

## **On making diversity.**

### **Ethnography and everyday nationalism in two “Gypsy neighborhoods”**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper traces the pathways through which I designed and carried out my ethnography in an Italian and a Romanian town. I aimed to investigate the ways in which Roma were framed in both locations' everyday life and the cognitive frameworks that were used, both by workers and community members in the stigmatized neighbourhood, as well as by local authorities. In the first part I discuss the organization of my research design. Conceived of as a comparative ethnography, the research design rested on the cultural similarity between Roma in Romania and Italy, an assumption that, once I came back from fieldwork, I had to seriously question.

In the second part I briefly sketch the contours of my most significant encounters in the field. In the Italian town I came across everyday stigmatizing expressions that were depicting Roma as excluded from the urban citizenry, due to their cultural traits which allegedly were at odd with those of the majority; by contrast, in the Romanian city I encountered everyday stigmatizing expressions that were casting Roma as outsiders of the nation, indexing moral characteristics that would allegedly not be adequate to those of the majority. In the third part I turn to an extensive discussion of data analysis. Interestingly, while carrying out data analysis after fieldwork, I realized that my differently perceived, in the two towns, geographical and cultural belongings encouraged representations that my interlocutors would have otherwise probably not displayed.

In the conclusion I summarize my entire research pathway showing the ways in which my encounters in each city were significantly affected by my-selves and how, in turn, this awareness contributed to lead me to a comparative argument, which revolved around the situated character of the stigmatizing expressions I had come across in each urban context. Indeed, notwithstanding the rather abstract and ‘eternal’ characterization of Roma that I was generally encountering, I could – thanks to an ethnographic imagination – set those characterizations squarely within the socio-economic processes of marginalization that each stigmatized ‘Gypsy neighbourhood’ was undergoing and thus show the socially constructed and contextual dynamics leading to the circulation of those stereotyping images.