and secondary stages of his local school and in addition he undertook three years of vocational training as electrician. W30 was 43 when I interviewed him and appeared visibly disappointed with his occupation and standard of living, in particular with the fact that they did not seem to match his education and general knowledge.

The son of a rag and bone collector W30 felt that he would have been in a better position had it not been for what he described the rampant corruption in the labour market, his lack of contacts and the resulting inability to obtain a formal full-time job.

Researcher: Tell me please about your education, did you go to school?

Interviewee: Yes I did, I have eight classes plus the 'professional' (vocational training)

R: What speciality was that in?

I: Electrician, electrical installations...

R: Can you now read and write?

I: If I told you that I am a qualified electrician...of course I can read and write.

R: Tell me a bit about the school year, your teachers...

I: I went to school here locally...had a good time really...not of these stupid things that take place today...this is what you mean to find out right? About the discrimination and stuff... well let me tell you that in those days there was none of this...teachers were polite and they were helping us to do our home work...when I was missing school, the teacher was coming around my house to ask my father why I did not go to school... Dad was giving me one around the head and that was that...

(W30 interview, Ferentari – Wallachia, April 2003)

W30's perception of the role of education was despite his low current occupational attainment a positive one and despite the up and downs of his recent life he did not question the usefulness of the education establishment. Quite the contrary, I had the feeling that W30 perceived himself fortunate to have attained a significant number of full-time education years and get certificates to show for it. Like in many other cases interviewed, W30 was helped to stay in school by a combination of factors such as the support and persuasiveness of his family and the guidance and encouragement received from the local school. Now three decades later, comparing his income earning ability to that of other Rroma I have interviewed, W30 was in a good position as he had succeeded in obtaining the much desired driving license and was now able to work as a taxi-driver and van-driver. Through school attendance, he had been able to make himself employable in the labour market and though he still did not get a contract, he was nonetheless able to earn a living by hiring his brother-in-law's car and work nights as an unlicensed taxi driver.

R: What would you say the role of the education is in life?

I: School helps a lot, helps you to see people in all the light, helps you understand things. I for example look differently at a Romanian now...

R How do you mean that?

I Well what I mean is that even when a Romanian goes Oy you Gypsy and all that, I understand him why he acts that way...it's ignorance!

R So you are saying that school helps you understand people in life?

I Helps you understand everything... It helps you read a paper, to access information...

(W30 interview, Ferentari – Wallachia, April 2003)

As far as the worthwhileness of his own education was concerned, W30 felt that he was in better position for the education he received and I had the feeling he was feeling in a good position not only on the professional level as he was relaxed about his ability to secure an income but he also felt 'an educated man' because he was able to read paper regularly, to keep himself updated with current developments and in general to have a more informed outlook on life. He told me that he felt sorry for his fellow Rroma who could barely read and write and was proud of his children doing well in school.

Researcher: Tell me please are your children going to school?

Interviewee: Yes of course they are, they have to go...I keep telling them: look at those ones over the road drinking themselves stupid with medicinal alcohol, do you know why they do that? Because they have no hope in hell, that's why. What can they do? They can't even get themselves papers, they can't apply for their benefits, they have to ask people to do it for them. That's what I am telling my kids: that's what you want to end up like?

R: And the girls, will you send your girls to school?

I: I have only one girl but yes of course she must go to school, it ain't like in the old days anymore when the girl could get married and hope that the man will get the bread on the table, these days is different, they'll have to pull together...

(W30 interview, Ferentari – Wallachia, April 2003)

W30 was contemplating leaving Romania for a better chance abroad, he told me at length that some of his acquaintances had found themselves jobs abroad in Spain as agricultural workers and kept sending money home to their families. Disillusioned with the current job prospects in Bucharest and feeling unable to challenge a system he regarded to entrenched to have a decent chance to challenge, W30 was when I interviewed him considering travelling abroad in search of work. In this context too, he felt he was in a better position than many of his fellow Rroma, indeed better than many of the *Gadje* because as a qualified driver and technician he felt his job prospects were favourable.

I asked W30 what he felt had the most positive impact in his life, what formed him as an individual and he was very resolute that his ability to respect individuals and to understand them is what assisted him the most in life. This was a skill W30 told me he learned from his reading of the Bible and from becoming a born again Christian. In turn, W30 felt that the empowering effect of his ability to read is what enabled him to discover the Bible and to convert.

Researcher: What would you say that shaped your life the most?

Interviewee: The word of God, that is what changed my life...before I discovered God I was drinking and playing Barbut (dice) and swearing and doing all sorts. I was angry you see, but then I did not know it, I did not understand it. Only when later I found the Bible I started to

understand about myself, about the people around me. Through the teachings of Jesus Christ...are you familiar with His teachings?
(W30 interview, Ferentari – Wallachia, April 2003)

Looking at W30's stable social trajectory and in particular at the impact the full time education had on it, I suggest that school and post-school vocational training did have a positive impact on his occupation, standards of living and outlook on life. Some of these areas were impacted upon directly such as his ability to obtain a driving license and work as a driver whilst other where impacted upon indirectly through W30's ability to access information and to increase his awareness of the opportunities available to him and confidence in pursuing them.

Type D: Ascending Intra/Inter-generational Social Trajectory – Modern Rroma

This type of social trajectory refers to the social mobility movements of respondents from the Modern Rroma segment who registered social ascendance within their own working lives and from the occupational positions secured before retirement by their fathers. These progressions have been calculated based on the number of levels progressed along the occupational scale and in turn, their advancements can be short, medium or long range according to the number of levels travelled within a generation or between generations.

As explained in Chapter I, the Modern Rroma segment is by far the largest of the entire Romanian Rroma population. The demographic data on the Rroma population are notoriously unreliable for a multitude of reasons such as the Government's wish to report the size of this ethnic community as low as possible, the Rroma leaders' wish to present it as large as possible, the reluctance of the Rroma to declare their true ethnic identity for fear of discrimination, difficulty experienced by the census data collectors in assessing accurately who is and who is not a Rroma, and several others. The figures provided at various times by Rroma community representatives and the Romanian Government vary considerably (between 3,000,000 and 800,000³) and as this research has shown already, it is extremely difficult to draw a fine line between Traditional and Modern Rroma segments therefore it would be even more difficult to attempt to count the respective members of each segment.

³ See Romanian National Census, Institute of Statistics, Bucharest 2000

The literature review and the subsequent field visits suggested that the make up of the Romanian Roma population is predominantly made up of Modern Roma i.e. by those Roma individuals with a settled way of life and who by and large adopted most if not all the Romanian values, norms and culture. My research revealed that on several occasions in Wallachia alone, some of the respondents themselves questioned the extent to which they really are different from the majority population other than their racial features (W17, W20, W23, W24, W29). Direct observation of the two Roma community segments and the relative scarcity of wholly Traditional Gypsies with a nomadic life style confirms the disproportion between the groups.

Accounting for the membership of each segment is however not within the remit of my work. Rather I aim to identify the various social trajectories experienced by various individuals belonging to the two groups and explicating their dynamics. Reflective to the size of the real life Modern Roma segment is, I believe, the size of the Modern Roma sub-sample I have been able to recruit for my research: though my sample was not intended to be representative I intended to recruit a similar number of Traditional and Modern Roma in Transylvania and Wallachia.

Observing the ascending social trajectories of the Modern Roma I identified a number of Modern Roma who experienced social ascendance both within the course of their working lives and across generations (Figure VII.3) The social intra-generational and inter-generational trajectories of these respondents ranged between short, medium and long distances and I must clarify that, in addition, I encountered several more Modern Roma with ascending intra-generational social trajectories combined with stable inter-generational trajectories. For consistency with the previous sub-chapters and in order to observe the potential impact of the forces of social inertia upon the son's intra-generational trajectory, I have selected for focussed observation only those respondents with dual ascending social trajectories.

The first observation drawn from the sample is that despite the number of Modern Roma respondents recruited in Transylvania (19) being close to that of the Modern Roma recruited in Wallachia (21), the number of Transylvania Modern Roma identified with an ascending double trajectory (6) is less than that of the Wallachia Modern Roma with similar trajectories (13). As I hypothesised in a previous sub-chapter, this discrepancy might be a reflection of the higher concentration of Roma Non-governmental Organisations and Roma focussed charity organisations in Bucharest, the capital city of Romania and Wallachia.

Ascending Intra/Inter-generational Social Trajectories							Modern	
Code	Self Ethnicity	ROS Level	Job Status	Father Ethnicity	ROS Level	Job Status	Intra Generation Trajectory	Inter Generation Trajectory
T13	MO-Vatrashi	4	EE	MO	8	EE	↑↑Short	↑↑Long
T16	MO- NN	3	EE	MO	8	SE	↑↑Medium	↑↑Long
T17	MO-Ungro-Rom	6	SE	MO	9	EE	↑↑Long	↑↑Long
T18	MO-Vatrashi	4	EE	MO	8	EE	↑↑Short	↑↑Long
T19	MO-Geambasi	8	SE	MO	9	SE	↑↑Short	↑↑Medium
T20	MO-Fulgari	8	SE	MO	9	SE	↑↑Short	↑↑Short
W16	MO-Vatrashi	2	EE	MO	6	EE	↑↑Long	↑↑Long
W17	MO-Lautari	2	EE	MO	5	SE	↑↑Long	↑↑Long
W20	MO-Vatrashi	4	EE	MO	6	EE	↑↑Short	↑↑Medium
W21	MO-Vatrashi	4	EE	MO	9	EE	↑↑Short	↑↑Long
W22	MO-Vatrashi	5	EE	MO	6	EE	↑↑Short	↑↑Short
W23	MO-Ursari	5	EE	MO	6	EE	↑↑Short	↑↑Short
W25	MO-Vatrashi	3	EE	MO	5	EE	↑↑Medium	↑↑Medium
W26	MO/TR-Vatrashi	3	EE	MO	8	EE	↑↑Medium	↑↑Long
W27	MO-Vatrashi	3	EE	MO	6	EE	↑↑Long	↑↑Long
W29	MO-Vatrashi	6	ER	MO	9	SE	↑↑Long	↑↑Long
W31	MO-Ursari	6	SE	MO	8	SE	↑↑Medium	↑↑Medium
W35	MO-Vatrashi	5	EE	MO	8	EE	↑↑Medium	↑↑Long
W36	MO-Lautari	1	EE	MO	4	SE	↑↑Long	↑↑Long

Figure VII.3 Ascending intra/inter-generational Social Trajectories of Modern Rroma: Type D

A second observation stemming from the table in Figure VII.3 is that the occupations with the highest ROS Level encountered within my combined Traditional Gypsy and Modern Rroma sample have been identified among the Modern Rroma in Wallachia. The highest level occupation identified within the sample was that attained by W36 (member of the Romanian Parliament: ROS Level 1), W16 (director of Rroma NGO: ROS Level 2) and by W17 (lawyer for Rroma human rights watch group: ROS Level 2). As with the previous findings, this last observation is not representative of the entire Romanian Rroma population but it does nonetheless seem to support my view that the newly emerging Rroma civil society in

Transylvania too but predominantly in Wallachia is a socially dynamic environment conducive to fast and long distance social ascending trajectories.

The two case studies selected for closer observation under this type of social trajectory are T17 and W35, two Modern Roma from Transylvania and Wallachia of similar age 58 and 64 with similar medium to long distance intra-generational and intergenerational social trajectories. I was introduced to both respondents by two other previous respondents (T16 in Transylvania and W16 in Wallachia) who acted thus as gatekeepers for other groups in their communities. Neither T16 nor W36 requested payment for the time they have gave me.

The Transylvania respondent observed under this category was a Modern Roma who described his identity as *Hungro-Rom* (Hungarian Roma) meaning that though ethnically a Roma, he grew up in a Hungarian enclave in Transylvania where he learned the Hungarian language, adopted Hungarian Calvinist Protestantism as religion, and effectively assimilated himself with the Hungarian *Gadje* rather than with the Romanians. This phenomenon is quite frequent and during my research, I have encountered several similar cases (T20, T28, T29, T30, T5, T6, T12). Far from becoming Hungarians rather than Gypsies or Roma, these individuals grew up in neighbourhoods where Hungarians were in a majority, thus the main influence upon their ethnic identity was Hungarian rather than Romanian. In the course of their lives, some of them moved on to regions where the majority ethnic background was Romanian. Thus they also learned Romanian, attended Romanian schools and occasionally married *Vlacho Rom* (Romanian Gypsies) but nonetheless they kept referring to themselves as *Hungro Rom*.

T17's Hungarian ethnic practices were further reinforced as during the communist years he emigrated to Hungary where after a while he gained Hungarian Citizenship. T17 was the only respondent in my sample who at the time of interviewing held dual Romanian and Hungarian nationality. Though he spoke Romanian perfectly he spoke with a strong accent different from that of the Romanian Modern Roma. Other than his claim to be Roma and his vague racial features, it would have been very difficult to identify him as belonging to a different ethnic group. Having spent many hours over several days in T17's company I noted that he did not speak Romany either with his partner or with his colleagues.

With regard to T17's acceptance of the Traditional Gypsy values and norms, I noted that he shared very little with the Traditional segment. Having spent many years abroad (some of them in prison) T17 was at the time of the interview well dressed, was speaking good Romanian, and had the standard of living (was inhabiting a £50,000 flat in the centre of Cluj City⁴) and the aspirations of a truly Modern Rroma, assimilated with both the Hungarian and Romanian cultures but retaining a claim to Rroma identity.

The Employment Status of T17 was difficult to ascertain as was indeed his current occupational attainment. To begin with, his Employment Status was somewhere between Self-employed as he derived a significant part of his income and appeared to spend most of his working time as a choreographer of a Rroma Dance Group performing Traditional Gypsy Dances at festivals and fetes. For his choreographic work he was getting paid sporadically in the form of a 'consultancy fee' by whoever was contracting him. When I interviewed T17, he and his partner were preparing a festival dedicated to the life time achievement of a famous Transylvanian Rroma violinist: the 'Alexandru Titrus Festival' and were expecting a small profit from the proceeds.

As a main and stable source of income, T17 was also reliant on state benefits and on a small unofficial business he was running, namely 'importing' leather jackets and coats from Italy and selling them on the Romanian and Hungarian markets. I use the term 'import' here euphemistically as when asked about his import license, T17 waved the question off. Overall and despite his regular state benefits, the most accurate description of T17's Employment Status can be categorised as Self-employed.

The range of his occupations attained throughout his working life span from unskilled factory labourer (ROS Level 8) at the point of entry into the labour market to dancing instructor (ROS Level 7). In addition to being the only respondent in the sample with dual nationality, T17 also had attained one of the most diverse range of occupations. At various points, T17 earned an income or part of it by being a free-lance entertainer (ROS Level 7), a skilled manual labourer (ROS Level 6), a factory maintenance foreman (ROS Level 5), a second-hand car dealer (ROS Level 8) and a musician in an orchestra (ROS Level 7).

⁴ see field notes and photographs, Transylvania – Cluj, June 2003

T17 also spent time in prison allegedly due to being conned by a friend who asked him to deliver to Romania a car from Germany. When attempting to cross the border into Austria, the car was identified as stolen and as the driver T17 was found guilty of handling stolen goods and sentenced to two years in prison. Interestingly, he intimated to me that whilst in prison he did not admit of being a Romanian citizen with Rroma ethnic identity. Rather he presented himself as a Hungarian Rroma citizen. I felt it was relevant to mention here T17's prison experience because when asked 'what in his life shaped him mostly as an individual' he replied: the prison. It was in prison, T17 explained, where he learned German, he earned good money as a builder, he discovered the Bible and he began to see the life the way he was seeing it at the time of interview. At the time of interviewing T17's occupations were less varied than in his previous working career and his average occupational level was as follows:

ROS: 6 (Dance instructor) + 7 (Commercial Traveller) Average Level = 6

By contrast, T17's father's employment status was easier to categorise; having worked all his life as a skilled labourer in a local factory, his status was as a Employee and as he retired holding the same position, his occupational level was 9. Comparing, therefore T17's average ROS Level (6) with that of his father (ROS Level 9) I noted a distance of approximately 3 levels between the two generations, an example of inter-generational social ascendance. T17's working life also experienced a long ascendance as between the occupational level attributed to the occupation of entry into the labour market (8-9) and the occupational level of his current position (6) the respondent has travelled a social distance equivalent to 3 levels.

Education: Like many of the Rroma respondents interviewed, T17 told me that he attended eight years of primary school and that he had a certificate to show. In addition to his formal full-time education, T17 also undertook part-time vocational course in percussion musical instruments and dance choreography. T17 described his life to me as very eventful and by comparison, his school years and the subsequent vocational training appeared to be very eventless. Having attended the first primary years in his native village Hungarian school, T17 had fond memories of his years in school and he described to me that most of his friends, teachers and colleagues were Hungarian and Rroma and that there was no discrimination on account of his ethnic background or his parents' relative poverty. T17 reminisced that some of his Rroma colleagues were treated rather differently with what at the time appeared to him to be discriminatory practices. When asked to expand, T17 described that the respective Rroma children belonged to

different *Neams* than him i.e. were children of *Corturari* implying that they were children of semi-nomadic families. In practical terms, T17 explained, this meant that those children had either a poorer school attendance than the rest of the class and were often wearing dirty clothes. It was this that made them the target of the teachers' harshness rather than their ethnicity.

Researcher: So tell me please did you go to school? I mean can you read and write now?

Interviewee: Yes I went to the Hungarian school (he says that with pride) in the village where I grew up, now it's part of Cluj-Napoca. I went for eight years, that's what you were supposed to do in those years, not like now. It was sufficient in those days to set you up in life with everything you needed. You learned to read, write, a bit about history and literature and of course the arithmetic and that was that.

R: ...and how was it, do you still remember it?

I: Yes I remember it very well, it was good, we all knew each other and we were having a good time. Teachers were good to us, we were preparing shows and parades and they liked me because I was very tidy dressed up and I used to play the accordion, I used to get on with them.

R: Were there other Rroma children in your class?

I: Yes they were but they were the travelling Gypsies, not like us, we are different Gypsies you see, they call us Boyars Gypsies or Silk Gypsies. We are part of the first group of Gypsies that the Grofs (Boyars) took on their homes and settled them and we learned to live like them. The other Gypsies still went on travelling and now they don't speak proper Hungarian or Romanian and they are very poor, them kids used to come to school very dirty and without shoes and the teachers use to put them in the last row because they were smelly. Sometimes they used to send them home because they had lice.

(T17 interview, Cluj-Napoca – Transylvania, May 2003)

T17 was a very interesting respondent and was keen to share with me much of his life experiences though after I met him and his partner several times at various locations and in different contexts, I learned that for every story that he was sharing with me, there were several other facets which he was not prepared to let me in on. For example, when describing his current project of preparing the Alexandru Titrus Festival, he initially present it to me as one of his charitable projects born out of his desire to honour a local Rroma musician. Through triangulation, I learned that there were quite a number of sponsors involved and that T17 was receiving a substantial project management fee for promoting and coordinating this event.

Nonetheless, T17 was keen to describe to me his perception of the role of education in the general sense and it appeared to me that he was genuinely convinced of the empowering role of education. Unlike W30 (see below), his views did not bring in the Rroma - *Gadje* dimension or the Oppressor - Oppressed discourse, rather he was simply feeling that individuals from all walks of life could benefit from going to school and learning. He was working indeed for a Rroma specific cultural festival and was a dancing instructor of a Rroma dance group but I could not

ascertain to what extent his occupational focus was due to him perceiving a lucrative niche and to what extent was out of a genuine desire to keep alive and promote Rroma values.

In this context, T17 perceived education as a useful tool, another feather in his cap, along with his artistic skills, locksmith skills, dance skills and commercial entrepreneurial skills. T17 explained to me that he would not have minded (!) going further to secondary education stages or even university for he was convinced that he had the intellectual abilities to have done it but on the whole, he did not appear convinced that the sacrifices and commitment that additional schooling would have required, would have subsequently generated a commensurate return in concrete benefits or otherwise put, that more school would have been 'good value for money'. In other words T17 was yet to be persuaded that despite the up and downs of his chosen path including the prison term, additional years of school would have guaranteed him a better occupational attainment. Looking at the entire package of skills acquired formally and informally by T17, including his foreign languages, artistic productions skills and his 'savoir fair' and seeing him interacting with Local Government officials and Rroma Leaders I began to see how his overall perception of the role of the school in general emerged.

Researcher: Tell me please what is your view on formal education? Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing? How many years would be best for people to go to school for?

Interviewee: Well to be honest with you I think school is very good...I know you talked to some of these guys and they told you that they don't need it because they are professionals, they know their jobs and all that rubbish but they don't know what they're talking...Look at that guy over there, did you speak to him? (He pointed to T30 whom I was later to interview too) He is an excellent builder, he can build a wall for you and then apply plaster on it and make it like paper but nobody gives him a look...do you know why? Not because he's a Gypsy but because he hasn't got a certificate to be employed, he can't read and write, that's why...You take him back to school, give him a certificate and he could run his own business. But does he even know this? He doesn't have a clue! (when I later interviewed W30, I learned that W30 was fully aware of his predicament and that he was trying to get out of his impasse) So of course education and school is good, what can you do without it? Don't listen to the guys who tell you they can do that and they can do the other without school...They may do for a while but then they get stuck and there's no way out without school...

R: I met many Rroma who did manage to get themselves many years of education some of them even got themselves Baccalaureate diplomas, are they still Rroma in your view?

I: yeah of course, I can show you some of them too, some went to university but the point is: what do they get out of it? Some fancy themselves as Romanians now, others Hungarians it's their business who am I to talk, I've got both Romanian and Hungarian passports and as soon as Hungary enters the European Union I'll be off (Hungary did accede to EU in April 2004). (T17 interview, Cluj-Napoca – Transylvania, May 2003)

T17 had children from a previous marriage and whilst he declined to speak about them specifically, he was happy to discuss with me about his understanding of the usefulness of education for girls too. Having heard his views of the purpose and usefulness of education in allowing individuals to pursue lucrative occupations and opening opportunities, I was rather surprised to hear that the same did not apply in T17's view for the girls. T17 explained to me that girls had in his view an opt-out close in that that they can always marry and become housewives whereas men did not have this 'luxury'. That wasn't to say, T17 clarified, that education was not as useful for them as it was for the boys but he just wanted to point out that women have a fall back option whereas men didn't. I pointed out to him that there were many Rroma women at the University in Cluj and elsewhere who were not so sure about this automatic option of opting out the economic and labour market all together. At any rate, the prospect of marrying somebody and dedicating the rest of one's life to raise children may or may not be a viable option and that as he himself suggested above, what would happen to the woman should the marriage not work out, or should the husband die or become incapacitated?

Researcher: Thank you for explaining to me your views on the role of education, please can you clarify whether men and women should go to school for the same number of years?

Interviewee: They don't have to really, do they? I know that these days women push for equality and similar pay and all that and that's fine with me. But they don't have to you see... do you get me? If they want they could get married and don't need all that hassle do they? On the other hand...look say you you're a girl who went to school and then went further and your parents worked hard and took their bread away from their mouth to give it to you so you can go to school and then after all that, you fancy somebody, get married and pour out few kids? Eh? What then? What was the point of all that sacrifice then, eh? Wouldn't that be a waste?

R: Well maybe it wouldn't be because she would be a smarter person able to prepare her few kids better for life? She would also be able to stand on her feet if her husband dies or when her kids grow up and live home?

I: Yeah, look...I am not saying that women should not go to school, right? All I'm saying is that they got to think hard before getting themselves into all this school and lyceum business because they might loose out on other chances life gives them....I know what you mean about the husband dying and all that but here is different, we live according to old traditions. If the husband dies, the children are supposed to take care of their mother aren't they, or the rest of the family...it's not as simple as that; husband dies and she's out on the streets!⁵

(T17 interview, Cluj-Napoca – Transylvania, May 2003)

⁵ See field notes, interview notes and photographic evidence collected throughout my months long field research. Whilst visiting shanty-towns and Rroma areas in Transylvania and Wallachia I came across many Rroma women who due to their husbands deaths or prison sentences were in precisely that situation.

After such an eventful life, I was curious to learn from T17, what in his view shaped him the most, what does he thought had the greatest impact on his life up until the moment we were discussing. Again, as when discussing gender specific aspects of the usefulness of education, T17 surprised me with his answer for it was only at that point in our conversation that he brought forward his strong religious beliefs and the fact that he was a member of a neo-Protestant group. Though he did mention the name of the group, he said it Hungarian and I could not understand it but at any rate, the actual name was irrelevant from the point of view of my research agenda. T17 explained that whilst in prison in Austria, he was befriended by a Hungarian pastor who took him under his wing, and hearing that T17 was Hungarian too (whilst in prison, T17 declared himself a Hungarian not Romanian national) began to introduce him to the Bible and his understanding of it. According to T17, this pastor spoke to him as if he knew him for all his life and sometimes he had tears in his eyes so powerful their discussions were. These discussions took the form of a retrospective look at his life, at the things that he did well and the things that he did badly, at the way he treated his family and so forth. Still whilst in prison, T17 converted to the respective branch of evangelism and gave up alcohol, tobacco, swearing, stealing and began living a straightforward life. T17 explained that never thereafter did he touch alcohol or cigarettes and that he always looked back at his time in prison as the best experience in his life.

Researcher: what would you say the most important experience in your life was? What changed you the most? What contributed the most in making you what you are today?

Interviewee: You will probably laugh at me but it was in prison when I met this Hungarian priest who saw me sobbing about the state I was in...I was feeling pretty bad: being cheated by the guy with the car, in prison... nothing left in the world, kids not wanting to know about me...anyway, this guy he was like a priest came and took me aside and talked to me and made me think about a lot of things...then he started asking me to join a group he formed there in prison to talk about the Bible and the teachings in there...I used to go to the church before that but I wasn't too bothered about the religion and all that...After I met this guy, I started to understand more about why the world is in the state it is, why people lie, why there is poverty and greed... a lot of things...I stopped drinking and smoking and doing all sorts after that...it really changed my life for sure...no I am how should I say it to you...I feel lighter, better...

(T17 interview, Cluj-Napoca – Transylvania, May 2003)

Though T17's ascending trajectory was not as long distance and as pronounced as other trajectories we have observed thus far, he did nonetheless move upwards in terms of his formal and informal earning potential, social circles mixing with, opportunities to travel abroad with his Gypsy dance group, quality of living accommodation, the clothes he was wearing etc. He was referred to respectfully by the Roma gatekeeper who introduced me to him, his 'students' were

addressing him on a very polite tone and he had a very distinguished air about himself. Everything about T17 indicated that he came a long way from his days as an unskilled factory labourer during the socialist years, not to mention since his years in prison.

Education had undoubtedly a significant role. The actual formal qualification received by T17 as a confirmation of his school attendance was useful up to a point. Specifically, it must have assisted T17 to obtain a driving license and to expand his commercial activities through mobility and increased volume of merchandises. In turn, such increased mobility would have made him into a more attractive partner to other commercial groups in his area thus T17 would have been able to demand higher rates for participating in the collective ventures such as when travelling to Hungary or Serbia and bringing back leather jackets or when travelling to Germany to bring back second hand cars. These lucrative business ventures earned T17 substantial amounts of cash with which he was eventually able to buy himself an expensive flat in the city centre.

The actual skills learned whilst in full time education would have also been very useful in T17's income earning activities but it appeared to me that what impacted the most on T17's social ascendance was his understanding that through skills including, not only those gained at school, he could increase his versatility in the labour market. Throughout his subsequent years T17 was effective in maximising the usefulness of his skills and experiences including his eight years of school. Among the non-educational aspects of his mobility I identified his linguistic skills. As a speaker of three languages (German, Hungarian and Romanian) T17 was able to operate in several different communities in Romania (Saxon, Romanian and Hungarian) and later European countries (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, etc.). Other non-educational skills included his musical and choreographic skills, his car mechanics and driving skills, his ability to access information, search and apply for grants, sponsorships, etc. Some of these skills were related to Traditional Gypsy skills or at least where acquired from T17 background in the Rroma community and through combining them with formal education acquired in the *Gadje* community, T17 was able to ascend socially.

Over in Wallachia, I was introduced (see Respondents Recruitment Chart, Methodology Chapter) by one of my respondents (W16) to his father (W35) and his brother (W22) who lived approximately 350km west of Bucharest (see Respondents Location Map – Methodology Chapter), on the border between Wallachia and Moldova (the third Romanian province) in a

town called Galati, a port on the river Danube. As part of my ethnographic research, I lived in this Modern Rroma family's home for four days and was able to conduct several interviews and many hours of observation. This Modern Rroma family was particularly interesting because, in addition to its intra-generational and inter-generation ascending social trajectories they were collectively experiencing a process of inter-generational ethnic transition from diffused traditionalism to full assimilation. The pivotal role in all these movements was played by the family's head W35, to whom I will now turn my attention.

Like most of the respondents I interacted with during my research, W35 was an extremely interesting man, knowledgeable and with a wealth of experience behind him. Despite living with his wife solely on a modest pension and on what their small garden could provide them with, I was offered very warm hospitality and my offers to contribute towards the daily meals were politely but firmly rejected. In total, I lived in W35's home for four days during which I shared with them their meals, their friendship and I have learned about their interesting past (Figure VII.4). Aged 64, W35 had a patriarchal air and was eager to let me know everything I wanted to know about what he described as 'his nation'.



Figure VII.4 Sharing a meal with W35's family in Galati - Wallachia.

Due to W35's personal characteristics, locating him along the ethnic identity spectrum turned out to be a complex task. In many respects W35 was more traditional than many self proclaimed Traditional Gypsies I met in the course of my research. W35 was a fluent speaker of Romany and had writing several unpublished notebooks of poetry and prose in what he described as 'the sweet language of his ancestors'. He was also fully aware of many of the norms and concepts defining the Gypsy identity and his patriarchal attitude towards his wife and children reminded

me more of a traditional *Bulibasha* than a retired state employee. However, he wore Romanian clothes and nothing in his house suggested anything other than a retired Romanian gentleman.

His wife wore traditional style clothes without being actually traditional Gypsy clothes. In other words she was wearing the traditional long skirt and obligatory modesty apron (see Chapter III) without which no traditional Gypsy woman would ever appear in public and in the course of my stay there, I have never seen her with her head uncovered by a scarf. Her clothes were however not distinctly Gypsy, as she did not wear the elaborately colourful multiple skirts, the silk apron and scarf or indeed the gold coins necklace⁶.

W35 and his wife gave the impression of being actually more Gypsy than they wished to show and later, during many long conversation I had, this was confirmed. Despite both W35 and his wife being fluent in Romany, they had deliberately decided not to teach their children the language. Having met and interviewed two of his sons (W16, W22 interviews) I was able to confirm that indeed none of them spoke even a limited amount of Romany. Furthermore, W35 actively encouraged their sons to marry Romanian women (though he clarified that he wanted them to be happy in their marriage above everything else) and they appeared to have a very close and supportive relationship with their daughters-in-law. Out of four sons, three were married to Romanian women and only one to a Rroma woman.

W35 confirmed to me that at the time his children were growing up his philosophy was to shelter them from the racial and ethnic discrimination to which he was subjected all his life. Later he explained that all his 45 years of economic activity have been worked among Romanians. W35 explained that in choosing a house in the more expensive Romanian suburb rather than in the Gypsy area, and avoiding to teach his children Romany he adopted a strategy of self-enforced assimilation in the *Gadje* environment and sadly, a strategy that he now deeply regretted. Whilst I do not suggest that in adopting such a radical strategy, W35 was unique among the rest of the Romanian Rroma population, his frank admission and his regrets were indeed very evocative.

It is also possible however that in understanding W35's decision not to teach his children Romani, we might have to understand the possible psychological barriers W35 might have

⁶ See field notes and photographs, Wallachia -Targu-Bujor, March 2003

actually erected himself against speaking Romani to his children. If one identifies particular linguistic repertoires with particular social contexts, it becomes almost impossible to use the inappropriate repertoire ([Acton – comments following candidate's Viva Voce](#))

Researcher: How long were you formally employed for before retirement?

W35: When I retired in 1998 my work log book showed forty years of uninterrupted work. On to, I had five years of work without papers when I was a lad. Forty years I worked.

R: Did you work amongst Romanians or amongst Rroma?

W35: Amongst Romanian my dear, always Romanians. There were some Rroma too but not in my team and I did not mingle with them anyway, I mingled with Romanians. These people helped me and supported me all along and in many cases they were closer to me than my own Rroma. Of course, in turn, I too was the type of man that deserved these things and I understood what I had to do. I was never arrested, I was never condemned, furthermore when I was entrusted with management roles, I managed Romanians and everybody was happy.

(W35 interview, Modern Rroma, April 2003, Galati – Wallachia)

Incidentally and somewhat poignantly, both of W35's sons whom I met, were working as Rroma activists and social workers with Rroma communities (W22 interview) and leader of a large Rroma NGO in Bucharest (W16). In the interviews I carried with them, they both revealed that they were particularly handicapped in their work by their lack of speaking Romany and by being occasionally considered outsiders by the very communities they aimed to aid and represent. Ironically, both of them were taking now Romany lessons to improve their chances of succeeding professionally.

Throughout his entire life W35 held various occupation in the local port as a helper on the docks then as a docker and he finally retired several years before the interview as dock foreman. From the point of view of his employment status therefore, W35 was consistent across his entire working career having been at all times an Employee. Having discussed this consistency with W35, he indicated that he always preferred the stability of having a 'payslip to sign for at the end of the month' rather than the uncertainty of setting up his own business.

W35 retired in 1998 after 45 years in the labour market and at the time of interviewing W35 was spending most of his time at home, working in the garden and supplementing the household needs with products obtained from the small plot of land contained within the garden: approximately 100 sq. m.. As with the rest of the retired respondents, thus strictly speaking not economically active it was difficult to accurately classify W35's occupation.

The ROS Level assigned to the occupation of dock foreman would be 3 but I believe that since the levels refer strictly to economically active men, this classification overstates the actual desirability combined with the employment status of W35's current occupation. To moderate it I combined W35's before retirement occupation with the only other productive occupation attained by him at the time of interviewing namely smallholder without employees which would attract a ROS Level 8. The resulting classification of W35's current occupation (ROS Level 5) is therefore a more accurate classification of W35 current occupation than by considering his occupation before retirement alone.

ROS: 3 (Dock foreman) + 8 (Smallholder without employees) Average ROS Level = 5

Having entered the labour market as a dock helper (nearest equivalent description in ROS would be dock labourer with a level of 9) and having exited the labour market as a dock foreman (ROS Level 3), I note that W35 ascended 6 ROS Levels within his working life, a case of intra-generational upwards mobility.

W35's father on the other hand worked all his life as an agricultural worker (ROS Level 9) and as a factory cleaner (ROS Level 9) thus attaining an average ROS Level of 9. It is relatively difficult to compare W35's occupation with that of his father half a century before him and to contextualise the difference in terms of ROS. I believe however that the accuracy of scoring and the subsequent differences are in some respects secondary to the overall goal of observing the existence of ascending or indeed descending social trajectories. In other words, whether the precise average level of W35's occupations is 5 or 6 and whether the precise average level of W35's fathers occupation is 7 or 10, I can nonetheless note that W35 registered a medium to long range inter-generational social trajectory.

Education: W35 told me that he had seven classes which means that he must have attended school for minimum seven years. He attended these school years in his local village together with Romanians and Ukrainian children. W35 lived in an area of Wallachia close to the border with Ukraine where small pockets of Russian and Ukrainian minorities coexist with Romanians and Rroma. W35 told me that he enjoyed the school years and that his teachers were very supportive of him as he was the youngest of a large Rroma family known and respected in the village. His father was a hard working man – W35 explained – and he installed in his children a sense of respect and duty which later was to shape their entire life. In immediate terms however,

W35 was a very disciplined and hard working pupil and he gained the admiration of the teachers. W35 was adamant that during his years of school there was no discrimination against him or against members of other ethnic groups on account of their ethnicity. He reminisced that he would have liked to stay longer at school but the illness of his father and the need to earn a living forced him to end his school years. At any rate, W35 explained, people were not staying much in school those days. W35 explained that he ended his school experience with a certificate and good reading and writing skills. During my stay in his home, I was later to see several notebooks with poems in Romany, written by W35 in a very clear and tidy handwriting.

Researcher: So tell me Sir did you go to school?

Interviewee: Oh yes my dear of course I did, we were respected Gypsies in our village, my father and mother worked hard to keep us well dressed and well fed and he would not have tolerated us to go astray...Dad did not have school you see, not one single class, he was a very intelligent man but never went to school...he could not read and write but was getting by and wanted to make sure us kids turned up better than him and Mum....

R: For how long did you go to school? Can you know read and write?

I: I went for seven years, that's what you were supposed to do in those days...you were only doing more if you wanted to become a priest or a teacher...Yes I can read and write, I will show you some of my poems later if you are interested...

R: So how was it? Did you enjoy it at school?

I: Yes we had a very good time, all of us, Gypsies, Ukrainians, Romanians ...all together...

(W35 interview, Modern Rroma, April 2003, Galati - Wallachia)

W35 was very politically aware and perceived school and the education as an empowerment tool, as a means of unleashing 'his nation's' full potential though he was dismissive of criticism (including some from his own son W12 whom I also interviewed later) that the current Romanian education establishments taught the pupils only the history and cultural values of the *Gadje*. He argued that if the price of an educated Rroma is one that is educated with *Gadje*, values a process which he described as a route to full assimilation, then that would be a price worth paying and he would rather have them educated. Throughout the time I spent with W35 he repeatedly referred to the education of his children as a means of safeguarding their future.

I: Education my dear is like the sword that cuts the Gordian knot. Have you heard that story?

The same way Alexander slashed the Gordian Knot with his sword, the same way we can cut the centuries of underdevelopment and effects of slavery and discrimination with the help of education. If the Gypsies would be educated they would know not to steal, not to have dozens of children if they cannot feed them, they would learn jobs and how to make themselves useful and we could all live in peace, like neighbours...

(W35 interview, Modern Rroma, April 2003, Galati - Wallachia)

Not surprising for somebody with such strongly held views on the purpose of education in the contemporary society, W35 felt that his seven years of education started an irreversible process of learning and self-development of which he was very proud. He felt that education alone could not have achieved it and that undoubtedly, his father's examples and teachings encouraging hard work and self-discipline must have undoubtedly contributed to his eventual position as a team leader. Nonetheless, W35 felt that his education had been very useful in opening doors for him that otherwise would not have been opened.

Researcher: So tell me please Sir, now at your age of 64, would you say school was worthy?

Interviewee: Of course it was, everything I am now I am because of those seven years and because the discipline and respect for work my father installed in me...I could have been a hard worker you see like my father was but without school, I would have ended up like him cleaning the school where his son was learning and my father did not want that to happen, that's why him and my mother kept pushing me to do my home work and to be respectful with the teachers...Later I tried to explain this to my children and now two went to university and did their degrees. One of the has done a Masters Degree In Bucharest at university and is now a Director...and you ask me whether school was useful? Yes my dear, it was very useful.
(W35 interview, Modern Rroma, April 2003, Galati - Wallachia)

W35 had four sons and no daughters and when I asked him whether he would have been equally supportive of his daughters to go to school, his response was not surprising in the slightest. He confirmed immediately that there would have been no difference in his views of the extent to which girls or boys should go to school. What mattered he explained, was for themselves to have enough mind and willingness to stick with it. He gave me examples of his daughters-in-law some of whom were educated, some of whom were less educated but his was not judgemental, rather he felt sorry for them for not having been able to continue with their study. There was not in his explanation a sense of disappointment that they were not educated as well as his sons, rather a genuine regret that they did not benefit from his children's circumstances.

Researcher: You told me how supportive you were of your sons to stay in school but would you have been equally supportive if you had daughters? What if they wanted to get married instead?

Interviewee: Not all the Rroma girls marry young you know? Of course I would have been strict with them to stay at school like the boys. Maybe I could not have given them the beatings that my boys got, Gelu (his youngest son) was the one that needed the most smacks because he was ill and his mother molly-cottoned him but ...that did not do him any harm you know...he's a director now married to a teacher. So yes I would have wanted my daughters to be as good at school as my sons. Even now when I look at my daughters-in-law I feel such a shame that their parents did not help them along...some of them could have done much better in life...
(W35 interview, Galati - Wallachia, April 2003)

When asked what in his life experiences shaped him the most, W35 told me that out of all the things that he went through life including the military service, his school experience, becoming a father or his church going, what shaped him the most was the hard work and the self-discipline his parents installed in him as a boy. It was through hard work that he gained the sympathy and admiration of his teachers at school, it was through his hard work and discipline that he earned the respect of his superiors in the army, it was through hard work that he earned the respect of his neighbours in his *Gadje* neighbourhood and it was through hard work that he earned a long term contract with his employer and the eventual promotion and retirement.

Researcher: What would you say had the greatest impact on your life?

Interviewee: ...the hard work and the humility and discipline with myself... knowing to mind your own business and carry through things and not allowing yourself to be dragged in arguments with the people. Respect everybody and everybody will respect you my father used to tell me and I listened to him and minded my own business and work hard to raise my family...My father had nothing else to leave me and my brothers but he left me his word and advice and I hope that my sons will be saying the same things about me one day...

(T15 interview, Cluj-Transylvania, May 2003)

Looking at W35's slow ascending social mobility and in particular to the impact the seven years of full time education had on it, I felt initially that I was observing a rare case where education had a significant impact on the respondent's mobility. Clearly, we have here a case study where the respondent accessed the labour market as a helping docker, i.e. unqualified labourer, coming from a family where the father died early in the respondent's childhood and the mother was an agricultural worker. Through school, one would be tempted to conclude, the respondent rose throughout his career to the rank of team leader and after over thirty years of successful career, he retired with a pension and an allotment in a sought after area.

The reality was, I felt, that whilst school must have inevitably played a very useful role, there were other factors and circumstances which assisted W35's social advancement. I felt that among the workers at the respective dock, there might have been several others with seven classes certificates but what W35 had in addition to them, was a set of personal qualities such as the ability to get on with his colleagues, commitment to his work, the willingness to work hard and undoubtedly an immensely valuable skill of bring these attributes together and working diligently towards making them bare fruits. This underlined the importance of basic level of education and literacy but after the basic level has been achieved there are additional qualities such as personal qualities that matter and that impact on one's social mobility.

Type F: Downwards Intra-generational Social Trajectory - Modern Rroma

Describes a rare but nonetheless interesting process through which respondents from the Modern Rroma segment suddenly lose their current occupational attainment and drop a number of levels on the ROS. This type of trajectory is not necessarily initiated by the loss of the respondent job alone and there have been several other circumstances with a similar negative impact on the respondent's position.

As I explained elsewhere in the thesis, the Modern Rroma segment functions according to the principles and characteristics of the rest of the *Gadje* community or in other words, according to the principles governing any modern industrialized society regulated by the laws of the free-market economy. In these environments, labour markets as well as goods and commodities markets fluctuate and the stability of various positions and roles can be volatile. The specific circumstances generated by free-market labour environments can assist individuals to progress socially but at the same time can create conditions in which individuals placed in vulnerable positions are pushed downwards socially. Both Rroma and *Gadje* are susceptible to these influences and in the previous sections of this chapter I described examples showing that Modern Rroma can progress socially both inter-generationally and intra-generationally.

I will turn my attention now to examples where the social and economic forces referred to above can have a detrimental impact upon individuals' social trajectories particularly those in vulnerable positions. The two examples I am going to focus on are of two Modern Rroma from Transylvania and Walachia who according to their own descriptions and my observations have experienced a downwards social mobility.

The first respondent in this category was T24 who welcomed me in his home, a disused shipping container which he shared with his wife and two children (Figure VII.5). The container itself was located in a shantytown placed on the outskirts of Cluj-Napoca, the capital of Transylvania. I was told (and later it was confirmed to me) that the land where the shantytown was located including the containers were 'donated' by the town-hall in a bid to 'rid the town of many of the homeless Rroma'⁷.

⁷ See discussion with Town-hall's environmental officer, Cluj-Napoca, May 2003

T24 began his work in life as an apprentice in a local plant and through on-the-job training programmes reached the position of skilled machine operator. By 1995 T24 had become a maintenance man and operator of metallurgical machinery earning a good wage in a state owned plant. His position guaranteed him a regular income, sick pay leave, annual leave, annual bonuses, access to free education for his children and most importantly he was allocated a two-bedroom flat. He told me that in view of T24's hard work and good working records, the plant management allocated the flat to T24 from a batch of flats in a block owned and managed by the plant, a common practice during the socialist years. The access to the flat in a sought after area of Cluj-Napoca is particularly significant to mention because, as it will be seen below, it was to play a major role in T24's future social trajectory.

Shortly after the collapse of communism in Romania, T24's plant was privatised and sold to a number of share holders who promptly undertook a radical reorganization of the plant. The flats and several other subsidies such as the reduced holiday packages for 'model workers' and free transport from the town centre to work were scrapped. The workers and the current owners were offered the possibility to purchase their flats at reduced prices and since at this point, in view of T24's regular job, his many years in service and recommendation from his management, the local bank was willing to approve him a loan for the purchase of his flat. In becoming a flat owner with a regular job, T24 witnessed thus a short social ascending trajectory.



Figure VII.5 T24's home (left) and the interior of the container which he shares with his wife and two children.

Shortly thereafter however, the new owners of T24's plant accelerated the cost saving exercises by offering voluntary redundancies and reduced-hours contracts. Initially these measures were

offered on voluntary basis and with a need to keep repaying his loan premiums; T24 declined the redundancy offer and accepted instead reduced working hours. The reduced-hours programmes started to offer fewer and fewer hours and T24 began to have difficulties in repaying his loans. His wife who was employed by the same plant was made redundant in 1995 and shortly thereafter T24's position was made redundant too.

At the same time, the deregulated Romanian financial market witnessed the launch of a number of illegal/unofficial financial pyramids⁸. Faced by mounting debts and with low prospects of employment T24 was persuaded by the news of success stories of previous investors and raised an additional loan with an unauthorized money-lender by offering his flat as a guarantee. Tragically, (from T24's point of view) within several weeks the Romanian Government intervened and clamped down on these fraudulent schemes.

T24 reported that, eventually the Pyramid Caritas collapsed, the heads of this venture were arrested and strict regulations were introduced to prevent the creation of similar ventures in the future. Without any returns or compensation and under the threat that one of his older daughters could be abducted and sold on the prostitution market. T24 told me that he had to surrender his flat and move in with his brother. After only several months the situation became untenable and T24 and his entire family had to move out and ended up living rough on the streets. Several months of petitions, protests and appeals later, the local council allocated to T24 a shipping container in the Patarat suburb of Cluj-Napoca an abandoned industrial area (Figure VII.6)⁹.

At the time of interviewing, T24's income earning consisted of income benefits, child benefits and dismantling the near-by abandoned factories, carrying it with a friend's wagon and selling it to a local scrap metal collection point. At times, T24 explained to me, his friend's wagon was not

⁸ The financial pyramids are non-sustainable business models that offer 'investors' a return four times the size of their investment within four weeks of their investment and their initial success was based solely on the large number of investors attracted by the rapid return of their investment. Gradually, the news of these returns spread and more and more individuals, associations and even companies invested large amounts of cash which in return guaranteed the quadrupling of the investment of the initial investors. The schemes are frauds and have been outlawed in the Western countries since 1895. Naturally, the process cannot be repeated indefinitely as the investment of larger and larger amounts of cash was due to reach its limit thus making it impossible to honour the promise of a quadrupling of investment of the later investors. In the initial stages however, thousands of investors did quadrupled their investments in four weeks and in Cluj-Napoca the local Pyramid Caritas was so successful that on one occasion, an entire factory arranged for their entire available liquid assets to be delivered to Caritas offices by trucks protected by armed guards. See also the House of Commons – The Hansard Debate of 2 February 1996.

⁹ T24's version of events was confirmed by two several independent sources: the gatekeeper who facilitated my entry into the Patarat community and the Press Officer at the Cluj-Napoca Municipal Council.

available thus he was carrying the stolen parts of old machinery with the aid of an abandoned pram or occasionally with his bare hands. T24's make shift accommodation was immaculate and his wife took great pride in maintaining the appearance of a normal sedentary flat. Interestingly T24's return to a traditional Gypsy occupation was facilitated by a *Gadje* friend who introduced him to this occupation and showed him where the available scrap metal could be found and how and where it could be sold. T24 also considered returning to a semi-nomadic life if only he could afford a cart and a horse of his own.



Figure VII.6 T24 and his wife sorting out scrap metal and empty bottles for reselling at collection points.

T24's social trajectory can thus be described through the following ROS levels: having entered the labour market as a unskilled worker (ROS 9) he increased his earning potential and access to benefits including training and subsidized accommodation by rising to the position of machine operator (ROS 8) and eventually becoming a skilled worker responsible for the machinery maintenance (ROS 7). At the time of interviewing, having been made redundant, T24 earned a living from state benefits and illegal commercial activities (ROS 11). With no access to a sufficient regular income and/or any substantial benefits and faced with the prospect of being arrested and convicted for dismantling old machinery components as scrap metal, T24's social trajectory was a clear case of rapid intra-generational downwards mobility generated by a combination of circumstances some of which were outside of his control (redundancy) whilst others were a direct result of his own decisions (raising an additional unofficial loan).

T24: 9 (Unskilled worker) + 8 (Machine operator, products assembler) + 7 (Qualified workers in machine maintenance - skilled workers in metallurgy).

Current occupational level: 11 (Benefit dependant, social assistance, child benefit)

Education: The list of unfortunate events in T24's personal life is not limited actually to his unwise decision to sell his home and invest the profits in a fraudulent financial scheme and, as will be seen below, they started actually early in his school years. T24 told me that after only four years spent in full time education, he was expelled for getting into a fight with the son of a local dignitary. This incident however must have been only the last one in a list of incidents and some of them were described candidly by T24.

T24 told me that overall he enjoyed the school years, the atmosphere in class and he did not allege ethnic discrimination, quite the contrary, he told me that his teachers were nice to him though that might have been connected to his father bribing them, an information that T24 also candidly volunteered. It appeared to me that far from being forced to leave school due to poverty, family responsibilities or ethnic discrimination, T24 simply left the school because he enjoyed it more on the streets, trafficking consumer goods with his father. It wasn't therefore that T24 did not enjoy school it was that he actually enjoyed the streets more including the occasional brushes with the police.

Researcher: Tell me did you go to school?

Interviewee: Well I did go yes...I have four classes completed but I got involved in contraband deals... my old man was dealing with contraband too so...

R What does it mean to deal with contraband?

I We were among the first business people during Ceausescu's years. We used to deal with cigarettes and chewing gum and stuff from foreigners...After four classes I stopped going to school...I used to sit in next to a girl and I used to get on very well with her...and we used to walk together home, we used to be always together. One day one of the boys in the class slapped her and she came to me and I argued with him and I thumped him in the face and his eye popped out. His father was a big man in the army and he came to school and expelled me.

R Up until this incident how did you get on at school?

I Yes I used to get on with it...it was ok, there wasn't a problem, even if I did not always do my home work...some colleagues were helping me, my dad was tipping the teacher with a pack of cigarettes and it was ok...I did not like to go to school and I had to be excused somehow, I was born to be racketeer and that is what I want to die as...I used to go to all sorts of places to sell my stuff, to Lidos in the summer to discos in the winter... for me when the police was chasing me for me it was fun...sometimes they were catching me and I was getting a good beating and I was promising that I would not do it again and the next day I was back at it... I liked racketeering better than school...

R How were the teachers at school?

I Very good they were, very good...I had a teacher who loved me very much, he always took good care of me...

(T24 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

Unexpectedly for somebody who left school after only four years (i.e. by the age of 10), T24 felt that he benefited from the years he spent in fully time education though it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how, other than the basic literacy and numeracy skills he would have acquired in this short period. The actual literacy and numeracy skills he had at the time of interviewing were acquired throughout his subsequent life. During the interview, I had the feeling that what T24 was trying to convey to me was not a sense of realisation that school years shaped him for the better. As it will be seen below, it was another period in T24 that was to have the most impact in forming him. I felt that what T24 was in fact trying to explain that he benefited from school the understanding of what *might* have been had he attended more years of school.

R Was it worthy going to school all those fours years?

I Yes it was worthy, when I look back now I see that I should have stayed longer at school, my life would have been different...

(T24 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

School for T24 would have had a strictly practical use and far from changing his outlook on life or indeed the choice of his profession, it would have assisted him to be better and more effective in earning an income from his dealings as a racketeer. Like several other Rroma interviewed from both the Traditional and the Modern sector, T24 told me that with more schooling would have come the ability to obtain a driving license. In turn this might have assisted him in being more mobile and independent in pursuing sources of income. Even the understanding of this lost opportunity to get a driving license came not through daily work or through a cool-head analysis of his life experiences, rather it came in prison where T24 told me that for the first time in his life he began to learn about cars and engines – presumably as part of the rehabilitation and re-skilling programmes provided for the inmates.

R But didn't you say you would have rather been a racketeer?

I Yes but I would have been able to get a driving license, I like the cars, in prison I got to learn about cars...

R How long have you been in prison?

I Ten months..

R And did they teach you stuff about cars there, did they have workshops there?

I Oh yes they did, very good ones...I learned a lot, the prison made me into a man, it tamed me and it taught me a lot of things...I want to tell you something...that is what I dream to do one day, to do this job to work as a car mechanic maybe to have my own workshop, if not my kids...

(T24 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

From T24 answers it emerges a picture of understanding of lost opportunities but this applies only to practical opportunities. This practical perception of the role of the school extends to his

own children too and T24 explained to me that he had to delay the start of his older son's schooling in order to get him to help around the house and mind the other children, presumably whilst T42 and his wife were at work. This corroborates with his earlier description of the events in his life as his son must have reached the age of going to school at about the same time T24 and his wife lost their jobs and undoubtedly their access to state sponsored child-care. There was no evidence in T24's explanations that he was perceiving as different the role of education in his sons as opposed to his daughters; in fact I felt he was proud of one of his daughters' dreams to go to university and become a lawyer whilst as shown above, his oldest son's education was delayed for domestic reasons.

R Tell what do you think is the role of the school in the world?

I Without school you are dead!you cannot get any help, you cannot apply for a driving license...(T24 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

Having met T24's entire family and having spent several days in their company, I observed that T24's and his wife's quiet support for their children to get a better education was genuine, as on several occasions I have noted their children being sent inside to do their home work. On another occasion, I was asked as a favour by T24 to give his daughter (the one that was aspiring to become a Roma human rights lawyer) a lift to school.

R How old are your kids, do they go to school?

I Yes both the girl and the boy go to school, the boy is in the third class and the girl in the second...the boy should have been really in the fourth...

R How do you mean, did he have to repeat a year?

I No but I sent him to school later, I kept him longer at home to stay with the other kids...

R And does he like it?

I This new generation is different, I cannot oblige him really to go...

R How long would you like them to go to school for?

I As long as they want, but if they don't want what can I do...my girl wants to be a hairdresser... the younger one wants to be a lawyer to defend the Gypsies...

(T24 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

The most significant finding about T42's understanding of the role of education and the impact his educational attainment had upon his mobility came when asked what of his life's experiences shaped him the most. T24 was not the first Roma I have encountered (see Pilot Interviews and T28 interview) who openly admitted that what had the most impact on their life was not full-time school education rather, the literacy and retraining programmes received in prison.

R What taught you most in life? In the army, in your family, at work, in prison...

I In prison...the prison made a man out of me...for some prison is very bad but for me it was good...even the clothes that I was wearing, I never wore prison clothes, I wore my own clothes and I could go out in the town for work, only I was not allowed to come home to sleep...but I was working in the car repair shop...

R: Did you attend a training course or worked as an apprentice? How did you learn?

I: It wasn't a course as such, but they put me in with an old man who knew his stuff...oh man, you should have seen the guy, he didn't have school and that but he could tell you what was wrong with an engine only by listening to it...

(T24 interview, Cluj - Transylvania, May 2003)

Overall, and as in some of the previous case studies observed, educational attainment had very little impact on T24's downwards social mobility. It is again a case where the actual years of school attendance determined the limited impact of education; I speculate again that had T24's father been stricter in ensuring that his son spent more years in school rather than teaching him to earn money from contraband at the age of ten, school and education might have had a different impact on T24's life. With an additional three years of school, he might have been able to obtain his much dreamed of driving license and with a further two, he might have been able to gain a place on a government sponsored car-mechanics apprenticeship scheme. As it happens, T24 was placed in a very vulnerable position by the limited education he had and without fall back plans, family or *Neam* support networks or any basic skills, he was unable to recover from unwise decisions and/or unfavorable circumstances. A theme I have referred to in Chapter V, like many other Modern Roma located in the lower echelons of the Social Diversity Model, T24 was in effect in a social 'no-man's land' as he lacked the Traditional Gypsies' support networks, traditional skills and capital to sustain himself through the Traditional Gypsy way of life yet at the same time, he also lacked the basic education skills, social and cultural capital required in the *Gadje* environment. He was yet another 'doubly-marginal' Roma for whom external events caused the actual social descent but whose lack of education reduced the versatility in the market and opportunities to recover.

Let us turn our attention next to a similar case where I observed a dramatic downwards social mobility trajectory. This case was observed in Walachia in a village near the border with Moldavia, the third Romanian province and it refers to the social trajectory experienced by W04 a Modern Roma living in the village of Targu Bujor.

According to my analysis of the practices present in the ethnic identity of Traditional and Modern Roma, W04 was a 57 years old Modern Roma as he did not speak Romany, was not

married either intra-*Neam* nor intra-ethnically and did not wear any Gypsy traditional clothes though he did mention that his parents and forefathers were of the *Fierari Neam* an occupation that he would still like to practice one day. From the employment status perspective, W04 was self-employed but, as will be seen below his employment status was a cause for his downwards mobility rather than an evidence of social ascent.

W04 welcomed me in his home initially under the misunderstanding that I was writing an article about his plight which is something that my gatekeeper explained to him. After clarifying that I was in fact an academic researcher his enthusiasm for speaking to me dissipated but nonetheless he was still willing to share with me his experiences. Despite understanding that I was not in a position to assist him, W04 showed me warm hospitality and invited me to share with him his meal and allowed me to photograph his home and family (Figure V21).



Figure VII.7 W04's home (left) and interior (right)

Like T24, W04 began his working life as an apprentice in a factory and I was told by him that this was due to the then socialist policies of compulsory employment which temporarily affected many Gypsies/Roma in a positive way (Gheorghe 1991). Unlike the previous case (T24), W04 was unable to progress professionally because he was according to his explanation discriminated on account of not having any school.

Interviewee: what can I tell you Sir, you come from these parts and you know how things go...they see you a bit darker then them and they put you at the back of the queue...what can I tell you...that's the way it is, this is our curse as Gypsies...

Researcher: But I met other Rroma who said they did benefit from promotions and training...

I: I don't know...maybe they did, maybe they didn't, maybe they were with the party and knew how to play the system, maybe they bribed the bosses...I don't know...maybe they had school? I

didn't have school...

W04 interview, Branceni – Wallachia, June 2003)

T24 also explained that his poor health did not allow him to pursue a vigorous working rhythm. Whatever the reasons, W04 was unable to advance professionally and he was up until the events that were due to dramatically alter his life a unskilled manual labourer in a Wallachian factory. Though modest, W04 did enjoy a regular income and access to medical facilities, free education for his children, annual holiday and the use of a state owned flat.

W04 explained that all these were to change dramatically when in 1998, W04 was asked by a friend to safe-keep a number of items which according to W04 description were not particularly valuable. The respective friend was due to move house and asked W04 to keep these items for him for a short period of time after which he was due to take them back. As it turned out however, these items were actually stolen by W04's friend who was a burglar. Having been caught during another burglary his friend confessed that some of the items stolen from a previous burglary were at W04's home address. When the police descended upon W04's home and found the stolen goods, W04 was arrested and charged with complicity to burglary and handling stolen goods. As the court did not accept W04's version of events and convicted him to two years in prison. As a result of his criminal conviction and the inability to pay for the maintenance of his flat and running bills, despite his family circumstances and appeals W04 was evicted from his flat and moved to the outskirts of the town in a Gypsy make-shift village¹⁰.

In a determination to force a reverse of his fortune, W04 told me that he sold all his furniture and possession and purchases from a local closing factory a number of old machinery and tools with which he intended he set up in business. W04 explained to me that unfortunately, in view of his criminal record, poor training record and virtual illiteracy, an inability to pay the bribes demanded by the local town-hall officials he was unable to obtain a business certificate and set

¹⁰ With the exception of the Patarat shantytown described above, the Targu Bujor village was the most deprived and poverty-stricken place I have visited during my entire field research. Houses here were made of dirt mixed with straw and animal dung, with windows made of plastic sheets, roofs made of corrugated iron sheets and the beds and furniture resting directly on the ground. W04 bed was made of planks of wood nailed together and his wood burning stove was made of recycled bricks covered with earth and painted over. Despite of this poverty, the homes I visited in this village were kept very clean and lively decorated with posters and family photographs. I had the impression that their owners had a very determined attitude of hiding their poverty in as much as possible. My visit to this village lasted three days and in was the period before Easter and all the homes were in the process of being thoroughly cleaned and decorated.

up his own business. All his machinery ended up rusting in his yard (Figure VII.8) and when I visited W04's home they appeared to me to be unusable though W04 insisted that he could still make them work and earn a 'decent living' for himself and his family.

At the time of interviewing, W04 earned an income from a combination of income benefit and child benefits supplemented with occasional day jobs and repair works done for the *Gadje* villagers in the surrounding area.

With no access to a sufficient regular income and/or any substantial benefits, virtual illiterate and criminal record, W04's social trajectory was one of short-range intra-generational downwards mobility. Like in T24's case, W04's current predicament was a combination of adverse circumstances some which were outside of his control (discrimination, poor health, illiteracy) whilst others were a direct result of his own decisions (accepting stolen-goods for safe-keeping)

W04: ROS 9 (Unskilled worker)

Current occupational level: ROS 11 (Benefit dependant, social assistance, child benefit)



Figure VII.8 W4's machinery and tools

T04's education consisted according to his description of four classes in the local village school where he told me that he enjoyed the lectures, that he was getting prizes. It was a school with mixed Roma and Gadje pupils and that W04's relations with the other pupils and his teachers were good, echoing the descriptions of other Roma interviewed on this topic. Throughout the interview, W04 made clear on several occasions, his views that 'before' meaning during the socialist years it was better. He did not allege discrimination on ethnic grounds, in fact he

explained that it was now after the end of the communism that he began to experience discriminatory practices and racial abuse. In view of the short time he spent in full time education W04 did not obtain any certificate and though his reading skills were not good enough to allow him to read the subtitles on TV her told me that he could read and write with ease.

Researcher: I want to ask you a few things about school, did you go to school? Can you read?

Interviewee: Yes four classes...I can read and write, oh yes I can...

R Can you read the writing at the films on TV?

I Err...not everything because it goes fast and my glasses are not good either...but give me a book and I'll show you how I read...

R And how did you get on at school?

I Good, I was the first one in the class, I was getting prizes, people were not like they are now...

R Do you remember your teachers how were they?

I They were very good, very good...

(W04 interview, Branceni – Wallachia, June 2003)

Despite the good time that W04 told me that he had at school, he was sceptical about the usefulness of the school beyond learning basic numeracy and literacy skills. Like many Roma interviewed and discussed with during my field research, W04's view on education were the result of a combination of disappointment with the current economic realities he was experiencing and a strong belief in the role of the informal training and life experience or what he termed as 'the school of life'. According to W04, what one really needed in life was not so much a diploma or a formal training programme but the ability to learn on the job or to 'steal the job' as he described the process. Unusual for a Roma interviewee of his age, the passing of time did not alter his views rather reinforced them as when asked whether he would have liked to stay more at school he commented that in his view only during the communist years, when Ceausescu was in power, school might have made sense. In the current economic climate however, W04 felt that even a university or a driving license had a questionable value. In concrete terms he described to me that he occasionally earned an income by stealing metal components of dilapidated factories and state own abandoned agricultural machinery and that he often does this in complicity with *Gadje* who are educated and have even engineering degrees.

Researcher: Tell me please, what would you say about school?

Interviewee: Well I don't know, I see big people with schools and driving permits and all, some even went to university, boys with education and all, they search for scrap metal like me...Don't you see what's here, everything is a ruin, all that Ceausescu left is gone...Where to get a job...

R Would you have liked to stay more at school?

I Then, when I was young, maybe, when I began, when Ceausescu was in power, maybe it was better then...things were aplenty, you could even afford a beer now and then... Maybe for some people it's better but what is the point you can get all this stuff if you can't get a job. Even that guy who is an engineer, after some much school he can't get a job.
(W04 interview, Branceni – Wallachia, June 2003)

Not surprisingly, considering his views on the usefulness of formal education, W04 did not push his children too hard to stay in full time education. In fact he told me that he used to take them along with him when looking for work in the near-by villages and when probed about the exact number of years his children spent in school he could not be too specific. Having met his children too, I was able to verify his comments by asking his son similar questions.¹¹

R How many children have you got?

I Four

R Do they work?

I No they don't but they come with us around villages, could not let them stay home. We take them around villages and work for people, sometimes they were calling us: look on such and such a day I want you for work and I will give you this and that, sometimes they were paying us in grain, sometimes in fat, sometimes in money. No there is no work

R So out of four children none is now working full-time but did any of them go to school?

I Only the old one went

R How many classes?

I He's got four classes or five...

R And how do they earn a living?

I Well they manage... we always find something, we gather berries, in the autumn we gather the harvest, we do what we can...

R Do you get anything else, like a pension or something?

I No just the benefits and what we get out of work now and then...

R If you look back at those four years you spent at school, would you say it was worthwhile?

I Well if you ask me it was worthy, it helps me find my way around, or find a house number or train station...

R So if you found it beneficial, why did you not encouraged your children to go to school too?

I If they didn't like it...

(W04 interview, Branceni – Wallachia, June 2003)

Asked whether the school was ultimately useful from his point of view, as explained above, W04 was sceptical about how useful his experience of full-time education really was. He was glad however that with his literacy skills were sufficient to allow him to read a house number or the name of the street. W04 told me that it was in prison where he learned more or to be precise, where he came closer to gaining a vocational qualification diploma. Unfortunately, even that course for which he trained during his prison term did not materialise in a professionally

¹¹ See filed notes, photographs and conversation notes with W04's family, Targu-Bujor, June 2003

recognised certificate because W04 had to attend another month of training at another penitentiary and spend an additional month in prison. I was told by him that the prison services would have paid for his relocation and that during the additional month he would not have been incarcerated but nonetheless, W04 felt that an extra month in addition to his already served term was too much to pay for a certificate in painting and decorating even though he was fully aware that with such a certificate, his transition into the civilian life and securing a job would have been much more straightforward.

R We were talking about your prison service. How was it? Did they teach you anything in there?
I Well how could it be, like in prison...There in prison I started to train as a painter-decorator I was working towards my diploma. They asked me if I want to stay one more month to get the diploma. Can you imagine to stay locked for another month 'in' to get the diploma...I could have gone to Bistrita-town to get it.

R And it would not have been better if you got that diploma? Could you not have gone to get it?
I Yeah but to stay another month in prison? That's still a prison.

R Yes but wouldn't have been better to have a diploma?
I ...it would have been.

(W04 interview, Branceni – Wallachia, June 2003)

W04's answers, his life experiences as well as the evidence I was able to collect through triangulation reflected a very poor opinion on the formal education process. What I found revelatory was that none of the data collected from W04 persuaded me that he was against training and vocational qualifications per se. What was evident was that W04 was profoundly disillusioned with the current economic climate in which he was finding himself at a considerable disadvantage yet could not venture outside his knowledge comfort zone by exploring alternative possible options to succeed. Though only 47 years old, W04's views appeared very firm and to undertake a thorough analysis of his strongly held views on the value of informal methods of training and that of the 'the school of life' would have been a very difficult task. Rejection of his previous life philosophy appeared so difficult to contemplate that he was even prepared to extend it to his own children despite the fact that he clearly had very little concrete evidence of the success to support it.

R If I were to ask you now what is the role of the school in life what would you say?

I Well the best is the school of life!

R You mean the school of life is better than the school with books and board and all that...Why, how do you mean that?

I You learn to get by...well I don't say that books ain't good, they're good, they help you to learn to read and count and stuff but the best is the school of the street. The best is a trade or a skill and that you don't learn at school. Any trade or skill or job you don't learn, you actually steal it.

Say for example you have a skill learned from school say welding and I did not learn this at school and say we have to do together a gutter. You know your job from school from the book but you have not practiced it. I'll still beat you at it. This is the school of life: practice not theory. Look at the drivers: there are some that went to school and have twelve classes and they are drivers but there are some that have only four classes like me but they feel the engine and they don't need a lot to tell you why the engine is cracking or why it does I don't know what noise, you understand. They can tell you immediately there is the problem. And the guy without school tells the guy with the school look mate there is where the problem is. And all that without books without anything.

(W04 interview, Branceni – Wallachia, June 2003)

Towards the end of the interview, W04 confirmed that I have indeed understood accurately his views on the role of education.

R Now tell me please if I were to ask what in life thought you the most what would you say?

I The life thought me the most, all I learned I learned from my parents stealing the job...

(W04 interview, Branceni – Wallachia, June 2003)

The dramatic downwards mobility experienced by W04 was not a direct negative result of the years spent in school, and according to W04's candid admissions, his initial teachers and the subsequent prison rehabilitation programmes attempted to equip him with the necessary skills to succeed in earning a secure income. These attempts however fell on a background of distrust in the formal education system, disillusion with a difficult economic climate, an exaggerated confidence in the value and usability of informally acquired skills and his readiness to risk his and his family's home and his own liberty by relying on his entrepreneurial flair. In adopting this approach in life, W04 had by the time I interviewed him replicated the pattern inherited from his semi-nomadic illiterate parents and was in process of passing it on to his children. By relying solely on traditional Gypsy skills but without keeping up with the society's changes and without *Neam*'s support or the necessary certificates, place people in very vulnerable positions.

Conclusions

This chapter has focussed on three specific types of social mobility observed among the Modern Roma respondents. Firstly, the chapter focussed on the social trajectory Type B: the stable inter/intra-generational trajectories. Secondly the chapter analysed the social trajectory Type D: the ascending inter/intra-generational social trajectories and thirdly the analysis focussed on the social trajectories Type F: the downwards social trajectories. Each of these types of social trajectories were analysed by selecting two case studies from each of the Romanian provinces

under observation: Transylvania and Wallachia. In total six case studies were selected and in selecting these case studies, I have identified for closer analysis, respondents from the two ethnic segments and geographical regions with similar characteristics: age, occupational and education level, employment status and ethnic background.

The respondents' social trajectories were observed in the context of the changes in their occupational attainment and the changes observed in their ethnic identity. When observing the changes of the respondents' occupational attainment level, I have classified their positions according to the specifically created Roma Occupational Schema (ROS) and observed the progression or regression of their various occupations on this schema since the respondents' entries into the labour market up until the time of interviewing. Concomitant with the observation of the respondents' social trajectory within their productive life, using the same Roma Occupational Schema, I have also undertaken an observation of the difference between the respondent's occupational attainment and that of his father at the point of interviewing (if still economically active) or prior to the retirement or death.

Secondly, the chapter investigated the ethnic identity of each respondent by deconstructing it along a number of ethnic practices making up their Gypsy identity. As such, using the respondents' suggestions and related literature research, I have proposed a number of practices which collectively but not necessarily exclusively form a typical Gypsy identity thus creating an ethnic spectrum ranging from ultra-Traditional Gypsies (individuals who displayed all and other of these ethnic practices) to Modern Roma (individuals who displayed few or none of them). Each of the respondents' ethnic identity was then juxtaposed with that of his father in order to observe whether the number of ethnic practices increases or decreases between generations thus observing a process of ethnic transition from traditionalism to modernism or vice-versa.

Thirdly, following the description of the Romanian education system presented in Chapter V, this chapter observed the educational level attained by the respondents. The individual educational attainment levels consisting of various numbers of years of full time education completed were augmented with the respondents' recollections of the experiences they encountered during school years and their perception of the overall role of the education. The education subsections also explored the respondents' perception of the usefulness of their own education experience and sought to corroborate their views with their stated encouragement for

their children to attend full time education. Here, special discussion was encouraged on the differences between respondents' views on the role and usefulness of education for boys and girls separately. The last element of analysis in this subsection was the respondents' perception of the most influential experiences in their development as individuals. The section concluded with a discussion of the role of education upon the respondents' social trajectories, perceived this time from the researcher's perspective.

In analysing the case studies in the context of the above occupation, ethnic and education coordinates, the chapter demonstrated the view proposed in Chapter V: Social trajectories and educational attainment, namely that the link between our respondent's occupation and ethnic trajectories and their respective education attainment level appears to be a direct one but is also varied according to a number of factors. Occasionally, some of these factors appeared to be as influential in determining an individual trajectory as the education level itself. The impact of the formal education has been identified as present in all case studies observed yet the strength of this impact has been found to vary between the Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma. Otherwise put, both Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma acknowledged and showed the role and the need for formal education in their lives and those of their children but they differed in their views of the optimum level of education required.

Many of the respondents were placed in a situation of particular vulnerability by their 'double-marginality'. This state was determined firstly by their distance from the Traditional Gypsy segment including the loss of strong *Neam* and *Familia* support, the loss of proficiency in a traditional lucrative skill and the respective market niche such as music skills, silversmithing or blacksmithing. In this category I showed that having lost their skills, language and *Neam* connexions of their parents they were now, only a generation later living a Modern Roma lifestyle without having the support, subsidies and the protection of the former socialist society.

At the same time, these individuals began a process of ethnic transition to an ethnic and social segment in which they are not fully integrated due to their lack of adequate education, administrative know-how and above all lack of necessary documents such as birth certificates, identity documents, school attendance certificates, driving licenses, small-holders permits, market-stall authorisations, etc. During the previous decades of socialist economy, some of the current prerequisites for living in the *Gadje* world were ensured and often enforced by the state

(minimum eight or ten years of full time education, school certificates, identity documents, obligatory work place and accommodation, medical log books) whilst others were unnecessary or irrelevant (driving licence, small-holder certificate, private builders authorisation, agricultural producer permit, market health and safety certificate, etc.). Whilst I reiterate that my sample was purposively selected to include Rroma from both ethnic segments and social echelons, the presence of a large number of illiterate and semi-literate respondents even in a small sample, and their inability to reach many of the modern society's prerequisites could provide answers to the overall levels of poverty prevalent among the Romanian Rroma community.

Even in cases where minimal traditional lucrative Gypsy skills were preserved, some individuals' illiteracy and/or inadequate school certificates ensured that overall, they were unable to capitalise on these skills and were left very vulnerable to adverse socio-economic and political changes such as the rapid liberalisation of the market and the closure of the state-owned sector.

Educational Attainment and Social Mobility among Romanian Roma
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Chapter VIII

Conclusions

Conclusions

My research stemmed from the intention of revisiting a number of general perceptions backed by a significant body of literature regarding the Rroma community in Romania and elsewhere.

Among these, some authors share the view is that the Rroma community in Romania is ethnically and socio-economically homogenous and that its members have in common a number of characteristics such as the nomadic life-style, fluency in Romany language, respect and adherence to a number of shared concepts (Chelcea 1944, Fraser 1992, Hancock 1994, Cherata 1997) and values and a reluctance to open their cultural heritage especially their language to members of the outside world: *the Gadje*. (Von Wlislöcki 1890, Liégeois 1998, Bobu 2002)

Other commonly held assumption and related to the above is that having been effective in safeguarding a traditional way of life from times immemorial, and as a consequence, Rroma now find themselves in conflict with the modern society, a conflict resulting usually in placing the Rroma in disadvantaged positions and roles that ensure their permanent living on the fringes of the modern society amidst destitution and socio and economic marginalisation (Pons 1995, Achim 1998).

Finally, a third assumption shared by some policy makers, educators and the *Gadje* is that unlike the modern industrialised societies where the relevance of formal education, its institutions and processes are generally accepted, these fail to find resonance with the Rroma community, in particular with those Rroma who are still adopting a quasi-traditional way of life. It is often argued that modern, sedentary methods of teaching are incompatible to the life-styles of the Rroma community who feel at best out of place in the school environment and at worst feel excluded and discriminated against (Liégeois 1998, UNDP 2002, Pons 1995). Fearing for the survival of their cultural heritage, the general assumption goes, Rroma have grown to fear and distrust the role and relevance to their lives of the entire education system and as such, perceive it as an experience to be avoided.

My research set out to investigate these assumptions and in particular to ascertain the extent to which the Romanian Rroma community is socially mobile: do Rroma ascend or descend socially

and if so what determines their social trajectories. Parallel with this investigation, I set out to explore whether and to what degree, the attainment of various levels of education attainment impact upon the Roma's social mobility or in put in other words, whether in the traditional Roma world, as well as in the industrialised *Gadje* world, the attainment of various levels of educational attainment can act as a social engine.

Roma ethnic diversity and transition

With regard to the first set of assumptions, my research has shown that far from being constituted into a homogenous and/or distinct community, the Romanian Roma are immensely varied in terms of their intra-community diversity. The Romanian Roma community has been observed in focus and through a combination of open ended interview schedules, ethnographic style observation, visual sociology and triangulation, I have shown that far from being homogenous, Romanian Roma are immensely diverse both in the ethnic spectrum as well as in socio-economic level. To begin with, the research has shown (Chapter III) that, whilst generically describing themselves as Roma, some members of the community feel ethnically diverse along the *Neam* lines of demarcation and avoid interaction let alone integration with members of other *Neams*. In support of this statement, the research has shown and documented instances where members of a particular *Neam* prefer intra-marriages with the *Gadje* rather than with other certain *Neams*. Intra-Roma diversity was also evidenced in the languages and dialects used by various Roma *Neams*, in their clothing and in their proficiency in traditional occupations and the degree to which they uphold values and norms held sacrosanct by other members of the community, sometimes from within the same *Neam*. The research has thus shown that individual members of the Roma community can be placed along a wide spectrum from the point of view of their adoption of ethnic practices, as well as cultural values and norms.

Through the number of cultural specific questions addressed by the respondents and their candid responses regarding inter-family relations, aspirations for their children and discussions on their past, sometimes involving, prison sentences, my research has also shown that, far from being a community closed to the outside world and refusing to share their cultural and linguistic heritage with the *Gadje*, as some observers have suggested, Roma are in fact keen to promote and share

their values including the *Marime* Code, the *Criss*, their views on marriage and the roles assigned to family members, their aspirations and concerns. Naturally, some individuals could be more open to share their values than others and again, here the intra-community diversity ensured that whilst some Roma have welcomed me for days in their homes, some other members ensured that I would never be left alone in their homes whilst others refused to meet me altogether.

Based on the data collected at literature review stage and throughout the field research regarding the ethnic and socio-economic make up of the Roma community, the thesis proposed in the Introduction chapter, the Roma Social Diversity Model. The Roma Social Diversity Model endeavoured to bring a degree of generic categorisation to a community governed by diversity and social fluidity. The Roma Social Diversity Model suggested firstly that the Romanian Roma community can be described as being distributed across two main Roma ethnic segments, distinct in their nucleus but with porous borders across which the members of the community are located. These ethnic segments were generically named and referred to by me as the Traditional Gypsy and the Modern Roma segments and they incorporated members of the Roma community with either a distinct Gypsy ethnic make-up including the fluency and usage of the Romany language, the adoption of traditional Gypsy values and customs, practising often traditional Gypsy occupations and leading occasionally a semi-nomadic life-style. On the other side of the Roma Social Diversity Model, I have placed the Roma with a modern way of life akin to that of the *Gadje*, and defined by unawareness and/or rejection of the traditional Gypsy values and customs, lack of fluency in Romany and a settled way of life away from the traditional *Shatra*, non-adherence to traditional Gypsy social structures such as the *Romany Criss*, the *Crissinitori*, the *Bulibasha*, etc.

The thesis has placed special emphasis on clarifying that most of the traditional Gypsy values and norms listed above beget ethnic significance only in as far as they are perceived as significant in the eyes of the beholder. In other words, semi-nomadic life-style is not necessarily perceived as an ethnic denominator unless the traveller himself perceive it as such. Consequently an individual cannot be categorised as more or less ethnically Gypsy based on the external perception of the role of his nomadism in his ethnic make-up.

The most important finding however under this area of research was the presence of a clear social trajectory of ethnic transition towards the modern segment. This trajectory describes a clearly evidenced process through which *some* members of the Rroma community tend to shed in between generations some of the elements making up their ethnic identity and generically referred to me in the text as Ethnic Practices. Among the Ethnic Practices shed most evidently between the generations I identified the intra-ethnic marriage, the fluency and/or usage of the Romany language, the proficiency in a traditional Gypsy skill, the semi-nomadic lifestyle and the wearing of traditional Gypsy clothes. Furthermore and supporting the claim that this process does take place (though I cannot ascertain to what extent it does at community level), I presented evidence that the shedding of Ethnic Practices does occasionally take place both in the inter-generational plan as well as intra-generationally as some respondents were found to have shed one or two Ethnic Practices within their own lives.

In referring this trajectory to the Rroma Social Diversity Model described above, the data collected showed that the Rroma segmentation along the Traditional vs. Modern lines of ethnic demarcation is not static, rather that in certain cases, a constant process of ethnic transition takes place from the Traditional segment towards the Modern Segment. For the individuals embarked upon this social trajectory, this is a process which may one day result in their full assimilation into the *Gadje* world and the possible eventual loss of ethnic identity.

Rroma socio-economic diversity and social mobility

The second set of assumptions challenged by my research was the generally held view that, having been successful in preserving their traditional way of life, Rroma are now somehow confined to pre-industrialised ways of manufacturing and means of generating an income and that in view of this incompatibility with the modern, industrialised world, Rroma are inevitably locked into a life of socio-economic marginalisation.

My research presented evidence that the reality is very different and that far from being collectively deprived, some Rroma individuals, *Familia* and *Shatra* are actually enjoying standards of living and access to material resources far superior to those accessed by the majority

of the *Gadje* community. Given the natural predilection of individuals to limit the information they provide on their own material resources, it is difficult to ascertain with any degree of approximation the proportion of these economically buoyant individuals out of the wider Roma community and at any rate my research did not set out to investigate their numbers.

The data collected during the literature review and subsequently through the open ended interview schedules and observation methods enabled me to compile two occupational schemas relevant to each of the two ethnic segments of the community. On one hand, using as denominators the security of income, the skills and capital requirement for the entry into the market, the capital/revenue ratio and the desirability for that occupation, I have created an occupation schema designed to capture the various occupational levels attained by the traditional community. I referred to this schema as the Gypsy Occupational Schema (GOS). Parallel with this exercise and using similar methods, I have also created an occupational schema for the Modern Roma segment, this time using the existing Romanian classification of occupations as used by the 2002 Romanian National Census. I referred to this schema as the Roma Occupational Schema (ROS). This exercise generated two important findings which collectively challenged the view that socio-economically too, Roma tend to be a homogenous community.

Firstly, the data collected revealed that Roma individuals are positioned across the entire range of occupational levels listed in the occupational schemas. As such, I identified respondents who collectively have attained all levels of the GOS and ROS including the highest levels. Among the Traditional Gypsies I located individuals earning substantial incomes as large proprietors, owners of lorry fleets, owners of large markets, famous fortune tellers and several more. At the top of the Modern Roma sample I interviewed legislators, executive members, leaders in the public administration and socio-economic and political units and directors of Roma organisations. At the other end of the occupational spectrum I identified Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma earning a living from a combination of semi-nomadic scrap-metal collecting, seasonal work, state benefits, illegal activities or scavenging in the municipal rubbish tips.

Secondly, the data showed that between these horizontal levels of occupation attainment there is considerable movement, taking place at various speeds and various lengths or in other words we observed intense social mobility in several directions. Again, to introduce a degree a structure in

this environment of multidirectional mobility, I selected six main social trajectories and through case studies I have described them in detail from the point of view of their direction, distance of social movement and observed the impact of the respective education attainment level upon their direction and speed. These six main social trajectories selected for closer analysis were the Type A: stable social trajectories of the Traditional Gypsies, Type B: stable social trajectories of the Modern Roma, Type C: ascending social trajectories of the Traditional Gypsies, Type D: ascending social trajectories of the Modern Roma, Type E: ethnic transition of the Traditional Gypsies towards the Modern Roma segment and Type F: downwards social trajectory of the Modern Roma. Each of these social trajectories were analysed with the aid of case studies and by bringing in the perspectives and views of the respondents' themselves.

Education attainment and its role

The main area of investigation covered by my research has focussed on the role of education in facilitating the Roma social mobility. As mentioned elsewhere, the generally held view is that Roma are sceptical about the role of education and that a prolonged exposure to compulsory settled-style formal education and the ensuing discriminatory practices within the classroom environment have contributed to an alienation of the Roma from both the institution and concept of formal modern education (Liégeois 1998). My own expectation was that whilst Modern Roma operating in modern industrialised environments and exposed to *Gadje* norms and values would in general find school attendance a beneficial experience, likely to impact positively on their career progression and standards of living. By contrast, I anticipated that Traditional Gypsies who earn a living from traditional methods of manufacturing and production and who negotiate their working relationships via informal, unlettered agreements would consider the formal schooling as an alienating experience both from the perspective of its practical benefits and from the point of view of the discrimination practices they would be subjected in school.

On the first assumption, my research found that school is generally held in high esteem by members of the Roma community from both ethnic segments and that among my samples of respondents, allegations of discriminatory practices were rare. Traditional Gypsies of various ages and positioned on all levels of the occupational schemas intimated that they perceived the

education process as an enlightening and empowering experiences and that they all intended to send their children to school. None of the respondents interviewed and observed by me expressed a doubt about the relevance of formal education or retrospectively wished that they did not attend the number of years of formal school they had done. Naturally, these responses might reflect a combination of deferential behaviour towards me, the researcher who was at the time enjoying their hospitality and whom they might not have wished to offend through an outright discounting of the topic of my research as irrelevant to their lives. Triangulation allowed me however to confirm that their stated respect for education was actually genuine: their children were indeed encouraged to attend school¹ and in some instances adult Traditional Gypsies have paid for private tuition (W1, T2 interviews) or returned to evening classes (T1, T3 interviews) so that they can complete their elementary studies.

Under the same topic, in only two instances I have heard allegations of discrimination at school. Significantly, the two respondents who alleged discriminatory practices on account of their ethnic background were young Modern Rroma whose school experiences took place in the post-revolution Romania, when the incidents of racially aggravated attacks and discrimination in the work places have increased dramatically. Most of the respondents from my sample however were explicit in reassuring me that they have never felt discriminated against and that they have not witnessed ethnic discrimination against their fellow Rroma in the classroom. Again, the fact that my small sample of respondents reported that they were not subjected to ethnic discrimination is not a confirmation that such discriminatory practices do not occur elsewhere but it is nonetheless significant that most of respondents clarified that their teachers were actually supportive and encouraging towards them and the other Rroma pupils.

However, despite the generally accepted view of the role of education and the expression of an abstract preference for it, there appeared to be however a clear gap between these stated expressions of interest and the reality of their educational attainment which appeared surprisingly low. The gap appeared to be more pronounced in the traditional segment where the highest educational level attained even by community leaders, *the Bulibashas*, was the secondary school

¹ On a couple of occasions, on rainy days, I was asked to give children a lift to the school in my car. See photographs and field notes: taking Rroma children of Patarat -Transylvania to school, May 2003

and an additional three or four years of vocational or adult education classes (in total twelve years of formal education).

An interesting aspect evidenced by my research was that in the current Romanian economic climate, the legislation stipulates the requirement of certificates proving a minimum of six to eight years of full time education. This requirement was introduced to ensure that applicants for driving licenses and commercial permits have a minimum of reading and writing skills and are thus able to access relevant publications and materials prepared by the government departments and regulating bodies. On one hand these requirements had an encouraging effect for Roma (and *Gadje*) who otherwise might have been reluctant to send their children to school. On the other hand however they had a negative impact on those Roma who in the process of earning a living through traditional occupations might require a driving license or professional permit and who at the time the legislation was introduced could not produce evidence of full time education.

The first category of Roma upon whom these legal requirements for school certificates had a negative impact upon their social mobility were those Roma individuals who began a process of ethnic transition and who in the process of shifting from traditional segment towards the modern segment have lost in the first instance their proficiency in a lucrative traditional Gypsy occupation and/or the niche that the respective occupation guaranteed. As such, members of *Neams* such as the *Caldarari* (coppersmiths), *Argintari* (silversmiths), *Fierari* (blacksmiths), *Fulgari* (dawn feathers collectors) found themselves on the fringes of the *Gadje* society without knowing anymore how to manufacture copper stills, tin buckets, silver jewellery and so forth. In addition, their departure from the hub of the traditional Neam removed the support the *Neam* might have been able to provide them with in normal circumstance and at the same time the opportunity to re-learn some of the old skills.

At the same time, some of these ethnically transient individuals have reached the *Gadje* society without the necessary prerequisites that would allow them to sustain themselves within their new environment let alone ascend socially. Specifically, whilst not necessarily illiterate, Roma in this category lacked the necessary education certificates, administrative know-how, social and cultural capital that would allow them to compete in the labour market with the *Gadje* or indeed

with other fellow Roma previously established and well rooted in the modern segment. Having undergone a longer process of ethnic transition, these latter Roma were by now occupying superior levels on the modern occupational schema, where living in modern block of flats and villas among the *Gadje* and were sending their children to the best universities.

Sometimes through their own volition and sometimes against their wishes, having undergone a process of ethnic transition from a traditional environment to a modern one, and without being equipped any longer for the former and not quite ready for the latter, these Roma ended up in a socio-economic no man's land or as 'doubly marginal', on the ethnic and socio-economic fringes of both societies and unable to sustain themselves in either of them. This is one of the most significant findings of my research, namely that the loss of proficiency in a traditional occupation and lack of versatility in the modern sector, especially lack of education, determined that these individuals were trapped into self-perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalisation.

At the other extremity of the ethnic spectrum, the absence of formal education and the subsequent certification, had also a negative impact upon the social trajectories of the Traditional Gypsies. Here, some of these Roma's ancestors had engaged for centuries in a symbiotic type of relationship with the *Gadje* and preserved a rich cultural heritage through the provision of services and goods necessary to the *Gadje* communities. Some of these services were provided on *ad-hoc*, temporary or seasonal basis and this suited the Roma's semi-nomadic lifestyle ideally: as soon as the demand for their services or goods would disappear, their *Shatras* would be free to pack and go on with their journeys (Chelcea 1944, Okely 1982, Cherata 1997).

Gradually, with the settling down of some of the *Shatras* and *Neams* on *Boyars*, monasteries and or villages communitarian lands the symbiotic nature continued unabated yet with a greater degree of interaction: the Gypsies would provide an on-going service or steady supply of products without which the *Gadje* society could not function. Stahl (1998) describes how Romanian villages in the Vrancea region of Moldavia, were so keen to attract itinerant artisans for vital services such as blacksmiths, wheel-makers, cauldron-makers, cobblers, potters, etc. that they were granting them the right to settle down in their village even when these artisans were in fact serving the neighbouring villages too (also Stahl 1980, Stahl 1991).

As such, Gypsies got increasingly involved in the community's daily activities including the obligatory collective work, taking part on the villages' councils and participating in the villages' celebrations (Stahl 1998, Lemon 2000). Stahl's study of the emergence, development and eventual disappearance of the communitarian Romanian villages gives us an excellent insight into the extent to which the Rroma were interacting with the Romanian villagers through providing services, settling disputes, marriages, etc.. Rroma's Kriss in particular are reminiscent of Stahl's descriptions of the selection and practices governing the rural Councils. Yet even when the Gypsies were allowed to take temporary or long term residence in the Romanian villages, racism and social capital would have ensured that such interactions took place from an unequal basis. Gypsies were always regarded as left-overs from the period of Tatar invasions (Stahl 1998) thus even when they interacted with the Romanian *rumins*² let alone with the free Romanians they would have had a lesser status in the respective communities. It is highly likely therefore that the even following the eventual emancipation of the Romanians and Rroma in light of the increasingly nonviable alternative of slavery (Panaiteescu 1941, Stahl 1998), these two ethnic groups would have started from an unequal basis³. This view is disputed however by Winstedt (1941) who disagrees with Panaiteescu's theory that Gypsies' proficiency in skills much needed by the rural settlements were a cause of their enslavement. Winstedt argues that since there is little evidence of these skills having been practiced elsewhere other than the Romanian Principalities the Gypsies' skills were in fact a result rather than a cause of their enslavement.

Regardless of the origins of the Gypsies' enslavement however, this symbiotic relationship involved various degrees of social interaction between Rroma and their host communities, it did not require Rroma to hold education diplomas and/or health and safety certificates whilst slowly but irreversibly, the *Gadje* society began to change and with its progress came a realisation that its development was due to a great extent to the positive role of mass education. The *Gadje* society therefore began to place an increasingly greater emphasis on the role of formal education and, inevitably, it began to assume that the society itself can no longer function in the absence of

² Peasants either tied or untied to a particular piece of land and who deliberately or involuntarily lost their freedom and thus acquired a social status located somewhere between the Serfs i.e. tied to the land and Slaves i.e. sellable separately from their former land. (Panaiteescu 1941, Giurescu & Giurescu 1975, Stahl 1980, Panaiteescu 1990)

³ See also Kogalniceanu 1891, Panaiteescu 1941, Chelcea 1944, Stahl 1998 and Acton 1993 for a wider discussion on the role of slavery in the Romanians' and Rroma's historical evolution.

a constant supply of education reinforcing its values and successful myths, etc. In turn, this created the expectancy from its own members as well as from external societies with whom it interacted, for evidence of adequate exposure to educational processes. After centuries of experiencing a quasi-autonomous living through exploiting a particular traditional skill or occupation, Roma found themselves handicapped by their lack of sufficient formal education and certificates.

At best, these Roma who previously could get by and earn a living through small scale manufacturing, crafts and artisanship found themselves unable to convert their family production units into legal enterprises due to their semi-literacy and/or lack of adequate certificates and paperwork. They were unable to apply for driving licenses, market-trader authorisations, passports and so forth and not being able to diversify or expand, their educational handicap resulted into social stagnation i.e. they were confined to the same small scale manufacturing and production processes based on the family unit and involving informal agreements. Newly opened areas of activity and entire markets where, through their proficiency in traditional skills and cultural characteristics, Roma would have been ideally equipped to penetrate and compete, were closed to them from the start.

To name but a few of such areas where Roma might have been successful actors, but where due to their lack of formal education and the necessary paperwork, the Roma were in effect prevented from playing an effective role in the formal education of their own communities and from undertaking social and community development work. My research found evidence that some Traditional Gypsies did succeed in occupying well paid positions in newly created areas of work such as community representation and promotion of the Roma cultural heritage but these were the very few with adequate literacy and numeracy skills gained through exposure to formal education and backed by supporting evidence. For the majority of Traditional Gypsies however, the Gypsies who for a multitude of reasons did not benefit from formal schooling, these areas of work were virtual no-go areas.

At worse however, some of these Roma were precluded from earning a living as brick-makers, animal breeders, agricultural produce dealers, food sellers, circus people, market-stall holders and all this was simply because they were either unable to read and write and complete the

necessary application forms, or could not present to the authorities the required evidence of their literacy and ability to operate safely in the commercial environment or did have sufficient disposable capital to bribe the authorities into obtaining these certificates. For some *Shatras*, the day to day survival consisted previously in a very delicate balance between a sporadic source of income and the daily and seasonal requirements of the community, a balancing act which became more difficult during the cold winter months and periods of commercial inactivity. The sudden introduction of administrative requirements for evidence of full time schooling have resulted for many in entire seasons of lost revenue with negative effects on the community's precarious resources and well being. The significant number of Traditional Gypsies I observed during my research still involved openly in commercial activities confirmed to me however that some Rroma have been able to bypass some of the needs for formal education whilst other Rroma were able to join together and create informal associations behind one *Neam* or *Familia* member with adequate documentation.

Another small sector of the Traditional Gypsy segment were those Rroma who able to gain access to restitutions of their bullions confiscated during the communist era and/or obtain reparations for their years of deportation and incarceration in the Trans-Dnestr mines, and with considerable capital resources available to them, were able to either return to formal education and secure belatedly the education certificates or alternatively resolved to hire educated *Gadje* professionals to act as accountants, counsellors or front names for their businesses. In some cases, I observed Traditional Gypsy business-men chauffeured around the counties not out of a desire to display their newly acquired wealth but because whilst they had sufficient resources to buy themselves cars, they did not have sufficient education to apply for a driving license.

The rest of the Rroma however who could not slip through the administrative net and/or find alternative means of earning a living through their traditional Gypsy occupations were faced by tougher and tougher choices such as earning a living from benefits, seeking the support of their families, entering illegal activities with further unfortunate consequences. Slowly but surely, the absence of formal education certificates and poor literacy skills ensured that they began a process of downwards social mobility and in the process of losing their traditional skills and with *Neams* networks stretched to the breaking point, they also began the journey of ethnic transition into the

lower echelons of the Modern Rroma where at least temporarily, their safety was provided by the state benefits, state hospitals, and state owned accommodation.

We have seen thus far that contrary to popular belief and general assumptions, formal education can bring about an ascending or stable social trajectory even for the Traditional Gypsies as it empowers them to expand their business, diversify their areas of operations or at minimum, enables them to carry on with earning a income from their small-scale family production unit in a legal context. Yes, through a variety of methods some Traditional Gypsies manage to avoid the need for minimum formal education and get by and maintain a traditional way of living and earning an income but their niche is dwindling rapidly. Some of them are increasingly reliant on alternative means of support including claiming state benefits and charitable projects which in turn could result in an accelerated ethnic transition process. The lack of minimal formal education can actually have a detrimental impact on the very ethnic identity that some of them tried to protect through avoiding the formal *Gadje* formal education establishments.

We have also seen that in the modern Rroma segment too, formal education can act as a social engine for the Modern Rroma and it brings about a greater versatility and competitiveness in the labour market. Modern Rroma live and work fully immersed in the *Gadje* society and as such, are expected to adhere and embrace the norms and values of the Romanian community including the need for formal education. Remnants of traditional symbiotic type relationships can be observed here too (flower sellers, music players, fortunetelling, scrap metal collection) and for this type of occupational attainment, a minimum educational level might just about suffice. To ensure long term social ascendance through business expansion and profile diversification one needs increased formal education qualifications. The lack of formal education can on the other hand place the individual in positions of vulnerability to adverse market circumstances.

Why then, in the light of such compelling evidence of the positive role formal education can play in facilitating social stability and ascendance, why then can we still observe such a gap between my respondent's expression of their abstract preference for education and their poor education attainment levels? Assuming that my respondents' statements of holding education in high esteem are accurate and that they reflect their genuine belief in the 'positive', 'enlightening' and

‘empowering’ role of formal education, why then do we observe a constantly low level of education attainment within both Rroma ethnic segments? What determined the extent to which some Rroma adults did go to school in their childhoods and what now determines the extent of their children participation in the formal educational process? Here the amount and type of data collected during the field research allows me to put forward a number of tentative propositions.

As we have seen, the argument that the ethnic discrimination in the school environment could prevent Rroma children’s participation ought to be further scrutinised before being universally accepted at least for the community cohorts who undertook full time education during the socialist years. Respondents dismissed discrimination and enforced segregation as the reason for their limited school participation. If anything, a different argument might be considered here, namely that in the past, obligatory schooling and over-commitment from the school cadres to involve the Rroma children in the educational process might have backfired with the Rroma children, traditionally keen and habituated with a relaxed and flexible environment. In the present however, the situation shows a different picture as some of the respondents did list ethnic discrimination as unattractive aspects of their schooling experience. Through triangulation and independent observation, I can confirm that indeed I have encountered several instances where educators of Rroma children manifested racism and ethnic discriminatory attitudes. Indeed on one instance a Romanian teacher explained in front of a Rroma predominant classroom that her suggestion for improving the life of Romanian Rroma would be mass deportation to a Pacific island. On the other hand however, I observed Romanian teachers encouraging Rroma pupils to be proud of their heritage and declare themselves as Rroma not Romanians⁴ though of course sincere and enthusiastic repudiation of racism can co-exist with continuing low expectations in education.

We have also seen that far from no longer considering the educated Rroma as true Rroma, the Gipsies from both Traditional and Modern segments appeared to be proud of their brethren’s academic achievements. What distinguished between a True Rroma and a ‘*Castaliu*’ was not the extent of his education rather, the way in which he carries on with his involvement with the

⁴ See field notes, tapes and photographs documenting the visit to the Ferentari neighbourhood School, Bucharest, March 2003

Shatra, the *Familia* and the *Neam*. Educational attainment *per se* does not alienate the Roma from their ethnic communities; on the contrary, the ethnic communities I have visited and investigated seemed proud to associate themselves with Gypsy success stories in the various education domains. I was often told that such and such famous writer, actor or professor were in fact Roma and this can also be taken as an indication that the argument that Roma fear the loss of their ethnic identity through education should have to be considered with caution.

My research revealed that adult Roma as well as the *Gadje* the world over do take the educational options for themselves and their children very seriously and that they weigh them in light of the perceived cost and benefit analysis. Roma adults and children evaluate the benefits of staying on in full time education and to a greater extent (the adults) and a lesser extent (the children) they are fully aware of the potential benefits they would be able to reap eventually from increasing their education levels. Adults in particular hold education in high esteem and fully understand the potential positive changes that might bring them in the future but they weigh them constantly against the costs they would have to incur in the present such as the financial resources they would have to divert from the daily costs of family living, the loss of labour their children might otherwise be able to provide to the household if not in education and the uncertainty of commensurate occupational attainment in the context of a highly competitive (and often discriminatory) *Gadje* economic arena where they observe *Gadje* being unable to exploit their education, to name a few.

This analysis often takes place in the absence of an accurate understanding of the speed and extent with which the *Gadje* economy and labour market are changing and the result is a postponement or suspension of the urgency for formal education. This failure to understand the changes taking place in the *Gadje* and the Roma societies and the subsequent relegation of the formal education to a lesser role, results in an exacerbated vulnerability for both of these two societies. By the time the social changes catches up with them, some Roma are often locked into a downwards social trajectory which they find very difficult to stabilise let alone to convert into an ascending one.

By contrast, we have seen many examples of Traditional Gypsies and Modern Roma who thoroughly understand that the societies are changing and school does play a greater and greater role and undertake measures to prepare themselves for the impact of these changes upon their lives and those of their children by changing along with the society. They pursue their own education and that of their children vigorously and invest time and divert resources to equipping themselves with adequate skills thus raising their formal education attainment levels. In turn their efforts protect them from adverse economic conditions, increase their versatility in the economic market and either ensure stable social trajectories or allows them to diversify and expand their areas where they can operate competitively with other Roma or with the *Gadje*.

For Roma children however such rational choices are more difficult to contemplate at an age when the prospect of far away benefits of the school are difficult to balance against current needs and preferences such as earning pocket money, being within their family environment, enjoying themselves in the outdoors. Some respondents reminisced to me that it wasn't that they did not enjoy school or that they were discriminated against, rather they simply enjoyed more being on the roads with their families, attending the village fetes with the tamed bears, being chased by police whilst running contraband or simply being at home with their friends. Naturally, in similar conditions and faced with the same options, the *Gadje* children too would chose freedom, fun and excitement over school routine, discipline and homework but to their advantage in latter lives, they did not have these options or the costs of pursuing them had been prohibitively higher.

Perversely, my research showed that the process of ethnic transition manifested through the loss of ethnic practices through enforced reliance on *Gadje* social structures is accelerated not delayed by the lack of sufficient formal education. The core of Roma/Gypsy traditional values and cultural heritage is being placed increasingly at risk by the growing inability of the custodians of Traditional Gypsy values and occupations to maintain their traditional way of life and in doing so, safeguarding a rich and diverse cultural heritage. This loss would have a detrimental impact for both the Roma and *Gadje* future generations, and in my opinion, sustained education programmes must be promoted and financed to avoid it. Otherwise put, 'if things have to stay the same, things will have to change.'⁵

⁵ Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, 1958