

Are Roma losing their roots? Traditional and non-traditional Roma occupations in two large communities in Romania: Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca

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Abstract

In Romania, one of the countries with the largest Roma community in Europe, the gap between the majority population and the Roma minority continues to be wide. The paper explores whether there is a sustainability of traditional Roma occupations and crafts or whether we are witnessing a continuous occupational dynamic. The objective of the research is to identify the patterns of traditional and non-traditional economic activities practised in Roma communities in two cities: Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca. The research hypothesis investigates whether there is a wide range of economic activities in analyzed Roma communities, where traditional activities tend to have a negligible share and dynamics compared to non-traditional ones. Also, we analyze whether traditional activities remain relevant in Roma communities and whether they represent a significant occupational resource in the case of external migration. The following statistical hypotheses are presented: there are significant differences between members of Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca. These are observed in the choice of practising non-traditional-traditional economic activities in the country. There are significant differences between members of Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca in the practice of traditional versus non-traditional occupations according to ethnic subgroup membership.

Keywords: Roma, community, labour, ethnicity, Romania

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1. Introduction

The objective of the paper is to identify patterns of (non-) traditional economic activities within the Roma minority in the municipalities of Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca, while considering the context of identity dynamics. Romania's developmental landscape demonstrates a dual pattern characterized by significant regional disparities. Notably, Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca emerge as growth poles exhibiting pronounced development compared to other Romanian regions. The research question is whether "Within Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca, non-traditional economic activities significantly outweigh traditional ones". The research inquiry recognizes the diverse nature of economic Roma practices, with a particular emphasis on the prevalence of non-traditional activities. The examination of social ties, identity dynamics, and regional contexts, as explained by Vacca et al. (2021) in their network analysis of Romanian Roma in France, furnishes pertinent background for comprehending these patterns.

As to originality, an understanding of traditional and non-traditional economic activities as a vector of social integration impacts on the reduction of disparities between the Roma community and the mainstream population. Roma crafts take on

an entrepreneurial character (for a formal definition see section 3: "Entrepreneurship and traditional crafts") that demonstrates access to a better living standard. This study also brings as a novelty an internal economic analysis of the Roma nations in the two cities from traditional and non-traditional occupations perspective. The originality of the work is the novel comparative analysis of the two municipalities as Roma people. Formal and non-formal leaders consider that there are about 6,000–6,500 Roma people living in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca. Most live in compact communities on the outskirts of the municipality. The most numerous Roma community is Pata Rât made up of four communities, namely: Dallas, Cantonului, Coastei and Rampa (Dohotaru et al., 2016). We also find a significant number of Roma dispersed among the majority population. The Roma groups that we find in Cluj-Napoca are lute-players, Gaborans, cowboys, goldsmiths, spouses, florists and spoon-makers. Of these, the gossips, the spoonsmiths, the florists and the milkmen practise traditional trades.

The Roma of the Pata Rât community collect recyclable waste from the rubbish dump where they are settled. The Roma Gaborans, the Fiddlers and the Florists live in Cluj-Napoca and the

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Roma spoon-makers in the surrounding area. Among the Roma Gaborans, in addition to the men's processing of metal, the women also trade in second-hand clothes. The Roma lute sing at various events, both Roma and mixed. The Roma florists have flower stalls in the markets. The lingurists live in the rural areas, where they also get their raw materials, but sell their products in urban areas.

According to 2011 population and housing census, 2,145 Roma people were registered in Timișoara. The current number of Roma in the municipality is unknown. As in other cities, we have compact Roma communities such as Kunz with 164 households, the Roma community of the Ștrand colony, the Roma community of Freidorf and the Roma community of Fratelia. Some Roma are dispersed among the majority population. The Roma nations living in Timișoara are the Caldera family, the Pițuleti family (from Hunedoara), the Gaboran family, the Ghipter family (German Gypsies, Circassians living on Slavic Street), the Geamba family, the Lute family and the Boy family. Of these, the lute-players and the Gypsies practise traditional crafts. There are some families of Roma Gaboran who practise their trade abroad. The sedentarization of the Roma ethnic minority, the lack of market demand for traditional Roma products and industrialization have been factors that have led to the non-practice of traditional crafts.

Roma have been forced to access unskilled jobs and often accept unattractive wages. Roma, even if they have kept the name given to their nations by the occupation they used to practise in the past, no longer take up traditional trades. They have had access to non-traditional, modern jobs. Those Roma people who fulfil an education level required for (re)qualification have obtained a diploma, but the rest work mainly in unskilled jobs. Traditional crafts are passed down in the family, from generation to generation. They are an essential component of the collective identity that characterizes each ethnic nation, giving it a specific, distinctive cultural profile (Otovescu, 2017). The Gaboran Roma have small workshops where they work with sheet metal and for which they obtain their raw materials from the trade. The children of the Roma lute players are taught to play musical instruments from an early age. Florists usually identify their own customers or are recommended for their products. The ingot makers have the biggest problem in getting raw material and end up stealing wood from the forest because they are unable to buy it.

As traditional subsistence, manufacturing and untaxed trades, Roma people who practise these trades confront difficult access to raw materials and the market. This has led to the restriction and decline of traditional crafts. In European countries, we are witnessing the same phenomenon of the decline to the point of disappearance of traditional crafts. Teichmann (2002) shows that the Roma community is organized by Roma nations according to the traditional occupations practised. He classifies traditional Roma occupations into three categories: craft occupations (metalworking and woodworking), commercial occupations (horse trading) and entertainment occupations (bear-taming by bear-herders, musicians by lute-players). The author does not specify which trades are still practised (Teichmann, 2002).

If we look at the Roma in European countries, we see that they have given up their traditional crafts. Bulgarian Roma used to practice old trades which is not the case nowadays (Marușiakova & Popov, 2000). The practice of traditional trades by Gypsies and Travellers is in major decline (Mulcahy et al., 2017). A qualitative Romania-Serbia border study on social construction of otherness in a multi-ethnic rural area challenged the hypothesis of socially mixed communities as a solution to Roma marginalization (Crețan et al., 2023, pp. 14–15). On the other hand, a Roma study in Hungarian Szeged pointed out that social institutions should better integrate the social capital aspects such as the interpersonal relationship between the middle class and the underclass Roma (Mereine Berki et al., 2017). Relatively little has been written

about traditional Roma crafts (Cace, 2002; Stănescu, 2013b; Vasile, 2016) probably because in European countries these are no longer practised and in Romania there are few Roma people who still practise it.

2. Theoretical framework

The sustainability of traditional crafts needs to be examined in the context of industrialization and globalization. After the displacement, many Roma families in communist Romania had to give up traditional occupations in favour of non-traditional ones with the sedentarization and forced labour integration. Romanian socialist industrialization produced a quick disqualification of the Roma generation since then and consequently broke the transmission circle of traditional crafts to new generations. The low educational level of Roma impacts their chances to obtain a formal job and support both self-employment and informal work (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993) as day-to-day survival strategies. The Roma had to learn non-traditional trades as they could no longer find a market for their products and services. Some attended arts and crafts schools, others were qualified on the job or after Romania's accession to the European Union as they were qualified and retrained with the support of projects implemented through European funds. These non-traditional crafts were in services and trade, construction, and automotive trades (Cace et al., 2010). Traditional trades were less inter-generationally passed on (Mărginean, 2001; Berevoescu et al., 2002). The post-communism situation of Roma was challenged by both the collapse of cooperative farms and a failure to qualify for land restitution (Crețan & Turnock, 2008).

Other factors preventing Roma access to the formal labour market are: lack of incentives and supporting networks; educational disadvantages and lack of skills; low mobility; the informal labour market, and the circle of discrimination. Roma expectations to confront further discrimination when searching for a job prevent them from learning new working skills which strength their negative perception on behalf of employers (Cace, 2007). On the other hand, labour Roma discrimination confronts a vicious circle hard to deconstruct: the lack of a job leads to lack of a house which it is a barrier in accessing the formal labour market or various public services (Mihaiu, 2023). Ethnic intolerance is supported by low education levels and diffuse perception of an anomic society rather than poverty. Relatively developed rural areas with low ethnic diversity seem to represent suitable social spaces in this respect (Sandu, 2005).

The lack of qualifications for a modern job requested by the market exposes Roma to social exclusion (Preda, 2000). Besides, lack of official papers such as birth certificate or ID card (*buletin*) generates obstacles in accessing a formal job (Burtea, 2000). Lower Roma participation to education is characterized by higher incidence of uneducated people, school dropout in early education, and elderly illiteracy mainly due to economic precarious conditions, cultural factors and isolation (Surdu, 2002). Little evidence is available on how the poorest Roma sections (Crețan & Turnock, 2008) benefitted from progress in implementing educational programs.

Roma people in Romania present the highest risk of extreme poverty compared to other ethnic groups, mainly in urban area (Stănculescu, 2004). Comparative 1992 and 1998 Roma surveys with statistically representative samples, pointed out a decrease of the ones without a job: 77% in 1992 compared to 52% in 1998. The Roma population following traditional crafts increased from 7.2% in 1992 to 10.3% in 1998, while Roma with modern jobs doubled: from 15.7% in 1992 to 37.7% in 1998 (Cace, 2002). Qualitative exploratory research carried out on conflicts in a Roma – Romanian ghetto (Zăbrăuți) from the District 5 of Bucharest

pointed out work-related stereotypes: the good Roma neighbours (stable and formal incomes) and the bad ones (occasional and informal incomes) (Preda & Rughiniş, 1998). Taking into account homogeneous Roma communities compared with dispersed ones, there are less employees, more unemployed people and more self-employment business in the first category (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993).

Self-declared Roma nations within the first Roma quantitative research conducted after 1989 in Romania, emphasized a total of 28 categories. A further analysis based on Roma experts' descriptions concluded to a 13 nations condensate list (Burtea, 1994). Roma nations in Romania are to be analyzed through their self-classifications and are based on marriages among each nation, as alliances focus on preserving traditions as horizontal communities' solidarities (Mihăilescu, 2014). The Roma nations the article is focused on are: *Vătraşi/kaştalii/Băieşi* – romi thanesco, *Gabori, Lăutari, Căldăraşi, Lingurari, Aurari, Florari* and *Spoitori*.

Traditional Roma crafts correspond to their labour historical legacy, mostly related to their nations. As characteristics no formal training framework is requested and they are inter-generationally passed down (Cace, 2002; Fleck, 2008). According to the 1998 survey, this is mainly the case of *lăutari, căldărari, ferari, cărămidari* and *spoitori* (Cace, 2002, p. 162). Work as a successful life strategy is not necessarily perceived by Roma as linked with a higher educational level compared with having money or luck (Surdu, 2002). A qualitative study conducted in 15 Roma communities pointed out that traditional crafts represent a survival solution adopted due to post-communist economic recession. The identified crafts were manufacturing of boilers and bricks, as well as violins (*lăutăria*) (Voicu & Precupeţu, 2007).

In this article, we take into consideration the definition of a Roma traditional craft as involving a technological process, of the transformation of raw material into a finished product, it involves skills and competences, it requires the existence of specific work tools. Also, the traditional craft is an old job and has an innovative character. The 1993 Roma survey shows a higher number of employees in large cities compared with smaller ones and rural areas, where Roma unemployment is higher (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993). The 1998 urban-rural comparison shows a higher percent of traditional crafts in rural areas compared with modern jobs in urban ones (Cace, 2002). From the gender perspective, women are less represented in the labour market in terms of both traditional crafts and modern jobs, as they are mainly running the households (Cace, 2002; Fleck, 2008).

Entrepreneurship in early post-communist Romania has involved social innovation due to the new situation – the economic role to be learned within an unfavourable environment. In rural areas this also involved the ability of taking a risk (Sandu, 1999). Besides, social entrepreneurship implies human resources searching for solutions to various social problems (Vlăsceanu, 2010). Profiles of Romanian entrepreneurs envisaged a more hostile economic environment for start-up comparative with other EU member states (Stănescu, 2013a). Still, social economy represents a sustainable solution to labour insertion of Roma, especially by revitalizing their traditional crafts (Alexandrescu, 2013).

3. Entrepreneurship and traditional crafts

Entrepreneurship involves individuals initiating and managing businesses, engaging in formal entrepreneurship training, and contributing to economic development through traditional and self-employment (emphasizes individuals taking the initiative to work for themselves). Roma entrepreneurship spans a range of activities, including traditional crafts, informal trading, and efforts to address barriers to equal participation. Many Roma have historically practised traditional crafts, passing down skills through generations, contributing to the cultural and economic identity of

the community. Some engage in the informal economy through activities like itinerant trading, street vending, or recycling, providing a means of survival in the absence of formal employment opportunities. Roma entrepreneurship involves overcoming challenges such as discrimination, limited access to education and resources, and prejudices. Recent initiatives, including social enterprises, vocational training programs, and support for small businesses, aim to empower the Roma economically and break down employment barriers. As an example, the Roma from the Zabala-Pava community, especially the best-off Roma in Pava, have engaged in self-employment activities that have enabled them to become entrepreneurs. The number of social benefits received consequently decreased (Veres, 2023).

Since the 20th century, folk crafts are called traditional, being located with predilection in the world of villages and being transmitted from one generation to another orally, for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and the secrets of the trade (Bucur, 2012). The historical evolution of the Roma community in Eastern Europe, especially during the communist era, involved forced settlement and integration into the labour market (Flašíková-Beňová et al., 2011; Zamfir, 2013). The collapse of communism led to the adoption of pro-market policies, significantly altering their occupational landscape towards non-traditional vocations like construction and electrical work. Market-oriented reforms resulted in job loss and chronic poverty, however, marginalizing Roma from broader societal prosperity. Despite educational opportunities, such as attending vocational schools, historical patterns persisted with a reliance on economically marginal pursuits like agriculture and animal husbandry. The Roma community, particularly those outside traditional settlements, engaged in non-traditional trades like waste collection and recycling, reflecting contemporary economic marginalization. This spatial segregation aligns with scholarly perspectives, underscoring the enduring challenges faced by the Roma in achieving equitable participation in broader socio-economic structures (Dohotaru et al., 2016). Besides, their segregation in ghettos exposes them to higher epidemic risks (Berescu et al., 2021).

The Eastern Europe Roma economic activities encompass diverse temporary engagements, notably the harvesting of forest fruits and medicinal plants. This seasonal pursuit involves a substantial number of Roma individuals who establish improvised encampments in mountainous regions during the harvest season, undertaking transnational migrations to Spain and France for mushroom picking, and subsequently returning to Romania by winter each year. The conventional temporality associated with waste collection and forest fruit picking, could be regarded as traditional jobs (Cace et al., 2010). Contrary to the assertion of traditionality, certain economic activities, such as the sale of sunflower seeds and sugar-based sweets, are no longer prevalent. In contrast, non-traditional trades are acquired through arts and trades schools or qualification and retraining courses, often funded by European funds. Despite obtaining qualifications through these endeavours, a considerable segment of the Roma population remains engaged in unskilled and seasonal labour, both domestically and abroad, particularly in agriculture, where individuals frequently hold fixed-term contracts and possess low educational attainment.

Our work emphasizes the influence of historical factors on the mindset of many Roma individuals, shaping a focus on immediate financial needs without long-term planning. Poverty is pervasive across the entire Roma population, affecting them collectively rather than specific nations. Discrimination against Roma in non-traditional jobs is acknowledged, with instances of bias in employment announcements and face-to-face interviews. A 2023 Romanian survey shows that 31 percent of respondents have confronted discrimination in the last 12 months while job searching, due to their Roma ethnic minority (Mihaiu, 2023).

Over the past two decades, a substantial decline in the socio-economic status of the Roma minority has been observed, characterized by deteriorating living standards and a population increase. In contrast to other minorities in Romania, such as Hungarians, Germans, and Jews, the Roma have encountered difficulties in labour integration. Among influencing factors, we mention the state of the national economy, low education levels, lack of requisite qualifications, and involvement in traditional occupations (Stoian, 2012; Preoteasa, 2011; Dincă, 2012). Similar challenges are reported in Bulgaria (Tomova, 2009).

In the analysis by Lakatoş-Iancu's (2020), the intrinsic link between Roma spiritual values and linguistic, musical, and cultural expressions is delineated. This connection encompasses the Romani language, music, rituals, and traditional crafts. Traditional occupations, although currently holding a smaller share compared to non-traditional ones, play a crucial role in preserving the cultural identity of the Roma community. These trades, passed down across generations without formal certification, include tin processing by the Gabori nation, woodworking by the spooning nation, brass processing by the spoitori nation, and flower selling. Some traditional crafts, such as sheet metal processing by the Gabor nation, exhibit seasonality, while others are practised throughout the year.

The Roma organizational structure in Romania is based on Roma nations named after historically practised occupations. These crafts, rooted in the period of slavery, have adapted over time to meet subsistence needs and respond to evolving market demands. The impact of social-communist industrialization and forced sedentarization, lead to a narrowing of the market for traditional trades and taxation for certain practitioners (Burtea, 2000). Consequently, some Roma nations shifted to trading or established businesses in sectors ranging from automobiles to clothing.

Despite being one of the most numerous ethnic minorities in Romania, the Roma population faces marked disparities on the periphery of society. The 2011 Census reported 621,573 individuals of Roma ethnicity, the highest figure in successive censuses. The current number remains uncertain, estimated at a few million by Roma non-governmental organizations and community leaders. Burtea (2000) underscores the organizational structure, highlighting the naming of nations based on predominant occupations practised within each nation. Traditional crafts, crucial for income and familial bonds, remain within specific Roma nations, not crossing between them (Achim, 1998). These trades, like spoon making, goldsmithing, and floristry, vary across Roma communities. Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca are central locations for these occupations.

Despite extensive discourse on the Roma community, there is a lack of comprehensive insights into their traditional trades. Toma and Foszto delve into historical Roma occupations in Transylvania (16th–18th centuries), including executioners and jailers, situating Roma on society's periphery (Toma & Foszto, 2011). A similar study focusses on Roma's crafts involvement, emphasizing their role as a "factor of wealth for the country" (Achim, 1998).

Post-emancipation, after over five centuries of slavery, the Roma underwent a complex process leading to freedom, dividing into sedentary and nomadic groups. Despite contributing to various crafts, the majority face poverty in marginalized communities, with limited access to public services, especially education (Zoon, 2001, p. 54). Education proves pivotal for Roma social mobility, challenged by monocultural education systems in Europe limiting institutional representation from local to central levels (Lambrev, 2015).

At the European level, Roma represents perennial outsiders, and their constant and severe stigmatization is to be understood by analyzing their long-standing processes of disidentification and stigmatization (Powell & Level, 2017). In Romania, the Roma situation mirrors that of Europe, covering lifestyle, education,

culture, and living standards. A qualitative study conducted in Timișoara, pointed out that new right political actions have exposed both poor and wealthy Roma to stigmatization (Crețan & O'Brien, 2019).

Post-emancipation, many initially pursued traditional trades, but industrialization made these obsolete. New occupations, like floristry, emerged, and certain traditional trades persisted, marked by distinct identities and practices. Identified through language and cultural markers, these traditional Roma groups endure, some practising abroad (Cousin et al., 2020). Romanian and Bulgarian Roma living in shantytowns in the Parisian metropolitan area highlighting the networks between individuals, as well as their attitudes, skills, and behaviour (PCT2). Uneven distribution aligns with specific regions practising traditional trades (Sala, 2005).

Abandonment of traditional trades is attributed to factors like sedentarization, reduced demand, and industrialization, leading many to low-paying unskilled jobs. Some Roma still retain occupational names, but the transmission of traditional trades within families has declined. Education facilitates qualification, while others are left with unskilled positions (Kiss et al., 2009).

Across Europe, there is a noticeable decrease, if not extinction, of traditional Roma trades, categorized by Teichmann (2002) into crafts, commercial, and entertainment professions. In Great Britain, a significant decline in traditional trades among Gypsy and Traveller communities was registered (Mulcahy et al., 2017). Evidence from other European countries, including Bulgaria, suggests even the disappearance of these crafts (Marušiaková & Popov, 2000).

4. Research design

The municipality of Timișoara is located in Timiș county, being the county seat. In the 2011 census, 2,145 people declared themselves as belonging to the Roma ethnic minority. The large and compact Roma communities in Timișoara are: the Kunz community (where there are 164 households); the Strand colony community; the Freidorf community; and the Fratelia community. The rest of the Roma are dispersed and living in privately owned or rented housing. Cluj-Napoca is the county seat of Cluj County. Roma leaders declare that the number of Roma in Cluj-Napoca amounts to approximately 6,000–6,500. Access to the respondents in the community was facilitated by the informal leaders. Besides, one author is of Roma ethnicity with relevant advocacy and research activities carried out in these two communities.

We used a non-probability random sampling. Respondents were selected by the snowball method with a total of 214 respondents interviewed. To increase the quality of the sample, several variables were introduced such as gender, age and location of the respondent, and the principle of proportionality was ensured:

- 55.1% of the participants are from Cluj-Napoca and 44.9% from Timișoara;
- Women 49.1% (105), Men 50.9% (109);
- Age: 16–25 years (23.8%), 25–45 years (51.4%), 46–65 years (20.6%), over 65 years (4.2%);
- The average age is 37.7 years.

Considering the education level, a diversified sample was envisaged, ensuring the participation of the entire Roma social spectrum: 26.2% with 4 completed classes, 29.4% with 8 completed classes, 6.1% with vocational school, 22.9% with high school education, 13.6% with a higher education.

The goal of the paper is to identify the patterns of (non-) traditional economic activities practiced in Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca Roma communities in the context of identity dynamics. Specific objectives were defined as follows:

- To identify the traditional/non-traditional socio-economic activities practised according to their nation; and
- To identify the degree of integration of Roma in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca from an identity, cultural and economic perspective.

The hypothesis maintains a focus on economic activities while acknowledging the importance of social ties and intergenerational transmission of traditional crafts. Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca exhibit distinct patterns in their engagement with non-traditional economic activities compared to traditional crafts. The hypothesis suggests a notable correlation between the inclination of Roma members in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca to pursue lucrative and rewarding occupations abroad within stigmatized migrant minorities, particularly in the context of seeking economic opportunities. The hypothesis posits substantial disparities among Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca's Roma community members concerning the adoption of traditional versus non-traditional occupations.

The main research hypothesis is that in the Roma communities of Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca there is a wide range of economic activities in which the traditional ones tend to have an insignificant share and dynamics compared to the non-traditional ones. Among the specific hypotheses we mention:

- Non-traditional socio-economic activities are found to a high extent in Roma communities due to the fact that community members have interacted with other Roma communities during external migration;
- Traditional activities remain relevant in Roma communities today since they represent a significant occupational resource in case of external migration.

Statistical assumptions of the paper include:

- There are significant differences between members of Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj Napoca in the choice of practising non-traditional economic activities – traditional in the country;
- There is a significant link between the willingness of members of Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca to seek a satisfying income-generating occupation abroad; and
- There are significant differences between members of Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj Napoca in the practice of traditional versus non-traditional types of occupations, according to ethnic subgroup membership.

The research hypotheses align with Vacca et al. (2021) network analysis on Romanian Roma, emphasizing the significance of intergenerational transmission and diversity in social ties within stigmatized migrant minorities. In terms of international (post) communist migration of Olteni (people from the southeast part of Romania) in the region of Banat (where Timișoara is situated), the acceptance of new arrivals did not exempt their exclusion, discrimination, marginalization and even local stigmatization (O'Brien et al., 2023).

5. Results

Most Roma research ethnically delimit them from the rest of population, but the present research wants to draw on the internal boundaries of the community based on measurable identity elements (especially clothes and language). Three dimensions have been identified: belonging to the “lineage”, assumptions of visual identity elements, and belonging to linguistic identity. Based on the processing of these variables, their identity was created from which the collected data were analyzed. In Roma studies, they are approached differentially, historically, by occupation or location for example i) the lutenists – musicians by profession; ii) Spoon-makers – producers of wooden handicrafts; iii) Gaborans – the

Transylvanian Roma, recognized by their large black hats. In this article we propose to organize the nations along an identity continuum based on a statistical synthesis of identity elements. The following Roma categories were identified, of which 16.8% can no longer identify their belonging (see Tab. 1).

From the perspective of visual identity, the assumed elements specific to Roma culture were inventoried. Thus, only 32.7% adopt at least one visual identity element. The three most common visual elements are wide skirts (27.6%), beanies (22.4%) and hats (21.5%). Overall, female-specific visual identity elements are more frequently used than male-specific ones, as jewellery is common to both sexes. From a linguistic identity perspective two dimensions were considered: speaking the language and learning it in the family. 45.3% speak the Romani language, 43.5% learned it from family, the rest from school or groups of friends. The role of the family in maintaining linguistic identity is thus essential and public policies to support the preservation of identity must be built on this basis (Fig. 1).

52.3% have no assumed identity elements generating a sample average of 1.05. The rest of the sample have at least one or two identity elements (15.5%) – see Table 2.

Eliminating those with 0 identifiers generates a sample mean of 2.2. The main mean values are 1 (31 cases) and 3 (20 cases). The validity of the explanatory model of their identity is supported by the statistical analyses carried out. Relating the total identity mean to the Roma people produced a continuum on a scale of Roma people grouped into four summary categories:

- The situation of the cases who do not know which nation they belong to having marginal values of the total identity mean;
- The category of Vatrasi, bullionists with a predominantly superficial “light” identity;
- The category of milkmen, florists and others (they did not indicate their lineage but have a clear average total identity) – average/coarse identity; and
- Goldsmiths, caldarași, Gaborans and spoitori with strong identity backgrounds – conservative category.

What kind of Roma are you?	Frequency	%
0. I don't know	36	16.8
1. Vătrași/Caștali/Băieși	39	18.2
2. Spoon-makers	13	6.1
3. Fiddlers	35	16.4
4. Florists	24	11.2
5. Other	6	2.8
6. Goldsmiths	13	6.1
7. Căldărași	12	5.6
8. Gaborans	23	10.7
9. Spoitori	13	6.1
Total	214	100

Tab. 1: Self-identification of Roma people
Source: authors' survey

Average total identity	Frequency	Share (%)	Cumulative (%)
0.0	112	52.3	52.3
0.5	6	2.8	55.1
1.0	31	14.5	69.6
1.5	6	2.8	72.4
2.0	6	2.8	75.2
2.5	13	6.1	81.3
3.0	20	9.3	90.7
3.5	10	4.7	95.3
4.0	8	3.7	99.1
4.5	1	0.5	99.5
5.0	1	0.5	100.0
Total	214	100.0	

Tab. 2: Distribution of the average total identity
Source: authors' survey

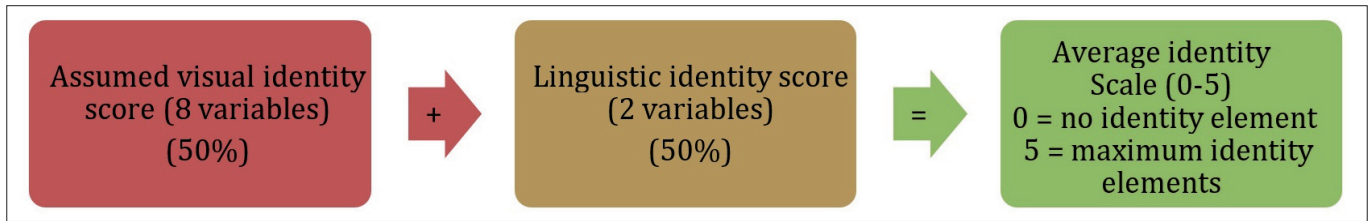


Fig. 1: Synthetic indicator of total identity average
Source: authors' conceptualization

Category	Score of average identity											Total
	0	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	
	Share of people (%)											
0. I don't know	86.1		5.6	2.8	5.6							100
1. Vătrași/ Caștalii/ Băieși	79.5	10.3	5.1	5.1								100
2. Spoon-makers	84.6		7.7		7.7							100
3. Fiddlers	54.3	2.9	37.1	2.9				2.9				100
4. Florists	45.8	4.2	41.7	4.2		4.2						100
5. Other	50.0					33.3	16.7					100
6. Goldsmiths	30.8		7.7			15.4	15.4	30.8				100
7. Căldărași	16.7		16.7		25.0	16.7	25.0					100
8. Gaborans				4.3		26.1	60.9	4.3			4.3	100
9. Spoitori								30.8	61.5	7.7		100
Total	52.3	2.8	14.5	2.8	2.8	6.1	9.3	4.7	3.7	0.5	0.5	100

Tab. 3: Average identity by Roma families
Source: authors' survey

Category	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Min.	Max.
0. I don't know	36	0.208	0.553	0.0	2.0
1. Vătrași/Caștalii/Băieși	39	0.179	0.405	0.0	1.5
2. Spoon-makers	13	0.231	0.599	0.0	2.0
3. Fiddlers	35	0.529	0.727	0.0	3.5
4. Florists	24	0.604	0.659	0.0	2.5
5. Other	6	1.333	1.472	0.0	3.0
6. Goldsmiths	13	2.000	1.541	0.0	3.5
7. Căldărași	12	1.833	1.094	0.0	3.0
8. Gaborans	23	2.913	0.596	1.5	5.0
9. Spoitori	13	3.885	0.299	3.5	4.5
Total	214	1.047	1.358	0.0	5.0

Tab. 4: Descriptive statistics
Source: authors' calculations

Total identity average	Sum of squares	df	Average of squares	F	Sig.
Between groups	281.930	9	31.326	57.778	0.000
Within the group	110.603	204	0.542		
Total	392.533	213			

Tab. 5: ANOVA Test
Source: authors' calculations

Statistically, there is a strong positive correlation between the respondent's position on the lineage continuum and the overall identity mean (Spearman's rho = 0.706**). Thus, those who do not know which Roma people they belong to have predominantly no or low identity means and the higher the position on the nation scale, the higher the percentage of respondents with high identity means (Tab. 3).

The analysis of the identity environments for each nation indicates variations between nations (Tab. 4). The model indicates statistically significant differences in means by running the ANOVA variance test so that belonging to a certain nation is associated with differences regarding the total identity mean (Tab. 5). A synthesis of the main nations was made into four distinct categories as in the following table (Tab. 6).

Category	Frequency	Class
0. I don't know	36	Don't know
1. Vătrași/Caștalii/Băieși	39	Superficial identity class
2. Spoon-makers	13	Light
3. Fiddlers	35	Moderate identity class
4. Florists	24	Coagulated
5. Other	6	
6. Goldsmiths	13	Conservative identity class
7. Căldărași	12	
8. Gaborans	23	
9. Spoitori	13	
Total	214	

Tab. 6: Descriptive statistics
Source: authors' calculations

Participation in economic life by identity class indicates a higher share of employment among the class that does not know identity, light or with coagulated identity (over 50%). Among the conservative class entrepreneurship is dominant (57%), see Fig. 2.

Participation in mainstream economic life by traditional or non-traditional identity class indicates (Fig. 3):

- An overwhelming share of non-traditional activities within the non-identity class;
- A high share of non-traditional activities within the light identity class;
- A higher share of traditional activities in the class with a cohesive identity (78.5%) who were able to make use of these activities; and
- A balanced share among the conservative class where entrepreneurship is dominant.

The Pearson Chi Square test has a high value for a significant threshold indicating that there are statistically significant differences between identity classes and participation in traditional/non-traditional types of economic activities, likely due to the statistical contribution of the coagulated ones and those who are not aware of their identity. This validates the hypothesis that there are significant differences between members of Roma communities in Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca in the practice of traditional versus non-traditional crafts according to nation. Ethnic subgroups are subsumed under already established identity categories.

Further analysis of the types of (non-)traditional activities according to the city in which they live indicates a high degree of similarity between the two communities. 53% of non-traditional activities are predominant.

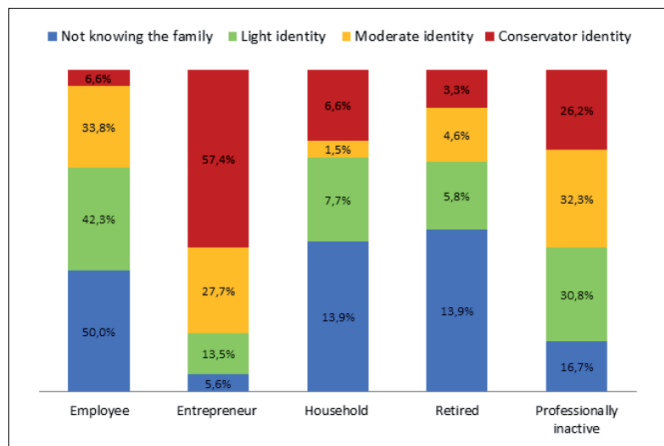


Fig. 2: Economic status by identity category
Source: authors' calculations

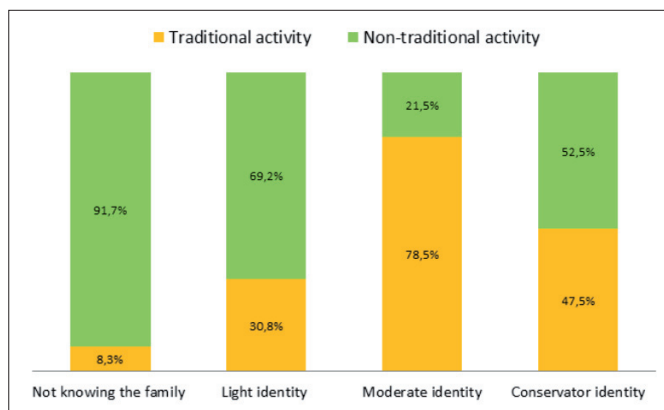


Fig. 3: Activity types by identity categories
Source: authors' calculations

The Pearson Chi Square test has a small value and the threshold is insignificant indicating that there are no statistically significant differences between participation in types of traditional/non-traditional economic activities between the two geographic communities (Tab. 8). The hypothesis that there are significant differences between the members of the Roma communities in Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca in choosing to practice non-traditional – traditional economic activities in the country is thus rejected.

The secondary activities refer to those (in)formal activities that respondents are performing to economically support their living. Romanian Roma people are usually performing a mix of activities, some of them formal acting as the main job but also additional (informal) activities based on community request. For example, the main job usually complies with the legal requirements (ex. drivers) and the second one is sometimes artistic performance shows at social events. Participation in economic life, though through secondary activities in traditional and non-traditional crafts by identity class, indicates an increase in the share of traditional secondary activities within classes where non-traditional activities were the main ones. This still indicates complementarity. Maintaining the higher share of traditional activities within the identity coagulated class (75.4%) that managed to exploit these activities (Fig. 5).

The Pearson Chi Square test is important, indicating that there are significant differences between identity classes and participation in (non-)traditional types of economic activities, probably due to the statistical contribution of those with coagulated identity. Within this group are the fiddlers who can afford more flexibility in performing traditional activities. Validation of IPS 3 Traditional activities maintain their actuality in Roma communities today due to the fact that they represent a significant occupational resource internally (Tab. 9).

	Value	df	Asymptotic meaning
Pearson Chi ²	53.001	3	0.000
Probability report	58.477	3	0.000
Linear association	21.936	1	0.000
Number of valid cases	214		

Tab. 7: Chi² Test
Source: authors' calculations

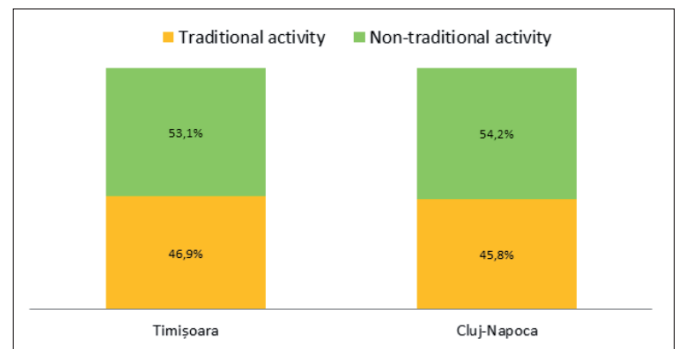


Fig. 4: Types of activity by geographical communities
Source: authors' calculations

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance	Exact Sig. (2)	Exact Sig. (1)
Pearson Chi ²	0.026	1	0.871		
b continuity correction	0.001	1	0.980		
Probability report	0.026	1	0.871		
Exact test of Fisher				0.891	0.490
Linear association	0.026	1	0.871		
Number of valid cases	214				

Tab. 8: Chi² Test for the participation in types of economic activities between geographic communities
Source: authors' calculations

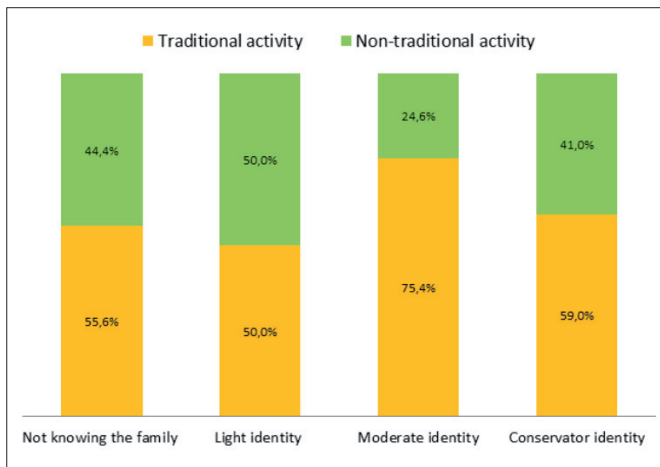


Fig. 5: Types of activity by identity categories
Source: authors' calculations

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson Chi ²	8.861	3	.031
Probability report	9.141	3	.027
Linear association	1.290	1	.256
Number of valid cases	214		

Tab. 9: Chi² Test for the differences between identity classes and participation in (non-)traditional types of economic activities
Source: authors' calculations

When it comes to (non-)traditional activities in a generational context, an in-depth analysis was carried out on how (non-)traditional activities are passed on from generation to generation. In this regard, it was identified that for 62% of the respondents, the father carried out a traditional activity and in the case of this group, 58.5% of the grandparents also carried out traditional activities. Looking at the next generation, only 46.8% are currently still doing a traditional activity and of these 41.5% currently have fathers doing traditional occupations. At this generational level, the Pearson Chi Square test is statistically relevant, indicating that there are significant differences between the type of traditional/non-traditional economic activities currently carried out by respondents and the type of traditional/non-traditional economic activities carried out by their parents (Tab. 10).

Overall, for 80 of the respondents who practise traditional crafts, there is consistency at the level of fathers and grandfathers. Within this sample 7 respondents do not know their grandfather's job and there is very little difference between the father's job and the grandfather's job. In 67 cases where it was identified that the grandfather-son occupation was maintained, we are talking about: fiddlers (25 cases), florists (15 cases), tinsmiths (15 cases), spoon-makers (5 cases), goldsmiths (2 cases), cǎldārari (2 cases) and spoitori (2 cases). In this regard, an attempt was made to identify an explanatory form by performing logistic regression analysis, in which the dependent variable is the type of activity currently carried out and the covariate factors are the father's and grandfather's occupation. Overall, the equation model is significant due to the Chi square test so that the type of traditional

or non-traditional activity present in father and grandfather plays a role/predicts the respondents' current choice of traditional or non-traditional activity.

The following classification table indicates that in 73.2% of cases the model correctly predicts that the current activity is determined by the activity performed by the father and grandfather. The contribution of the grandfather's occupation to the explanatory model is higher (Tabs. 11 and 12).

The research has identified a continuum of maintaining the presence of traditional activities within the family from grandfather to father and to the actual respondent. This particularity has been further explored to find potential explanations; thus the nominal regression being applied. The overall model showed that the presence of traditional activities in case of both father and grandfather are predictors for the continuation of traditional activities by the actual respondent. The B parameter shows that the grandfather has a higher influence than the father. This is explained by the traditional living model where several generations and families are living and working in the same house. In the Roma culture, the grandfather status is more important than the father, thus explaining its direct role in the continuation of traditional activities. The grandfather decides on the nephew's education, professional activity, and is related also to other social and family events.

6. Discussion

The Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca comparison revealed a common background of (non-)traditional trades with more similarities than differences. We undertook this analysis by highlighting the internal Roma diversity through the elements of identity that we brought together in the form of a construct. This an identity pattern includes three dimensions: belonging to the "nation"; the assumption of visual identity elements; and belonging to the linguistic identity. 16.8% of Roma respondents can no longer identify their belonging to the "nation" (Vătrași, Caștaliu,

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance	Exact Sig. (2-fețe)	Exact Sig. (1-față)
Pearson Chi ²	50.779	1	0.000		
b continuity correction	48.735	1	0.000		
Probability report	54.946	1	0.000		
Exact test of Fisher				0.000	0.000
Linear association	50.532	1	0.000		
Number of valid cases	205				

Tab. 10: Chi² Test for the differences between the type of economic activities carried out by respondents and activities carried out by their parents. Source: authors' calculations

Please, indicate if it is a traditional or non-traditional activity for the main activity			
1 - traditional activity	2 - non-traditional activity	Correct	percent
85	11		88.5
44	65		59.6
			73.2

Tab. 11: Nominal regression prediction
Source: authors' calculations

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for Exp(B)	
							Inferior	Superior
- Please, indicate if it is a work with traditional activity or non-traditional (grandfather or on behalf of father) (1)	- 1.071	0.525	4.157	1	0.041	0.343	0.122	0.959
- Please, indicate if it is a work with traditional or non-traditional activity (father) (1)	- 2.187	0.388	31.794	1	0.000	0.112	0.052	0.240
Constant	2.518	0.524	23.104	1	0.000	12.403		

Tab. 12: Nominal regression equation
Source: authors' calculations

Băieși, Spoon-makers, Fiddlers, Florists, Goldsmiths, Căldărași, Gaborans, Spoitori or others). Is this a consequence of integration into the mainstream culture or rather a dilution of the norms' imposition of a tradition that no longer justifies its place in the contemporary Roma life? This is a question that we seek to answer to below.

We found that 32.7% of Roma adopt at least one visual identity element, most common practices being wearing wide skirts (27.6%), headkerchief (22.4%) and hats (21.5%). These practices are more common among women than men. These visual identity elements contribute to the day-by-day Roma particularization. Such practices are day-by-day: the living of traditional ethnic cultural norms and values in relation to the majority culture. Traditional dress, for example, has not been used in the general population or in the majority culture for a very long time, even in rural areas, where there are still only disparate elements of traditional dress in certain rural communities with except for secular and religious celebrations or other events (prayers, folk festivals, etc.) when these elements are revived. Roma is closer to and has preserved its traditional values to a greater extent than the mainstream population.

The identity pattern also contains two dimensions of the linguistic identity scale: speaking the language and learning it at home. We noticed that less than half of the ethnic members speak the language today, a sign of their integration into the majority population. In the future it could represent a dilution factor of Roma identity. If the case, we consider that Roma will be absorbed into the mainstream population and culture, a distinctive element of Roma culture being precisely its orality and its transmission through the Romani language. This statement is supported by the results of our survey, which indicates that 52.3% of respondents have no assumed element of identity. The rest of the sample have at least one or two identity elements

The validity of the explanatory model of the identity pattern is supported by the statistical analyses carried out, on a scale of the Roma nations grouped into four categories:

1. The situation of cases that do not know which nation they belong to, having marginal values of the total identity mean;
2. The category of vătrași, spoon-makers with a predominantly superficial light identity;
3. The category of fiddlers, florists and others (they did not indicate their lineage but have a clear total identity average) – medium/coagulated identity; and
4. Category of goldsmiths, caldarași, Gaborans and spoitori with strong identity backgrounds – a conservative category.

Statistically, there is a strong positive correlation between the respondent's position on the nation continuum and the overall identity mean. Thus, those who do not know their ethnicity have predominantly no or low identity means and the higher the position on the ethnicity scale grows, the higher the percentage of respondents with high identity means.

Participation in economic life by identity class indicates a higher share of employment within the class who do not know identity, light or with coagulated identity (over 50%). Among the conservative class, entrepreneurship is dominant (57%). Economic participation in (non-)traditional identity class indicates:

- An overwhelming share of non-traditional activities within the unaware-identity class; high share of non-traditional activities within the light-identity class;
- A higher proportion of traditional activities in the bound-identity class (78.5%) who were able to make use of these activities; and
- A balanced share among the conservative class where entrepreneurship is dominant.

This validates the hypothesis that there are significant differences between members of Roma communities in Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca in the practice of traditional versus non-traditional types of occupations according to ethnic subgroup membership. Such validation is also since ethnic subgroups are not equally represented in the two communities.

Further analysis of the types of traditional – non-traditional activities according to the city in which they live indicates a high degree of similarity between the two communities as 53% non-traditional activities are predominant. This rejects the hypothesis that there are significant differences between the members of the Roma communities in Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca in their choice of (non-)traditional economic activities. We observe that the practice of (non-)traditional activities is balanced and without great differences between the two communities, even though the distribution by nation differs. Some nations, more than others, preserve the practice of traditional trades as long as they are able to practice them and there is a market and demand for them. But it is worth observing the significant share of traditional occupations, almost half of all occupations, compared to their practice in the general population, where they are insignificant.

Traditional activities are not only economic, but also a means of perpetuating the material Roma culture. Participation in economic life but through secondary activities indicates an increase in the share of traditional secondary activities within classes where non-traditional activities were the main ones. These still indicate complementarity. Maintaining the higher share of traditional activities within the identity coagulated class (75.4%) managed to exploit these activities. There are significant differences between identity classes and participation in traditional/non-traditional types of economic activities, probably due to the statistical contribution of the coagulated identity. Within this group are fiddlers who can afford more flexibility in carrying out traditional activities. This validates our hypothesis that traditional activities maintain their actuality in Roma communities today because they represent a significant occupational resource internally.

Further analysis was carried out on how (non-)traditional activities are passed on from generation to generation. It was identified that overall for 62% of the respondents, the father carried out a traditional activity and in the case of this group 58.5% grandparents also carried out traditional activities.

Looking at the next generation we indicate that only 46.8% are currently still doing a traditional activity and of these, 41.5% currently have fathers who are doing traditional occupations. At this generational level, the Pearson Chi Square test is statistically relevant, indicating that there are significant differences between the type of traditional/non-traditional economic activities currently carried out by respondents and the type of traditional/non-traditional economic activities carried out by their parents. In the case of 80 of the respondents who practise traditional activities, there is a constant transmission of these activities at the level of father and grandfather. Overall, the equation pattern is significant so that the type of traditional or non-traditional activity present at father and grandfather predicts the respondents' current choice of traditional or non-traditional activity. In 73.2% of the cases, the pattern correctly predicts that the activity currently carried out is determined by the activity carried out by father and grandfather. The contribution of grandfather's job to the explanatory model is predominantly higher.

7. Conclusions

European, national and local institutions as well as of civil society pay special attention to Roma socio-economic integration (Preoteasa et al., 2009; Ionescu & Stănescu, 2014). Adopted strategies in this respect are intended to reduce disparities between

the Roma communities, which lives mainly on the periphery of society in conditions of high poverty. Besides, Roma minority confronts an impossible choice in terms of choosing either to abandon their culture and integrate either to separate themselves (Crețan et al., 2023) from mainstream population.

The article focuses on Roma integration from the perspective of traditional occupations in the current market economy in Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca. These traditional crafts are at least as old as their appearance in Romania (e.g. metalworking by blacksmiths), or those that appeared later, traditional trades that have acquired over time an innovative character of adaptability according to the needs of the consumer market, for example: bone processing – the Roma family of "ursari" (or the "kokalor-ilor" people – from the Romanesque noun kokalo-bone) are on the way to extinction, even though some Roma groups are also practising their trades abroad, e.g. the Gaboran people – sheet metal processing.

With the great industrialization, these traditional crafts, which also give the name of Roma nations, have lost their usefulness on the consumer market. With the taxing of businesses, some Roma who were unable to tax their businesses stopped doing them, others continued to sell their products on the informal market. Currently, only few traditional crafts are practised such as blacksmithing, fiddlers, sheet metal working, woodworking, all of which are handmade as an element of originality. These are passed down from generation to generation, especially to the male part of the family.

Despite extensive Roma research, relatively little was written about Roma crafts. The scarcity of literature on Roma traditional occupations underscores the diminishing prevalence of these trades, both in European countries and specifically in Romania, where only a few Roma still engage in them. From this perspective, the article enriched the Roma literature focus on crafts and contributes to current scientific debate in the field. Besides, traditional crafts, as an integrated element of Roma culture, have been under-promoted by Roma civil society, formal and informed leaders and non-Roma researchers. The article highlighted the fact that in every Roma nation there are people with entrepreneurial potential. The support of Roma entrepreneurship represents a vector of their socio-economic improvement.

The research identified three crucial dimensions of identity: belonging to the "lineage", visual identity elements, and linguistic identity. The statistical findings categorized Roma people into distinct identity classes, revealing a correlation between identity and economic participation. The study highlighted a continuum of identity maintenance from those unaware of their identity to those with a strong conservative identity, impacting employment and entrepreneurship.

The research hypothesis validation process underscored significant differences in economic activities based on identity classes, particularly the influence of coagulated identity. Notably, the rejection of the hypothesis regarding differences between Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca communities in choosing traditional or non-traditional economic activities emphasized a high degree of similarity.

The analysis delved into the persistence of traditional activities, showing a continuity from grandfathers to fathers and the present generation. Logistic regression confirmed that both father's and grandfather's occupations predicted the respondent's current choice of traditional or non-traditional activity, with the grandfather's role being more influential.

The study highlights the significance of traditional occupations in the Roma community's integration into the market economy. The article underscores the historical importance of these traditional trades, adapting to the evolving consumer market. It acknowledges the challenges faced by traditional crafts, attributing

the decline to industrialization and taxation. The research calls attention to the low focus on Roma crafts in both nationally and internationally research.

The future of traditional Roma crafts is not certain due to needed resources as well as current economic characteristics which require specific qualifications, legal and financial knowledges (Fleck, 2008, p. 122) especially for formal provision of the traditional outputs. Potential revival of traditional crafts would be possible in favourable conditions but confronting certain difficulties such as partially lost specialized knowledge and skills (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993).

Public-private partnership represents success factor in Roma labour integration but no general employment solution is available (Cace, 2002). The personalization of social institutions in the Roma issues could better promote less rigidity, flexibility, and autocracy (Mereine Berki et al., 2017). Educational policies doubled by Roma affirmative employment policies could also improve their efficiency (Surdu, 2002).

The current article contributes to in depth understanding of the Roma occupations dynamic within a current challenging economic context which supports an accurate social policy design focused on improving their socio-economic conditions. The outputs give us the opportunity to propose public policies both at the central and local level. Although the current Romanian legislation supports entrepreneurship, it is desirable to adopt additional regulations better focused on the development of entrepreneurship and labour insertion of vulnerable people, Roma included. The adoption of Law 219/2015 on social economy was welcomed but further fiscal facilities are to be boosted. We also consider that the research outcomes could support efforts of non-governmental organizations interested in implementing programs to support entrepreneurship. In this respect, the revival of traditional crafts would be a vector in the development of the Roma communities by sustainably supporting their entrepreneurs and businesses digitalization.

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