Racial Discrimination and Public Policies on Roma
The Case of Rumania
Minorities

- Ethnic/National (old, new etc.)
- Religious, sexual (gay, lesbian etc.)
- Linguistic, politic, local/regional
- Economic (very rich, very poor, agriculture, industry, incl. sex industry etc.)
- Other (like: tall/short, old, left-handed, stutters, homeless, AIDS/HIV positive, Alzheimer, prostitutes, prisoners, nomadic, people with glasses, terrorists, cannibals etc.)
Minorities

• **Disadvantaged** (Roma, homeless, drug addicts, AIDS/HIV positive, very poor, very short, prostitutes, convicts, old, sick etc.)

• **Advantaged/Dominant** (very rich, Chinese in S-E Asia, German speaking in Habsburg Empire etc.) – difference between *reality vs. perception* (e.g. Jews)

• **“Neuter”** (left-handed, bald people – sometime, brown eyed)
Decreasing levels of any public policy

- **Doctrine** (= theory, “philosophy”): on Roma, there are mainly two:
  1. *Social Inclusion Theory* (SIT) and/or
  2. *Racial Discrimination Theory* (RDT)

- **Strategy**
- **Master-plan** of measures (or action plan)
- **Programs** (sectorial: education, labor, health-care, housing, gender etc.)
- **Projects** – grassroots level, real people
Social Inclusion Theory (SIT)

- Originating in 18th Century (Enlightenment)
- Optimistic, progressive, dynamic
- Roma are considered as human beings, but …
- … they are supposed to be just “uncivilized”, because they were not able to benefit from the novelties of civilization (literacy, soap etc.)
- The goal is to transform Roma into full humans (= “civilized” human beings); as such, anyone (= local and central government) will need to act upon the following techniques:
Main Techniques

• Capturing the nomads and settling them down
• Disinfection, new dwellings, new clothes, ID cards, even new names; sometime, to use force is “required”
• Children and youth to be put into schools (any variety of SIT is viewing education as the key element); education not *per se*, but for best preparation to *work*
• Religion (Christianity, Islam), as a disciplinary ideology (Communism will do, too, in certain circumstances)
• In some extreme cases: take children from their natural parents and put them into foster (non-Roma) homes
• Adults: to be put to *work*, new and useful occupations (begging is not work); punishment for non-working
• Combating Roma’s “impulsive and irresponsible” hedonism through the example of an elite (propaganda)
History of SIT

18th Century (Enlightenment):
• Spain – kings Fernando VI and Carlos III (see July 1746, the arrest of all Gitanos etc.)
• Habsburg Empire – Maria Terezia and Joseph II (no “Gypsy”, but “Uj Magyar” etc.)

20th – 21st Century (Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Soviet Union etc.): Communism, Social-Democracy – following the Enlightenment paradigm; later on, the same with World Bank, European Commission, George Soros, Decade of Roma Inclusion, national strategies (incl. early 21st Century), COM recommendations (of 2011 and May 2013), academic experts etc.
In Rumania

- Transylvania: 18th Century
- Moldova and Walachia: mid-19th Century
- Neglect until 1942/1943 (Transdnistria) – 10% of Roma (= nomadic + 3 penal convictions = approx.. 25 K Roma)
- After 1948: sedentarisation, education, work (toward assimilation)
- After December 1989: national debate (Catalin Zamfir, Nicolae Gheorghe), Roma as a European issue, migration Westward (taboo issue), several Roma NGOs (community development and racial discrimination); local violence (villages)
- 2005: Decade of Roma Inclusion (until 2015)
- January 1st, 2007: Rumania became member of European Union
- 2013: Revision of the New Roma Strategy (duration: until 2020), in line with COM recommendations (May 2013)
History of RDT

• Romanticism of 19th Century (coming from J.-J. Rousseau’s theory of *le bon souvage*)

• Definitive essences, immutability (as prescribed by Romanipen): facts, history, costumes, customs, life-style, beliefs etc.

• “Roma issue” not as a problem of Roma themselves, but as a problem of racist non-Roma (= the all majorities of all populations, everywhere and anytime)

• Roma only as victims – never perpetrators; a few “taboo issues” (early marriages, status of women, domestic violence etc.)
RDT (continuation)

• For RDT believers, Roma were/are essentially an unpopular minority because of the “innate racism” of majorities; eradicate this racism, and Roma will be highly valued everywhere for their (mostly innate) talents (dance, music, business, life-styles, craftsmanship etc.)

• Currently, the lack of Roma self-esteem is caused by a widespread stigmata (stimă vs. stigmă, in Rumanian), causing lots of trouble for Roma (from national censuses to political representation at local and central levels)
Conclusion

- **Diversity** – as a mixed blessing *and* a curse; human capital issues in ethnically and culturally diverse local/regional communities (cf. Robert D. Putnam, *E Pluribus Unum*, 2007)
- Roma rights *and* Human rights. And the law (local, national, European etc.); limits of tolerance & Co.
- On prejudices/stereotypes: are they only wrong perceptions of reality *or*, sometime, real “statistical truths” (cf. Aristotle – the individual as the intersection of several generalities …)
- Effects of certain public policies (RDT and SIT): the dangers of *apartheid* (= separate development) and of *assimilation*
The Way Forward

• Importance of the report between a. the majority of the population (i.e.: practically, its democratically elected representatives, in local and central administration) and b. an unpopular ethnic minority (Roma)

• No sustainability of any project/strategy/public policy without the real participation of a. Roma themselves (including Roma NGOs, traditional leaders, elected Roma representatives etc.) and b. the authorities (especially at local/regional level, as elected representatives of the majority).