CONSTRUCTING THE ROMA PEOPLE AS A SOCIETAL THREAT
THE ROMA EXPULSIONS FROM FRANCE

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the expulsion of the Roma people in France in 2010 as the consequence of their transformation into a societal security issue by the French authorities. It does so by using the theoretical framework provided by the securitization theory especially in its latest, sociological variant. In its first formulation, securitization theory was concerned with security as a speech act, emphasizing the importance of discourse and its rules for the emergence of a security issue. The sociological variant also focuses on practices, context and the power relations that characterize the construction of threat. This is of particular importance since it stresses how different securitizing actors call upon distinct audiences and sources of legitimacy. In order to study these processes I will use a qualitative methodology focused on analyzing the discourses and practices involved. The securitization used by the French authorities referred to several social groups, mixing, for example, Roma people and *gens du voyage*, but those targeted as scapegoats were the Roma, by invoking the 'republican order' and the 'values of the French society'. Thus, president Sarkozy and the French invoked a threat to the identity of the French society in order to legitimize the ensuing collective expulsions. The aim of the paper is not to reify the way Roma people are perceived but to show how their identity and mobility is recurrently constructed as an illegitimate threat. Especially in times of crisis we deal with this kind of approach in which the political mechanisms of the nation-state produce a rise in xenophobic attitudes which forces some parties to appropriate extreme right wing discourses in order to guarantee their electoral success. Targeting an entire community, as opposed to a case by case approach, makes even clearer the transformation of the issue into a societal threat.

Keywords: Roma, security, societal securitization, identity

1. The theory of securitization – development and conceptual evolutions

The theory of securitization was introduced by Ole Waever and subsequently developed inside the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. It proposes a discursive conception on security, in which its definition is dependent upon its successful construction inside a discourse. Securitization is a "process

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through which an inter-subjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat" [1]. These measures are outside normal liberal-democratic politics.

Securitization has two essential stages that include the presentation of an issue as an existential threat (depends on the securitizing actor) and the acceptance by the public that the issue needs emergency measures. The adoption of these measures, for the removal of the claimed threat, is not a necessary condition for a successful securitization. All is needed is "for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threats, point of no return and necessity" [2]. But when the measures have been adopted, the actor doesn't rely on the social resources of rules shared inter-subjectively among units but relies on his own resources, demanding a right to govern his actions according to his own rules [2]. Thus, the defining characteristics of securitization are the specific rhetoric and the claim to an exceptional mode of action, based on emergency and priority of action [3].

The success of a securitization depends on three facilitating conditions:
1.   the demand internal to the speech act to follow the grammar of security:
    a.   presenting an existential threat;
    b.   a critical point of no return beyond which nothing can be done;
    c.   a possible way out.
2.   the social conditions related to the position of authority of the securitizing actor (speaker-audience relationship);
3.   objects with features generally considered to be threatening that can be cited as evidence of threat [2, p. 33].

The key aspect of securitization theory is the acknowledgment of the arbitrary nature of threat, the conception according to which the basis of every security policy doesn't have a given 'nature', but it is chosen by politicians who have an interest in defining it in a certain way [4]. Because of this character of the construction of threats and because of the temptation presented by securitizations, the proponents of the theory consider that securitization should be seen in a negative manner, as a failure in managing problems within normal politics. They declare themselves as supporters of de-securitization: issues are moved outside the threat-defence thinking and back into the normal public sphere. This doesn't involve the existence of issues treated as threats against which we don't have usual means of management.

Some of the researchers that approached the theory of securitization, after its initial formulation, felt the need for a greater contextualization and renamed it the sociological or pragmatic theory of securitization [5]. They supported the importance of discourse but also of practices that sustain a certain image of a threat. Then, the reformulations of securitization theory studied more the importance of the audience. The latter has to have a direct causal connection with the issue and to have the capacity to empower the securitizing actor so that he can adopt measures to tackle the threat [5]. The support given by the audience

can be of two types: formal (given by, say, a legislative institution) and moral (given by the public opinion) [6]. Gaining formal support at the expense of destroying one's ties with the public opinion may damage securitizing actors. Thus, these researchers emphasized how different actors call upon different sources of legitimacy and conclude that the "securitization research agenda requires an […] institutional analysis [that takes into consideration the fact that] the institutional locus of effective securitization cannot be restricted to […] Defence departments and foreign ministries" [7].

In the context of the European Union, state and military security is replaced, as a dominant type of security, with societal security. The latter is defined as: "the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible and actual threats. More specifically, it is about the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom." [8] If state security concerns its sovereignty, societal security concerns its identity.

Migration is often approached by authorities as a threat to national identity. As Huysmans observes, security policy is a policy that can mediate the belonging to a political community [9]. It conserves or transforms the political integration and the criteria for membership through the identification of threats. In security practices, the social and political identification of a community develops as a response to threats. The community defines what it considers as the "good life" through the reification of instances of societal danger, such as the criminal or the invader. Thus, the fortress mentality in constructing security expresses a powerful impulse towards the securitization of migrants as intruders in the harmonious and ordered cultural space of the nation-state: "Given the evaporation of clear markers of social and national identity through processes of globalization and internationalization at least within Europe, this traditional logic of security becomes increasingly problematic in that it makes the life of a growing number of people less secure in political, social and cultural terms" [10].

This interpretation of migration is based on the assumption that a political community is culturally homogenous and the threat to it must be countered either through keeping the migrant at a lower status than the citizen (thus limiting its rights), or through expulsing him from the community [10].

2. The societal securitization operated by the French authorities

The context in which the societal securitization of the Roma people in France was dominated by two events whose apparent connection is rather related to their consequences. The first event took place on the 15th of July 2010 near Grenbole and involved the killing of Karim Boudouda by the police, after he and an accomplice robbed a casino. Boudouda was a French citizen, 'a second generation immigrant'. A few days later, on the 17th of July, the killing of Boudouda sparked riots, which involved shootings between the police and some

protesters, in the suburbs of Grenoble [BBC News, *Riot in French city of Grenoble after police shooting*, 17th July 2010, online at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-10672400, accessed 27.06.2011]. The second event involved the killing by the police of a French citizen belonging to the group of 'travellers' (*gens du voyage*), Luigi Duquenet, after he failed to stop at a checkpoint and bumped into a police officer. The killing of Duquenet triggered a violent reaction from his group, which attacked the police station in the town of Saint Aignan. We must mention that the term *gens du voyage* is an administrative term used in France which also applies to non-Roma groups with itinerant life styles [Council of Europe, *Roma and Travellers Glossary*, 2006, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/Source/documents/GlossaryRoma.doc, accessed 27.06.2011].

As we can see, the ethnic identity of the individuals killed by the police is different. The element that links the situation is the reaction of the two groups towards the police. But the two situations were amalgamated into one societal securitization, without operating any differentiation and which eventually lead to the deportation of a different ethnic group, the Roma, from France. These isolated events, initially treated by the media as "a simple matter of fact" [D. Stancu, „Ciocnirea Franței cu romii: două luni de tensiuni", Evenimentul Zilei, 16th September 2010, http://www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/ciocnirea-frantei-romii-doua-luni-tensiuni-906053.html, accessed 25.05.2011], constituted the external conditions of the discourse, which were favourable to a successful securitisation: "objects with features generally considered to be threatening […]. Through themselves, these objects don't make for a necessary securitisation, but they are certainly facilitating conditions." [2, p. 33] As Bertossi notices, although it started as a piece of news in which the police was confronting the French travellers, the problem became "a war against drug dealers", it was related to "50 years of immigration not being sufficiently controlled" and to a crisis of integration of foreigners, of state authority and of the powers of the Republic in its fight against "illegal immigration" [11].

The discourse that inaugurates the securitisation attempt is the declaration on security made by president Sarkozy in the Council of Ministers on the 21st of July 2010. The declaration doesn't involve the elements of a proper securitisation discourse. It is limited to declare, by calling on a generalisation, "a relentless fight against crime" and "a true war against traffickers and criminals" [Déclaration de M. le Président de la République sur la sécurité, Conseil des ministres, Palais de l'Elysée, 21.07.2010, http://www.elysee.fr/president/les-actualites/declarations/2010/declaration-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique. 9344.html, accessed 25.05.2011].

Notwithstanding, the declaration mentions a practice associated with non-discursive securitization: the appointment, in the regions involved, of prefects that were former police officers: Eric le Douaron in Isere and Christian Lambert in Seine Saint-Denis. The measure doesn't have an exceptional nature (outside normal politics) because, in principle, the access to senior public offices is not restricted for individuals who previously had positions in the army or the police.

But it can be interpreted, from the perspective of pragmatic securitization theory, as a practice that aims to creating a perception of insecurity that needs to be tackled with even stronger measures. After all, an attack on security forces can be solved very well, and can be avoided even better in the future, by a prefect who was not part of the same forces. The Declaration on the 21st of July marks the beginning of targeting the Roma as a likely candidate to the status of 'security problem'. Although it starts by presenting the fight against crime and the need to protect state authority and mentions the events in Grenoble (where no member of the Roma community was involved), it concludes by focusing on 'the problems brought about by the behaviour of certain travellers and Roma'. The Declaration prepares the ground for the next steps in the securitisation of this issue, promising a meeting with the government in this matter.

The communiqué resulted after the ministerial meeting is precise in its reference to travellers (*gens du voyage*) and Roma, especially those from Eastern Europe [French Presidency, Press release following the ministerial meeting today concerning the situation of travellers and Roma, 28th July 2010, http://www.elysee.fr/president/les-actualites/communiques-de-presse/2010/ juillet/ communique-faisant-suite-a-la-reunion.9381.html, accessed 26.05.2011]. First of all, the it points to the situation of travellers and states that they have the same rights, but also the same obligations as any French citizen and that they must respect the 'republican order'. Thus, the events in Saint Aignan are presented as threats to the basis of the French society: the republican order. The definition of the latter is not mentioned, it is left to the imagination of the audience. Although they are designed as targets for evacuation of their illegal camps and for verification of their fiscal situation, delinquency is not generalised to all nomads: the press release is careful to say that only a 'small minority' amongst them is guilty for disturbing the republican social order.

Not the same thing can be said about the communiqué's references to the Roma from Eastern Europe. The latter are described as living in an 'outlaw situation' (*situation de non droit*) in the illegal camps which are 'sources of illicit traffic, of profoundly undignified living conditions, of exploitation of children for begging, prostitution or crime'. The generalization is evident and categorical: there are no references anymore to detail the situation. The alleged activities in the Roma camps are presented as threats not only to public order, but also to society at large. Although they are not constructed as an existential threat, the discourse opens the way for such a presentation through associating the Roma with the threats to the republican order mentioned in the case of the travellers. The exceptional measures proposed in this communiqué envisaged the dismantling and evacuation of illegal camps. If their illegality could not be proven, fiscal verifications were bound to take place in order to ensure the conformation to all French laws inside the camps. Second of all, the press release requested the removal of foreign nationals which abused the European citizenship and the legislation regarding freedom of movements. These nationals from Eastern Europe (even unaccompanied minors) were to be evacuated from France. The communiqué also promised the modification of the legislation in

order to broaden the possibilities of invoking expulsion on grounds of public order and security. The envisaged modification stipulated that the citizens of other EU member states were to be removed from French soil only through the simple presumption that they will become, in the future, a burden for the social security system or because they were tried in a lawsuit [Human Rights Watch, *France: Senate Should Revise Immigration Bill*, http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/02/07/france-senate-should-revise-immigration-bill, accessed 26.05.2011]. Measures that are part of the normal, routine policy were also included: international exchanges of twenty police officers and development projects to keep the Roma in their country of origin [Joint Press Release of Romanian and French Ministers, http://old.mae.ro/poze_editare/2010.09.09_Declaratie.Ro-Fr.pdf, accessed 26.05.2011].

The above mentioned declaration and press release are not a clear evidence of securitization since they don't fulfil all the conditions of such a move. The discourse that introduces a clear securitization attempt is the one in Grenoble, held by Sarkozy for the inauguration of the new prefect, on 30th of July 2010. Firstly, an existential threat to the fundamental values of the French society is identified (the first element of a securitization discourse). Isolated events and crimes whose context is different (as the two events that involved a second generation immigrant from Grenoble and a French Roma from Saint Aignan) are presented as part of the same assault on the French society that must be countered by declaring a "war on traffickers and criminals" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 2, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. The presentation of the situations as being an existential threat to societal security is found in the references to the destruction of values: "Certain values were destroyed; we must propose measures adequate to the situation" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 5, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. Moreover, Sarkozy refers twice to the necessity of re-establishing "the republican order" which is threatened by the challenge to state authority, by the attacks on police forces. In the same tone are the references to the "savages implantations of Roma camps" (*implantations sauvages de campements de Roms*) and their description as "outlaw zones that we cannot tolerate in France" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 5, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. The discourse concludes that the two events mentioned above are not isolated and singular in their context and they cannot be associated to minor crimes but are instead "minor crimes […] manipulated by big crime" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 1-2, online at

http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. Thus, by presenting the crimes in this way, Sarkozy makes their approach as existential security problems easier.

Additionally, the discourse discards the possibility that the causes of violence are related to social precariousness and describes a critical point beyond there is nothing to be done (the second element of a securitisation narrative). The image that Sarkozy wants to propose in his discourse is that of a critical moment beyond which the republican order and the French society will not be the same, a point beyond which there will be no 'us' anymore to which we can relate as in the present: "This is not a social problem, what happened is a problem of gangsters, of values that are on the verge of extinction." The discourse in Grenoble describes the critical possibility of losing a secure situation, of losing the safety of the citizens: "We don't have the right to lose what we have at the hands of a few criminals" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 3, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. Referring to the migrants' negative impact on the situation and that they push French society towards a critical point, Sarkozy says: "France cannot gather all the trash in the world" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 5, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/ pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011].

Sarkozy describes the situation in the following way: "Current crime doesn't come from a precarious situation, as I often hear: it is the result of a profound contempt towards the fundamental values of our society". Such a way of presenting the situation doesn't allow for normal politics and policies, of the social and economic type, to solve the issue. Since certain groups or persons are framed in the category of criminals because that's just the way they are and they want to be - mischievous and contemptuous toward the law, then it is justifiable to use exceptional, urgent measures, that are outside normal politics against them. By describing the situation in this way, Sarkozy also discards the possibility of a public debate on security and on the context, because the situation is too grave for this kind of discussions: "if I came here to tell you: they shot at police officers and I'm organizing a debate, who would take me seriously?" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 2-3, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. He focuses in his discourse on the decisionist, schmittian model that implies that "I act, I don't sit and debate" and which most of the time damages the democratic ethos.

Sarkozy's speech aims to have another effect which is characteristic to securitisation attempts: presenting a problem as beyond partisan or ideological opinions and as requiring the "rallying around the flag" of the citizens, the adoption of a common position. Such attempts are evident when he says: "All the MPs are preoccupied, this is not a problem of the opposition, of the majority,

of the left or of the right, it is a matter of general interest. No one could have an interest in tolerating such a thing as firing an automatic gun at police officers. […] We need to come together to show this minority that it has no hope and that we will act" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 2, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. Moreover, Sarkozy tries to create a favourable public opinion that accepts his measures, beyond the supporters of his own party: "The war that I decided to start against traffickers, against hoodlums […] exceeds the context of this government, of a majority or of a party. And I am sure that in all political formations we can find man and women of good will that are determined to react and to bring their support in this action of the government of the Republic" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 7, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011].

This attempt at silencing any opposition under the pretext of treating an issue as security and as being too grave to benefit from debate or democratic dissent refers to the exceptional measures: "The political positions on one side or the other of the spectre are not worthy of the occasion. This is not about knowing what one party or another thinks, even it is his right, it is about knowing what to do facing this situation" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 3-4, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. In Sarkozy's opinion, the emergency measures should not be challenged, but collectively embraced, as a proof of the unity of the political community. Thus, Sarkozy says: "I also hope that beyond the differences between us, we will come together regarding video surveillance or safety cameras. We need this. There are no leftist or rightist cameras. [..] This is not at all about interfering in the private life of the inhabitants of Grenoble or Isere department" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 3, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011].

The lists of proposed exceptional measures continues with legislation which introduces fixed 30 years punishments for the killers of persons that exercise a public authority, the wearing of electronic bracelets by subsequent offenders or the revision of penal law applied to minors. But the measure which is most distant from normal politics, which targets only the French citizens born outside the country (and not the Roma which are citizens of other member states) is the removal of their French citizenship as a consequence of breaking the law. The French citizenship is qualified by Sarkozy as "a privilege that you have to be worthy of" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 4, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf,

accessed 25.05.2011] From the perspective of analysts such as Jean-Philippe Roy, professor of political science at Tours University, the adoption of such measures would be 'unbearable': "we can take away [one's] freedom but not his nationality. It is inalienable." [France 24, *The idea of removing people's nationality is unbearable*, interview with Jean-Philippe Roy, 31st July 2010] Patrick Weil, historian, political scientist and director of the National Centre for Scientific Research in France, stated that the adoption of this proposal would represent the 'nuclear option': "Historically, it's a measure mainly used in wartime. Since World War II, the issue of citizenship has been treated with a lot of caution." [A. Lantier, „European Leaders Disavow Criticism of France's Roma Deportations", *Global Research*, 18th September 2010, http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=21086, accessed 26.05.2011]

As I've already mentioned, this proposal doesn't refer directly to Roma citizens of other EU states, but Sarkozy's discourse links the Roma issue to illegal immigration thus transforming every Roma in an illegal immigrant which wrongfully enjoys "rights and advantages" [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 5, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/ bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011]. Sarkozy insists that "illegal immigrants must be returned to their countries", including the Roma, although the latter enjoy de rights associated to the freedom of movement inside the EU and cannot be assimilated to the category of illegal immigrants. The discourse says that the Roma are committing an "abuse of the freedom of movement" because they profit upon the return policies that offer them money and then they return to France. Accordingly, it's not the policy that's deficient, but it's the Roma fault. The measures proposed in the discourse mentioned that "In three months time, half of these savage settlements will have disappeared from the French territory" and provided for the modification of legislation to facilitate the evacuation of the camps [N. Sarkozy, *Discours de M. le Président de la République à Grenoble - Prise de fonction du nouveau préfet*, 30th July 2010, 6, online at http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank/pdf/president-9399.pdf, accessed 25.05.2011].

The implementation of the measures that aimed at dismantling Roma camps and the expulsion of those who 'abused' the freedom of movement granted by the EU legislation was implemented through a series of memos (*circulaires*) released by the government (on the 24th of June, 5th and 9th of August 2010), whose existence was denied by the French authorities until their publication by the press [http://www.lecanardsocial.com/Article.aspx?i=193, accessed 15.04.2012]. The orders for the implementation of the measures included references to the intentional targeting of Roma. The memos stated: "Therefore, it is the responsibility of prefects from each department to proceed, on the basis of the situations on the 21st and 23rd of July, in the direction of a systematic approach to dismantle illicit camps, giving priority to those of the Roma" [The memo IOC/K/1017881/J from 5th of August 2010 regarding the

evacuation of illicit camps]. The memos even established quotas regarding the number of camps that had to be dismantled. The reaction of EU institutions and the national and European civil society lead to the release of another memo (on the 13th of September, a day before the famous declaration of Commissioner Reding) that removed the reference to the Roma but kept the proposed objectives.

The targeting of the Roma, as a political strategy, can be interpreted as a proof of the fact that the republican model of integration is in a crisis determined by its rejection by the segments of French population originating in former immigrants [11]. Apparently neutral towards these differences, this model which, at least theoretically, was blind to the existence and preferential treatment of national minorities, became more and more oriented towards using the explicit themes of ethnicity, race and religion. Proofs in this regard were the public reactions to the riots in 2005 that focused on the identity of the immigrants [11]. "The whole French public debate on citizenship embraced this new reasoning: universalism no longer functions *because of the ethnicity* of the 'immigrants' (without taking into consideration that these 'immigrants' are second-generation French citizens)" [11].

Considering the fact that the adoption of a measure such as the deportation of French citizens would have been politically explosive, the Roma were targeted as scapegoats. This also served to demonstrate the commitment of the government towards the implementation of the public order programme promoted in the electoral campaign in 2007. Additionally, the ease with which the Roma were targeted also comes from the fact that they are a vulnerable minority lacking the support of a national-state (they are often repudiated even by the states whose citizens they are) and being less visible in the narratives concerning the Holocaust or other abuses on human rights. As Stéphane Maugendre, the director of Gisti - a French NGO fighting for the rights of immigrants - noticed concerning the memos that targeted the Roma: "Can you imagine a directive explicitly naming *Jews* or *Arabs*?" [12]. „The Roma of Rumania and Bulgaria are a necessary target today in order to establish the authority of the State and to show its effectiveness, since it proves to the public that the targets set for the policy to curb illegal immigration can be achieved" [11].

What is most obvious is that the security problem publicized by the French state is constructed and has nothing to do with the claimed objectivity of the situation(s). There is a clear option of the French authorities and government to treat these issues in a way specific to security problems and to give the impression that it solves them through the deportation of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma. Certainly, the events could've been approached from a different perspective: by considering the specificity of the events in Saint Aignan and presenting an analysis that separated them from the rioters in Grenoble. There was the opportunity for a public debate on the place of travellers in French society and to clarify the difference between them and the Roma migrants. A debate could have been initiated on solving France's deficiencies in respecting

the European Charter of Social Rights concerning the living conditions of travellers [11]. But the approach adopted focused on the opposition between 'us', the French citizens, and "them", the foreigners that threaten our life style. The minority that took the burden of exceptional measures were the Roma. The approach was not about an objective situation also because the Romanian interior minister at the time stated that the Romanian Roma deported in August had no criminal record [A. Cochino, *Evenimentul Zilei*, 29th of August 2010, http://www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/romii-repatriati-din-franta-nu-sunt-infractori-904497.html, accessed on 27.06.2011].

3. Conclusion

The French authorities initiated, in the summer of 2010, a societal securitization against Romanian and Bulgarian Roma in France. By invoking the protection of the 'republican order' and the 'values of French society', president Sarkozy and the government in Paris resorted to collective expulsions. Considering the EU legislation on freedom of movement, these measures were indeed exceptional and emergency-like: the order to implement 'without delay' collective expulsions of foreign nationals from French territory didn't lead to a case by case approach and didn't comply with the procedural guarantees of the Citizens Directive [13]. Targeting an entire community as opposed to a case by case approach makes even clearer the transformation of the issue into one of societal security.

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