

ICT for Integration, Social Inclusion and Economic Participation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities: Case Studies from France

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‘The Education without Borders Network: ICT as a Tool for Bottom-up Integration’, Dana Diminescu, Matthieu Renault, Christophe d'Iribarne

‘Immigrants, Ethnic Minorities and the Matrimonial Web: Economic Aspects’, Dana Diminescu, Matthieu Renault, Souley Hassane

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PREFACE

Launched in 2005 following the revised Lisbon Agenda, the policy framework ‘i2010: A European Information Society for Growth and Employment’ has clearly established digital inclusion as an EU strategic policy goal. Everybody living in Europe, especially disadvantaged people, should have the opportunity to use information and communication technologies (ICT) if they so wish and/or to benefit from ICT use by services providers, intermediaries and other agents addressing their needs. Building on this, the 2006 Riga Declaration on eInclusion¹ defined eInclusion as meaning “both inclusive ICT and the use of ICT to achieve wider inclusion objectives” and identified, as one of its six priorities, the promotion of cultural diversity in Europe by “improving the possibilities for economic and social participation and integration, creativity and entrepreneurship of immigrants and minorities by stimulating their participation in the information society”.

In the light of these goals, and given the dearth of empirical evidence on this topic, DG Information Society and Media, Unit H3 (eInclusion) asked the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS)² to carry out a study to explore ICT adoption and use by immigrants and ethnic minorities (henceforth IEM) in Europe and the related policy implications.

The study, entitled ‘The potential of ICT for the promotion of cultural diversity in the EU: the case of economic and social participation and integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities’, was designed and overseen by IPTS. It was carried out over twelve months in 2008 by a research consortium made up of IDC Italia Srl (main contractor), MIP Politecnico di Milano, Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme – TIC-Migration, Universität Bremen - Institut für Medien Kommunikation und Information, Universidad Sevilla – Laboratorio de Redes Personales y Comunidades, Sheffield Hallam University – Culture, Communication and Computing Research Institute. Cristiano Codagnone of Università Statale di Milano (Dipartimento di Studi Sociali e Politici) acted as scientific coordinator of the consortium.

The study entailed both desk-based research, especially of online services and other resources, and field work. The first step surveyed a wide range of ICT-based initiatives carried out for and/or by IEM in all EU27 Member States. A deeper investigation and analysis then followed of national policies, supply and demand aspects and case studies of specific experiences of ICT and digital service adoption and use by selected IEM groups³ in four countries: France, Germany, Spain and the UK. A foresight workshop later explored trends, challenges and policy options, leading to the preparation of the final report.

The study's results are available in the following six publications (including this one):

- Overview of digital support initiatives for/by IEM in the EU27
- ICT supply and demand for/by IEM in France, Germany, Spain and the UK
- Case studies on ICT uses for/by IEM (publications⁴ on Germany, Spain and France)
- The potential of ICT for the promotion of cultural diversity in the EU: final report

¹ Available at http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/ict_riga_2006/doc/declaration_riga.pdf

² IPTS is one of the seven research institutes of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre

³ The groups selected by the research partners are: Argentinians (ES), Bangladeshis (UK), Bulgarians (ES), Ecuadorians (ES), Indians (FR, UK), Moroccans (ES), Poles (DE, UK), Romanians (ES), Russians (FR, DE), Turks (DE).

⁴ For editorial reasons, the two ICT usage case studies from the UK have not been published separately, but have rather been included as Annex III of the ‘ICT supply and demand’ publication.

This is one of the three case study publications which, together with the one on 'ICT supply and demand', were produced and should be read as interim contributions to the final report.

All the publications are available at <http://is.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pages/EAP/eInclusion.html>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is one of the outcomes of the study ‘The potential of ICT for the promotion of cultural diversity in the EU: the case of economic and social participation and integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities’ carried out by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) on the request of DG Information Society and Media, Unit H3 (eInclusion) of the European Commission. As part of the study, a broad overview of policies and ICT-related initiatives was initially conducted in all the EU27 Member States, followed by deeper research of ICT usage experiences in four selected countries: France, Germany, Spain and the UK.

This report provides an analysis of ICT usage experiences in France. As in the other country reports, three cases were selected – two to explore the role of ICT for the digital and social inclusion and/or the socio-cultural integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities, and one to address aspects related to the labour market and economic participation.

Selected cases and motivations

The three case studies carried out in France are the following:

1. **Fighting the digital divide: e-Government and the role of the public sector in improving ICT access and literacy**

This case addresses two aspects: the use of ICT to provide citizens, specifically immigrants and ethnic minority people, with more convenient access to government information and services; and national and local government initiatives providing public access points and ICT training for disadvantaged people, particularly immigrants and ethnic minorities.

2. **The Education without Borders Network:⁵ ICT as tools for bottom-up integration**

Réseau éducation sans frontières (henceforth RESF) is a network of associations, advocacy groups, trade unions and individual members of civil society. This network aims to fight against the expulsion of school-age children from France, due to the undocumented status of their parents. This experience was chosen to explore the uses of ICT (particularly the mobile phone) in the social movements helping undocumented migrants (*sans-papiers*).

3. **Immigrants, ethnic minorities and the matrimonial Web business models**

This case study looks at the motivations, the functioning and the economic implications of what is called the digital economy of marriage from the point of view of the owners, associated service suppliers and end users. Three different instances are examined: a major Indian website (www.shaadi.com); a flourishing business which helps set up mixed marriages between European men and Russian women; and websites and new social media (web 2.0) used for planning traditional Moroccan weddings in France.

Main findings: eGovernment and ICT access initiatives

Beyond official information services, there are very few online interactive procedures for immigrants and multi-language public web sites are rare.

⁵ See <http://www.educationsansfrontieres.org/>

The national portal www.service-public.fr acts as a one-stop-shop service for all French public administrations and also fosters access to online information by simplifying the administrative language for the users. It has a well articulated section for 'Foreigners in France' and links to other websites relevant for them. A closer analysis of this section and several other national sites showed, however, that beyond information, not many other relevant services are available online for immigrants. The only teleservices (fully interactive services) for this target group are the application procedures for biometric visas and student visas established by *CampusFrance* (both services were set up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Also, not much online help is provided to handle the formalities and understand French administrative language. Finally, linguistic diversity is not a standard or a priority for e-Government sites, so most of those that might be visited by immigrants and ethnic minorities do not offer translations of key information in any other language.

At local government level, very few municipal websites were found to offer any information on migration-related procedures (indeed, municipalities in France play a minor role in this domain). Two thirds of them did however provide a link to *service-public*, but one third not even that.

Looking at the demand side, it was found that immigrants do not often use online public information or the (few) available interactive administrative services, mainly due to lack of trust.

Many Internet access, training and support opportunities are available, though they do not specifically address immigrants and ethnic minorities. So far, public internet access points have played an important role by providing access and training to users, referring immigrants to supportive associations and institutions, and even developing the ICT market (reducing fear of technology and increasing its purchase and use at home). However, as user demands become more stringent (e.g. for job search support and studying), there are too few of them in underprivileged neighbourhoods and existing public internet access points do not have the qualified personnel to respond to the new demands.

Internet/phone shops are mostly owned by foreigners and are very popular for personal communications and leisure needs, as users claim that they offer a level of intimacy not offered by public internet access points, libraries, or more formal/institutionalized locations.

Main findings: the Réseau Éducation Sans Frontières (RESF)

While ICT (especially electronic mailing lists) have played a decisive role as organizational and mobilization instruments in this militant movement, the *sans-papiers* immigrants themselves have been found to rarely participate in the online activities of this network (and apparently of other support movements as well), although they come out in full force for offline activities such as gatherings and demonstrations. Also, the interactions between 'sponsors' (RESF members who take responsibility for helping a specific undocumented immigrant) and sponsored *sans-papiers* generally take place face-to-face or by mobile phone, and only rarely through the Internet.

RESF members act mostly for and on behalf of the *sans-papiers*, rather than enabling them to act for themselves, especially through the use of ICT. By supporting the mobilization and organization of RESF's activities, ICT are also seen to contribute, albeit indirectly, to the development of social capital between members of the host society and the immigrants. In this case, we have a third sector organisation which makes intensive use of ICT to run its activities, but does not see the use of ICT by its beneficiaries as a goal to pursue.

Main findings: matrimonial web sites

The three types of matrimonial web sites studied show that:

- they represent an important business (30 million dollars revenues in 2007 for Shaadi.com; 10,000 stable relationships established since the creation of Eurochallenges site in 1996) involving very different types of entrepreneurs, usually with an IEM background;
- they create jobs directly in both the home and host countries, for running the websites and for the physical activities often associated with the online ones. They also create jobs indirectly, as many business actors provide services around the meeting and wedding events and gain visibility and a broader customer base on/through the web;
- social networking platforms are creating alternative market entry opportunities for the above suppliers and are enabling new business models (e.g. using 'friends' networks for marketing);
- these services stimulate the international circulation of people: mostly younger members of the elite in the Indian case; and older and middle-class women in the Franco-Russian case (Eurochallenges site);
- they also boost intra-ethnic social capital (Indian and Maghrebian sites), as "not only are ties internal to the physical community reinforced, but the community is extended virtually, by bringing together individuals, who would not have met otherwise";
- they can also promote mixed marriages (Franco-Russian case), which are paradigmatic of bridging processes between an immigrant and a member of the host society (also a source of institutional integration). A multiplicity of other potential relations in the new social context is opened up for the immigrant through his/her host country spouse.

Conclusions and policy considerations

Many public programmes, initiatives and institutions have been set up to develop wide social use of ICT in France. Their main aim is to enable all sectors of the population to make use of the new digital services, including public online services. However, few fully transactional, specific eGovernment services exist for immigrants and ethnic minorities and potentially relevant aspects of online information services for this group (multi-language information, simplified language, guidance etc.) are not very developed. At the same time, immigrants and ethnic minorities currently seem to make little use of what services there are, due to fears and suspicions. The precise causes of this vicious circle should be better explored so as to identify ways of breaking it. Initiatives aiming to foster linguistic diversity and the systematic cross-referencing of all local government websites to the central *service-public* portal would certainly facilitate the understanding of French administrative language and procedures.

The report shows that the needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities have been addressed only indirectly by associations and institutions running ICT promotion measures (e.g. when they focus on unemployed people or when they are set up in deprived areas). At the same time, associations and institutions working for the integration and equal opportunities of the immigrant population do not promote ICT use among them (or even, in many cases, among their own members). The case of *Réseau Éducation Sans Frontières* illustrates how even a network organisation which makes intensive and effective use of ICT has not really addressed this opportunity. Thus, specific programmes combining ICT promotion with actions which aim to integrate immigrants and ethnic minorities living in France are needed. These programmes could support public internet access points (probably in collaboration with local associations) in addressing their customers' growing demands for more personalized and needs-oriented support.

Using ICT as part of a holistic effort to enhance literacy levels and proficiency in the host country's language (both important barriers to integration and ICT use itself), while exploring the culture and customs of the new context, has been found to be a promising approach, especially for newly-arrived immigrants, the most disadvantaged immigrants and ethnic minority people. In order to develop initiatives of this kind, it would be necessary to establish partnerships with local social centres and immigrant and ethnic minority associations, as well as creating more public internet access points in immigrant neighbourhoods. This would also reduce the risk that ICT use only strengthens intra-ethnic ties, by rebuilding a community space across borders and continents, as seems to be the case for Tamil Indians and Sri Lankans observed in the fieldwork in France.

The case of the matrimonial web-based services confirms the important new business opportunities, enabled by the Internet, which serve the needs of large diaspora communities (Indian and Maghrebian cases) or of new global markets (the 'love market'). Other such opportunities concern immigrants' remittances and the use of this money in the countries of origin (for education, building or purchasing a home etc.); knowledge transfer and the support of local businesses in the homeland; and religious practice.⁶ This case also confirms that ICT have come to play a crucial role in people's personal lives by, for example, finding wives/husbands, and breaking down distance barriers.

The above opportunities are powerful drivers of ICT adoption and use within the immigrant and ethnic minority population. They can also offer immigrants and ethnic minorities economic participation and personal well-being (with associated risks⁷). They can benefit (or damage) both sending and recipient countries, but are still little understood. Measures like the ones mentioned before to better promote the use of ICT for the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities in our society should at least take this broader context into consideration and, possibly, address it as a source of motivations to be exploited and of potential risks to be avoided.

⁶ See for instance BRINKERHOFF, J. M. (2008), "What Does a Goat Have to Do with Development? Diasporas, IT, and the Case of Thamel.com" in *Information technologies and International Development*, 4(4), pp. 9-13. and HELLAND, C. (2007), "Diaspora on the electronic frontier: Developing virtual connections with sacred homelands" in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(3)

⁷ For instance, as stated also in this report, the boundaries between the "love market" and human trafficking are sometimes very thin.

INTRODUCTION – CASE STUDY SELECTION AND OVERVIEW

Case study selection

The three case studies we opted to carry out were the following.

Fighting the digital gap: e-government and the role of the public sector in improving ICT access and literacy: This case study focuses on two main points: 1) the use of ICT to provide citizens (and here we will focus on IEM populations) with more convenient access to government information and services; 2) the public initiatives (local and national government) to develop public access points and ICT training for disadvantaged people, particularly IEM. Considering the lack of studies and reliable sources or statistics on migrants/IEM populations' uses of ICT in France, fieldwork was also performed.

The Education without Borders Network – ICT as tools for bottom-up integration: The issue of illegal migrants has become a crucial issue in France. The case of the Education Without Borders Network (RESF in French) was of interest to us for two reasons: first, because we thought it would help us uncover how the most underprivileged populations (particularly migrants) use ICT and second because we were able to observe innovative uses of ICT (particularly the mobile phone) in the movements of or in favour of *sans-papiers*.⁸

IEM and the matrimonial Web – economic aspects: In the Internet economy, what we call Web 2.0 or the social Web has become an indisputable reality. However, we can show that community sites (meaning 'ethnic' or 'national' which include some migrant sites) on the one hand, and meeting and marriage sites on the other hand can be considered as being two sources or origins of Web 2.0.⁹ In this respect, we thought it probable that the 'matrimonial Web,' whether it focus on intra-community marriages or mixed marriages, was a source of economic opportunities for migrant populations.

General research questions

Contribution of ICT to IEM's social participation and integration: Our first two case studies will help us evaluate the potential of ICT for developing the social participation and integration of migrants. These two case studies are intended to complement one another insofar as each one deals with one of the two integration paradigms: top-down integration and bottom-up integration. The first refers to all the institutional integration mechanisms and procedures, and the second refers to different types of solidarity currently operating in civil society.¹⁰ We will see how ICT circulate and operate in each of these two integration models. We should start by saying that we are not dealing with a dichotomy. In fact, we shall see in our case study on 'E-government' the importance of local initiatives whereas our study on RESF (Education without Borders Network) is rooted in the role of citizenship and its image in movements that defend *sans-papiers*.

⁸ DIMINESCU D., «L'usage du téléphone portable par les migrants en situation précaire», *Hommes et migrations*, n°1240, 2002.

⁹ See BOYD D. M., ELLISON, N. B. (2007). "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), article 11.
<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>

¹⁰ We provide more details about this distinction in the introduction to our case-study on the *Education Without Borders Network*.

Potential of ICT to enhance the economic participation of IEM: Our third case study seeks to evaluate the economic opportunities that ICT may offer migrants, or at least provide an overview of the entrepreneurial possibilities that ICT may offer IEM. Our task was to understand the business of migrant marriage sites by using varied examples, ranging from intra-community Indian marriages and Franco-Russian mixed marriages. We will also look at the opportunities available to companies that provide marriage-related services (for the Moroccan case). One essential question will be to understand the actual role that ICT play as well as finding out who is really profiting from this ‘love economy’ (which is not completely unrelated to a certain type of ‘database economy’, the data in this case being the profiles of marriage candidates).

Overview

This report is divided into three parts and each part covers one of our case studies:

- ☒ **Fighting the digital gap** – government ICT initiatives designed for migrants: a selection of websites of public organizations (local and central government) will be analyzed: services available online for migrants, practical information online, guides or informational leaflets, time it takes to access information, the accessibility and clarity of these services, etc. An analysis of the initiatives undertaken by local and federal government to develop access to computers, to reduce the geographical digital divide, to boost ICT training, and to set up strategic guidance will then be undertaken. For this study, we used studies already conducted on public access to computers and training, as well as our own field work. We will focus on the key actors (key public actors and public-private partnerships when they exist). Regarding actual uses, we mainly relied on our field observations and interviews. Various examples of initiatives (involving associations and public organizations) to exchange competence, knowledge, or research will also be presented. This work will lead us to reassess public initiatives in France aimed at: 1. putting clear and accessible administrative information online for migrants; and 2. developing public access to ICT tools, the training offered, and any success in terms of uses and needs of migrants (namely in terms of uses that enable tightening community bonds and/or being integrated into France), the problems encountered, areas that need developing, etc.
- ☒ **The Education without Borders Network: ICT as tools for bottom-up integration:** We begin this case-study by providing an overview of the RESF network (its origins and structure). We will then outline our research methodology, which was based just as much on fieldwork (interviews, questionnaires, etc.) as on numerical data analysis. We will then present the average socio-economic profile of network members before focusing on ICT as a weapon for integrating *sans-papiers*. We then examine sponsorships of *sans-papiers* insofar as it reveals the forms of integration at work within RESF. Our focus will then shift not to RESF activities but to the *sans-papiers* they defend in order to see if they make use of ICT: making these observations will require studying the politics of representation at work in RESF in order to better understand how ICT are being used within the network. Lastly, we will look at the possibilities in terms of relational integration, skill building, and social capital that these uses may bring about.
- ☒ **IEM and the matrimonial web – economic aspects:** this case-study is divided into three parts and each one covers one of the three communities we selected. 1) Regarding the Indians, we will focus on the marriage site www.shaadi.com that addresses the scattered Indian community (we will therefore not pay particular attention to France’s Indian migrants). We attempt to give a complete presentation of how the site operates with the main goal being to understand the economic factor. 2) Regarding Russians, we will focus on sites that arrange mixed marriages (French men/Russian women) by looking at both

exclusively online matrimonial agencies (whose business largely entails selling women's e-mail addresses) and agencies that combine online (namely profile browsing) and offline (services typical of the traditional matrimonial agency) services, especially the agency called Eurochallenges. We will also look into the question as to whether or not migrants really benefit from this economy. 3) Regarding the Moroccans, our approach will be different because we will study the presence of companies providing services for Moroccan marriages (and more generally Maghrebians) on the French web and try to identify the main actors on this market. In our conclusion, we present a synopsis of the potentialities of the matrimonial web to raise migrants' economic participation, but we will also look at the possibilities it offers in terms of skill building and community regeneration, without forgetting the question of social capital.¹¹

To conclude this report, we will summarize the main research results from the different case studies and provide a table based on these results that shows how they pertain to the different requirements put forth in the Riga Declaration. Lastly, we will discuss the implications that our research conclusions might have in terms of policies by reposing the question as to how ICT are helping to meet the objectives regarding IEM put forth in the Riga Declaration.

¹¹ This last case study precisely focuses on the selected IEM. The nature of the two other studies (namely the one on RESF) made it difficult to focus on this aspect.

CASE STUDY 1 - FIGHTING THE DIGITAL GAP: E-GOVERNMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN IMPROVING ICT ACCESS AND LITERACY

1.1 Introduction – context and methodology

Created in 1998, the Interministerial Committee on the Information Society (CISI in French) defines the main orientations, political priorities, and courses of action for integrating and developing ICT (Information and Communication Technologies). An E-Government Strategic Plan (PSAE in French) for 2004-2007¹² was prepared by the Ministry for Civil Service, State Reform, and Spatial Planning and the Office of the Secretary of State for State Reform. A new strategic plan is currently in preparation. Regarding access to computer equipment and tailored ICT training and support actions, the Delegation on Internet Use (DUI in French) was established by the 2003 meeting of the CISI. It is attached to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The DUI's essential task is to increase access to the Internet and ICT, to improve digital literacy and encourage people to use ICT in their daily lives.

1. Analysis of the online civil services devoted to migrants. E-government (electronic administration) in France will be analyzed in terms of the services offered to migrants and IEM. The analysis will not only look at online services, but also how quickly they can be accessed, how easy they are to access, and how understandable they are: practical information online, guides or explanations, clarity of information, time it takes to access key information, online services (procedures that can be done online, availability of electronic forms), etc.
 - ☒ Websites of central government in charge of questions related to IEM (ministries, agencies, prefectures, police headquarters):
 - Analysis of online content: official information, legal references, practical information, guides, online forms, online applications, etc.
 - Evaluation of access to information: how easy is it to get to the required information (essentially, how many clicks are necessary to get to the required information?).
 - Understanding online information: how clear is this information? Are translations in foreign languages provided? Are there guides to help users understand?
 - ☒ Websites of local government (City Halls): websites of the 95 largest cities in France will be visited as well as websites of city halls of smaller cities in the suburbs of Paris where many IEM have settled.
2. Analysis of initiatives undertaken by local and federal government to develop access to computers, to reduce the geographical digital divide, to reinforce ICT training, and to set-up strategic guidance.
 - ☒ Public Internet Access Points (PIAP)
 - ☒ Definition and various labels

¹² This E-Government Strategy is available at: http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media_282.pdf A web site devoted to practical exchanges between officials in charge of implementing electronic administration is <http://www.references.modernisation.gouv.fr/>.

- ☒ Key actors
 - ☒ Focus on 3 PIAP located in areas inhabited by migrants. Details on the training provided, the attendees, and difficulties encountered. Observations and interviews.
 - ☒ Evaluate the impact of PIAP: studies conducted and their conclusions, interviews with PIAP actors, and observations during the training sessions.
 - ☒ Public and private involvements
 - ☒ Privately-owned communications shops¹³
 - ☒ Uses – observations and interviews with users of cybercafés, managers of cybercafés, and PIAP actors
 - ☒ Knowledge exchange: initiatives and associations:
 - a few examples,
 - the National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities,
 - the case of ‘Migrations in Besançon’.
3. Discussion focusing on the priorities defined in the Riga Declaration, accessibility of digital content, the level of user involvement, and the persistent gaps in ICT use, the most successful actions in favour of digital literacy, the key actors in the initiatives carried out.

Note: all fieldwork was done in August 2008.

1.2 Results – review of national, regional, and local initiatives for electronic administration (eGovernment)

The official portal to the French civil service: service-public.fr

In terms of official online information and accessible digital content, the website Service-Public.fr now offers internet access to all French administration and public services. It has been transformed into a unique window for all the services and information: it is *the* official portal to the French civil service. The site has practical guidelines classified by theme, a civil service directory, and a directory on public websites, and the user can use links to access the texts on laws, public reports, and job offers in the civil service. The search engine helps users find information regarding all topics on the portal and on the public websites.

1. Information about ‘your rights and procedures’ tell users about their rights and obligations, and directs them to the relevant organizations. There are many links to the official portal containing all legal references (laws, decrees, etc), legifrance.gouv.fr.
2. Online forms: Forms can be downloaded free of charge from a list of subjects. These forms can be printed out, filled in, and then sent it back to the relevant civil service. The logo ‘CERFA’¹⁴ and the number marked at the bottom confirm the authenticity of the form. The civil service is obliged to accept these forms under Art. 4 of Decree 99-68 from 2 February 1999 regarding making administrative forms available online. Some forms can be filled out on-line.

¹³ The two terms used in French are *cyberboutique* and *téléboutique*. *Cyberboutique* is a place where one can pay for an Internet access and, in general, pre-paid phone cards. *Téléboutique*, refers to places where one can find telephone services (phone booths) with discount calling rates to call abroad.

¹⁴ Acronym for “Centre d’Enregistrement des Formulaires Administratifs” (Administrative Documentation Processing Center).

3. The ‘teleservices’ heading gives access to online services that users can use for carrying out all or part of a procedure relating to a given civil service.

On the main page of this portal site, there is a section for ‘Foreigners in France’ where users will find the following topics:

- - Entry into France
- - EU Citizens in France
- - Residence permit
- - Work permit
- - Family reunification
- - Underage foreign visitors and family services
- - Free movement of people across the Schengen area
- - Asylum seekers, Stateless persons, and temporary protection
- - French Citizenship
- - Socio-professional insertion
- - Repatriation procedures

The website provides clear – and official – information on the procedures, laws, and official reports, as well as a civil service directory. Formalities are detailed: definition, conditions to fulfil, procedure, steps to be taken, required documents, places where the information is available (links to the civil services in charge), etc. There is a FAQ section, a search engine, and some online forms.

Service-Public.fr is connected (hypertext links on the website) to all French public administrations. For the section concerning Migrants/IEM (‘Foreigners in France’), we found – using a manual crawl methodology – around 35 links. These links are illustrated in the following graph:

Légende

- www.caf.fr Site web
- Lien hypertexte entre sites web
- Idem : les liens contournent les sites
- Lien bi-directionnel (en noir)

*Graph illustrating hyperlinks from the website ‘Service-Public.fr’,
‘Foreigners in France’ section¹⁵*

¹⁵ Available also at http://ostap.bender.free.fr/TIC-Migrations/ICT_IEM/Doc.2.services%20publics.pdf

In total, there are around 600 CERFA forms available on this site. Some of them can be printed, filled out, and returned while others are only for informative purposes. However, the section called 'Foreigners in France' does not offer that many forms online. English, German, and Spanish versions of the site are available, but only certain parts of the website have been translated and it does not include the section on 'Foreigners in France'.

The Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Community Development

www.immigration.gouv.fr

This recently established Ministry (May 2007) pursues four objectives: control migration flows, promote integration, promote French identity, and encourage community development.

The Website is very poor and very little information is available. There is no useful information for migrant/IEM, no guidelines, and no references. The only online documents include a list of CERFA forms about a few questions related to migrant/IEM, but no information (procedure, formalities, explanation, etc.) is provided with the forms. The thematic files – announced on the main page – on 'Coming to France' and 'Live in France' are empty.

Formalities on the website of the Prefecture of Paris

<http://www.prefecture-police-paris.interieur.gouv.fr/>

<http://www.prefecture-police-paris.interieur.gouv.fr/demarches/etrangers/etrangers.htm>

In France, prefectures – and, in the case of Paris, the police headquarters – are in charge of most of the formalities and some of the decisions regarding resident permits and applying for French nationality.

The website of the Prefecture of Paris (Paris police headquarters) is very informative, comprehensive, and complete. The user can find general information, definitions, conditions, procedures, a list documents to send with the application form, opening hours of the office where the application has to be delivered (and the rush hours¹⁶), reference laws, as well as a FAQ section.

But while this site is quite informative, there is no electronic application procedure.

Very few CERFA forms are available online and the ones that are available are just for information purposes only. The IEM applicant still has to physically go the police headquarters to deliver his application and, even in some cases (first application), to pick up the application form. To renew a residence permit, the applicant can call or send an e-mail to get the application form (that she/he will receive by regular mail).

¹⁶ It should be mentioned that the wait time for those wishing to obtain a residence permit can be several hours at the Police Prefecture of Paris.

Website of the Police headquarters of Paris

⇒ Section 'Questions about documents'

⇒ 'Foreign citizens'

⇒ For companies: procedure to request an application to hire a foreign citizen.

⇒ For individuals:

- Residence permit
- Authorization for minors to move in and out of the country.
- Return visa or travelling permit for refugees.
- Family reunification
- French nationality

⇒ French nationality

- Naturalization and reacquiring French citizenship
- Acquiring French nationality through marriage with a French citizen
- To ease your formalities, get informed before going
- To know more on the subject
- Rush hours at the naturalization office
- FAQ

The Ministry of the Interior

www.interieur.gouv.fr

The Ministry of the Interior is in charge of granting asylum at the borders. This specific procedure is designed to monitor foreigners arriving at French borders (ports and airports) without any identification documents and who request asylum in France. The Ministry of the Interior decides (in general after consulting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) whether or not to authorize the individual to enter French territory.

The website of the Ministry of the Interior provides very little information for migrants/IEM. In the 'Civil services/procedure' section ('Foreigners' sub-section), some application forms can be viewed (but not used, these are only for informational purposes) and no information (practical or legal) can be found.

The only information provided on this website is a guide for asylum seekers (together with an English translation of this guide). But this document is outdated (since July 2004)!

French Bureau for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (in French OFPRA) www.ofpra.gouv.fr

The OFPRA is the body entrusted with the task of making decisions regarding refugee status and the status of stateless persons. Since August 2004,¹⁷ the OFPRA is the only institution authorized to grant these statuses.

The application (applicant must pick it up at the police headquarters where the applicant's fingerprints will be registered) must be filled out in French. Following a review of the application for asylum, the OFPRA may summon the applicant for an interview with a protection officer. An interpreter will be present to translate between the applicant's language and French. At the end of the interview, the officer will write a report and then issue an opinion as to whether or not the person's request should be accepted or denied.

Their website is very informative and comprehensive. Information about rights, the status and procedures, the required documents, and guidelines for appeals if the applicant's request is denied are given. In addition, informational leaflets for asylum seekers are available in other languages (Russian, Lingala, Turkish, Tamil and Arabic).

French Agency in Charge of Migration and Welcoming Foreign People (in French, ANAEM) www.anaem.fr

The French Agency in Charge of Migration and Welcoming Foreign People (ANAEM) was created in 2005. This new agency combined the resources and capacities of the International Migration Office (OMI, founded in 1945 for managing and regulating the arrival of immigrants) with those of the Service on Social Assistance for Migrants (SSAE, an association founded in 1926 with the mission of welcoming arriving migrants, which is when they are most vulnerable).

ANAEM regulates migration, receives newly arrived immigrants, and monitors the 'welfare of foreign populations.' It is the public authority responsible for welcoming legal aliens upon their arrival in France. It helps legal aliens who have entered for work reasons (responsible for inserting non-EU workers entering France) or family reunification. At the time of their entry, they are invited to sign the Reception and Integration Contract. If necessary, they may apply for special support from social services. It initiates specific actions for asylum seekers and family reunification applicants. For family reunification, ANAEM:

- ☒ handles applications filed in certain regions,
- ☒ when requested by municipal authorities, it inspects the applicant's housing,
- ☒ brings the family members to France (following acceptance by the Prefecture) through involvement with French governmental offices abroad (missions, consulates).

ANAEM is also in charge of making France more attractive to foreign investors and serves as the sole contact for businesses wishing to fill senior or upper level management positions.

However, ANEM is also in charge of:

- ☒ Combating the employment of illegal aliens: ANAEM participates in fighting the exploitation in France of illegal aliens by collecting administrative fines imposed on non-compliant employers.

¹⁷ Decree of 14 August 2004.

- ☒ Return to home country: ANAEM provides assistance to foreigners returning to their home country who have received a Request to Leave French Territory (IQF) or who find themselves in a precarious living situation. Under certain conditions, the Agency also covers the social and financial support of migrants developing an economic project who wish to return to their home country.

Users can also find on the ANEM's website the usual general explanations and reference documents on:

- ☒ working in France (seasonal workers, permanent workers),
- ☒ bringing in your family or family reunification (conditions, steps to be taken),
- ☒ studying in France,
- ☒ returning home.

Moreover, their website also provides valuable information on 'Entering France as a Seasonal Worker' (contract duration, assignments in France, issuing work permits). We should also point out that, contrary to many sites we sampled, an English translation is provided.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of issuing visas. Their website only publishes information on visas, but this information is complete and clear: Going to France: What type of visa do you need? Where do you apply? How do you apply? How much does it cost? How are visas issued? etc. There are online application forms (for short-stay visas, and long-stay visas) and a FAQ section. The explanations given are quite clear and complete. Moreover, the website offers English, Spanish, and German translations of this section.

Some consulates abroad have set up online applications for visas, namely since the biometric visas were put into use (in compliance with EU Directive 2004/512EC of 9 June 9 2004). However, the biometric system does require physical presence since the ten fingerprints are required. Accordingly, all visa applicants, regardless of the type of visa sought, will henceforth be required to appear in person at the visa division of French consulates.

The section on 'Studying in France' is even more comprehensive and detailed. Foreign students can find articles, an overview of French diplomas, the administrative steps, information on how to learn French or live in France, and a list of useful addresses. The English, Spanish, and German versions of the website present even more information than does the French version.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has launched several initiatives to encourage foreign students to apply (scholarships, prizes). For example, it set up together with the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education, and Research, an agency called 'Campus France' in order to make France's higher education sector more attractive to foreign students. The website www.campusfrance.org provides information on French higher education, the various programs (covers all levels, fields of study, and specializations), admission and application procedures, information on getting a student visa, and information on housing. An online application procedure is available in more than twenty countries (including countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe). Here again, the website is available in English, Spanish, and German.

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Research

www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr; www.education.gouv.fr

The two ministries' websites (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Research) are identical. They both provide an overview of the diplomas recognized in France (including the legal references), a guide for foreign students, an informational leaflet, and online forms. Electronic applications are available through campusfrance.org. No translations into foreign languages are provided.

City Halls

Many city halls, especially those located within Paris' different neighbourhoods or *arrondissements* (75002, 75003, 75005, 75006, 75007, 75008, 75009, 75010, 75011, 75012, 75013, 75014, 75015, 75018, 75020),¹⁸ in Parisian suburbs (Ivry sur Seine, Compiègne, Créteil...), as well as city halls of other cities (Tours, Strasbourg, Amiens, Chartres, Orléans, Marseille...) provide a 'Guide to Rights and Formalities' composed from national and official information available on the official portal to the French civil service (service-public.fr). In this case, all the practical information about administrative procedures is available (including information for migrants).

Websites of other city halls offer very little or no information that could be relevant for migrants/IEM (such as formalities for obtaining a residence permit, application for family reunification or citizenship, etc.).

In reality, city halls play a minor role in civil services and administrative procedures that concern IEM. The only administrative formalities that call for an involvement of the city service is 1) family reunification where the City is responsible for checking that applicants fulfil the required lodging and financial requirements (although the City is not authorized to make the final decision); and 2) the official invitation issued by French citizens or foreigners who wish to host (and vouch for) a foreigner applying for a visa. In the later case, the host has to go the city hall to get the form. Moreover, very few city hall websites offer information on the subject (the information is otherwise available on other websites, namely service-public.fr).

Focus on websites of city halls in areas inhabited by Moroccans:

Selection of areas inhabited by North African/Maghrebian (Moroccans) migrants:

- Parisian suburbs (Île-de-France): Argenteuil, Gennevilliers, Vauréal, Villiers-le-Bel, Sarcelles
- In other parts of France: Béziers, Nancy, Nantes, Reims, Sens, Strasbourg.

Sometimes, the information is easily accessible (one or two clicks to access the service-public.fr portal on French civil services (French civil service – Your rights and procedures – services-public.fr – Foreigners in France). Sometimes, the information is available, but it is difficult to access. This is the case of the municipal websites of Strasbourg, Nancy, and Reims.

¹⁸ Paris and its suburbs is one of the most multi-cultural areas in Europe: according to the 1999 census, around 20% of its total population was born outside of France and around 5% of the population of metropolitan Paris were recent immigrants (i.e. people who migrated to France in the 1990s).

Sometimes, no information at all about procedures and formalities that might concern migrants/IEM is available and no link to the public services website (service-public.fr) is provided. This is the case of the municipal websites of Sens, Nantes, Béziers, and in the Paris suburbs of (Île-de-France) Vauréal, Villiers-le-Bel, Argenteuil, Gennevilliers, Sarcelles.

Actually, throughout Metropolitan France, among the 95 websites of the largest cities in France that we visited, a third of city hall websites have not included information from service-public.fr.

Integration of information from the central "service-public.fr" portal City-Hall Websites



Map of France showing which city hall websites have included information about 'service-public.fr',¹⁹

¹⁹ Available also at http://ostap.bender.free.fr/TIC-Migrations/ICT_IEM/Doc.1.CityHall%20Websites.pdf

City halls might offer some other assistance to IEM. For example, Sarcelle set up platforms (hosting facilities where Migrant/IEM can get help filling out the papers to get a residence permit, French citizenship, to leave the country, and others civil services such as driving licenses, etc.). But these provide no guidance regarding online information.

Among the 95 websites of the largest cities in France that we visited, apart from a few cities that give tourism information, the only one that provides information in English for foreign residents is Paris' municipal website. This information is mainly geared towards foreign students, but some other information is provided as well (necessary steps to settling in, how to get a residence permit or apply for French nationality, healthcare and social services, some useful links).

It should be noted as well that online directories of local associations (and therefore, possibly, IEM associations) that city hall websites might present are in general rather incomplete as they require associations to register in the directories.²⁰

1.3 Results – access to computers, training and technical assistance

Public Internet Access Points

The goal of the Public Internet Access Points (PIAP)²¹ is to raise digital literacy and knowledge (in line with the priorities defined in the Riga declaration). Their mission is to:²²

- ☑ facilitate public access to ICT and promote their use,
- ☑ increase the population's Internet knowledge,
- ☑ issue the Internet and Multimedia Passport (IMP – document attesting to one's ability to use computers and the Internet²³).

They are tailored to respond to the needs of excluded groups: unemployed people, elderly people, foreigners, children, and students. The goal is to set-up public Internet access points in remote areas and to reduce gaps in internet access across all regions.

PIAP work as local interlocutors for the area's inhabitants and also propose basic training programs on ICT and multimedia, as well as more advanced training. Examples of what they offer include:

- ☑ free access to Internet,
- ☑ training on surfing the Internet,
- ☑ how to create and administer websites, HTML language,
- ☑ training on how to work with software on learning French as a foreign language (i.e. using computers to learn French),
- ☑ introduction to word-processing,
- ☑ video workshops,

²⁰ Associations are officially registered as associations at the Prefecture.

²¹ In French "Espace Public Numérique" (EPN)

²² See the charter on public spaces adopted by the Interministerial Mission on Public Access to Computers, the Internet, and Multimedia (MAPI in French) on www.renupi.org/IMG/doc/Dossier-EPN.doc. Also see the circular letter from 23 August 2001 regarding the setup of PIAP (<http://admi.net/jo/20010824/PRMX0105052C.html>)

²³ More on the IMP (Internet and Multimedia Passport) on the DUI website: <http://delegation.internet.gouv.fr/netpublic/pim.htm>

- ☒ training on how to work with open software and other online procedures.

Access and Training: Various labels and key players

1. Access points may be found in most of the public libraries. Public libraries are located in all French towns (including the smallest ones) and all areas (including socially-disadvantaged areas). But, most public libraries only offer access and not training.

Case-study on the Centre Pompidou (Beaubourg) Library (Bibliothèque Publique d'Information – BPI), the largest public library in Paris

The library has a 'Reading Room' (free and open access to computer posts) and a 'Self-Training Room,' which is also free and open to everyone.

- ☒ The reading room for Internet has 50 computers. Users must make reservations and time slots are limited to 45 minutes. In 2004, the number of monthly reservations ranged from 16,000 to 20,000.
- ☒ It is a place where users can learn about various disciplines: computers, software, and languages using educational tutorials (Internet sites, educational CDs, or other documents and methods on audio and DVD devices). Users can also practice using applications like Word, Excel, and Access. The Beaubourg Library has 120 work stations, 84 computer posts, and 36 audio/video posts. All are reserved for training purposes.²⁴
- ☒ Created in 1995, the public reading room was initially used mostly by an educated public (sometimes students), who were already members of the library. This public, as well as how these posts are used for consulting Internet have since become more diversified.
- ☒ A large part of the users are migrants/IEM. The number of non-Francophone sites visited as well as the variety of languages observed reflect the linguistic diversity of these users. 10 user sessions were logged in a survey realized in 2004²⁵ and only one session used no other language than French. The foreign users are mainly Arab, Russian, Polish, or African. The languages of visited sites demonstrates this: French (39.5%), English (21%), Russian (18%), followed by Polish, Arabic, Chinese, Bulgarian, Turkish, Korean, Bengali. Moreover, out of this 39.5% representing sites in French language, some of them are sites from North Africa or Africa.²⁶

2. For unemployed people, Public Internet Access Points have been created on the premises of the National Employment Agency (ANPE in French). The ANPE can also provide one with assistance if requested. Some 'Personalized Educational Workshops' have been set-up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. These workshops can provide personalized training on ICT and Internet for people with disadvantaged backgrounds or living in precarious situations (unemployed people, housewives, prisoners). Other access points have been set up for young people (program created by the Ministry of Youth and Sports).

3. France's national postal service (a State company), 'La Poste,'²⁷ created Cyberposte, a system that offers access to internet terminals in post offices. However, access is not free. The

²⁴ <http://www.bpi.fr/uploadfile/autoformation2007.pdf>.

²⁵ This data resulted from a 2004 study: *Les consultations "libres" d'Internet à la Bpi. Etude exploratoire*, led by Muriel Amar (Evaluation Unit) and Bruno Béguet (Print and Electronic Documents Service). November 2004, 29 p. Unpublished (Synopsis in French available in *Bulletin de la BPI*, n°13, April-June 2005, p. 19 – <http://www.bpi.fr/uploadfile/Bull13ok.pdf>).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ www.laposte.net.

user has to buy a personal microchip at the post office. *La Poste* is a state-owned industrial and commercial entity (« *établissement public à caractère industriel et commercial* », EPIC).

4. The National company '*La Caisse des Dépôts*' (CDC) finances also an access program called Cyberbases. The goal of Cyberbases is – here again – to fight gaps in digital literacy. Cyberspaces have been set up in collaboration with the DUI and a CyberBase²⁸ label has also been awarded. The *Caisse des Dépôts* is a public financial institution (its executive Board is chaired by a member of the Chamber of Deputies and its Chief Executive Officer is appointed by the President of France).²⁹

In the end, we find various national labels:

- ☒ NetPublic = a national label granted to some access locations by local governments that adhere to the NetPublic Charter
- ☒ Point Cyb = a national label from the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Associations
- ☒ Cyber-base = a national label from *Caisse des dépôts et consignations*
- ☒ Space on the Multimedia Culture (ECM, *Espace culture multimédia*) = a national label from the Ministry of Culture and Communication.
- ☒ Access Point for Distance Learning (P@T, *Point d'accès à la téléformation*) = a national label from the Ministry of Work and Social Cohesion

The key players in ICT training (and access) are local associations, which in most cases have been set up for this purpose. Around 1900 NetPublic labels have been awarded in France, but not all PIAP have received a label. The directory of PIAP in France³⁰ shows thousands of access points throughout all of France, including the rural areas. CyberSpaces (*Caisse des Dépôts*) account for around 700 access points throughout France and more than 1500 counselors and trainers. Cyberposte provides access points in around 800 post offices across France (including the most rural areas as well in France's overseas territories/departments).

Finally, specific local programs have also been launched in different areas in France (Basse Normandie, Aquitaine, Centre, Corse, Midi-Pyrénées, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Poitou-Charente, Provence-Alpes, Côte d'Azur, Limousin, Pays de Loire, Bretagne). For example, the project launched in Bretagne by the regional council has created more than 400 'cybertowns' in the area; the project launched in 2002 in Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur (creation of access points for regional citizens) is also financed by the regional council; the regions Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Limousin propose Cybercentres or Public Multimedia access points, etc. They all bring ICT within these areas and are complementary to the national financing of PIAP.

In some regions, dedicated agencies for ICT participate as well in the coordination of regional eGovernment projects. Examples of such agencies are: ArtesiNumara in Rhône-Alpes, ARDESI in Midi-Pyrénées and SUSI in Picardie, Artesi in Ile-de-France.

In Paris, a project named PARVI project (Paris Ville Numérique – Paris Digital City, launched in 2001) gathered all the local initiatives aimed at developing the potential of ICT. It

²⁸ www.cyber-base.org.

²⁹ See Country Report.

³⁰ An official directory of the PIAP labeled in France is available on the DUI's Website: <http://delegation.internet.gouv.fr/bddui/api/accespublic/index.php>. Lists of PIAP in various areas of France can also be found on the Website of the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE - www.insee.fr). Also see the evaluation of public Internet access places within Ile-de-France by ARTESI: <http://www.anetville.com/public/rubrique.tpl?id=10559>

is aimed at filling the digital gap. Under this PARVI project umbrella, wifi access has been set up in local Paris City Halls and in local squares and parks and 19 PIAP have been labelled (but there are other PIAP, which have not received labels). All these 19 PIAP are monitored by associations and they have been set up in disadvantaged areas, including areas inhabited by migrants where there is a high concentration of North African and Sub-Saharan IEM (18th district) and North African and Asian IEM (19th district). These include PIAP called Torcy, Réseau 2000, La Goutte d'Ordinateur, Espace 19 Multimedia, EPN Belleville, EPN Relais Menilmontant, Confluences, Microlithe (See the list in the Country report).

Focus on some PIAP located in areas with high migrant populations

For example, the association called Réseau 2000 (<http://reseau2000.net/>) is active mainly in the 18th and the 19th districts of Paris, areas with the largest North African population (Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians). The official mission of the association is to promote the 'democratization of Internet access and knowledge.' The association created some Internet access points and offers ICT training. It monitors multimedia poles where users can get help on personal projects that could help his/her professional and social integration. In 2002, Réseau 2000 created two structures:

- ☑ Quaiweb: a structure dedicated to ITC and multimedia training and practice. It is open to the general public.
- ☑ The Network Workshop: this is a place that provides computer access to members of the association. Since 2007, the workshop also offers trainings and support to local development projects. It also is equipped with an e-library.

Conceived as a local community-based service, these two structures are even open on Sundays. They received the PIAP label in 2002 and the Paris PARVI label. In 2005, it provided access to some 6,000 people.

The 'Espace 19 Multimedia' (www.espace19.org) works with the association *Espace 19* which manages three social centres that try to promote social linking and counter isolation. The role of these social centres is to host and provide support (notably to migrants). This means it offers services that are complementary to those offered by the PIAP. The 'Espace 19 Multimedia' has the goal of providing computer training to those who request it and of promoting the use of ICT in the social centres' actions (school support, French language workshops for adults, help finding employment, etc.). The 'Espace 19 Multimedia' offers training that introduces people to micro-computing, basic software applications, Internet, and multimedia, as well as self-training (independent use of computers following initial training).

The PIAP called 'La Goutte d'Ordinateur' (no website) is managed by a social centre called Salle Saint Bruno. The area has a very high proportion of Maghrebian and African inhabitants and the vast majority people who use this PIAP are migrants, many of which are quite old. Today, few students use this PIAP. In general, users are those who do not have Internet at home, or sometimes users who come for additional training after having taken classes at a PIAP.

"In most cases, the user doesn't have a computer when he first comes, but he wants to learn how to use one and then buy one for home."

(...)

"Then there are people who were given a computer but don't know how to use it. So they come mainly to learn how to use their own computer at home."

(Interview with the manager of the PIAP 'La Goutte d'Ordinateur,' 7 August 2008)

The PIAP ‘*La Goutte d’Ordinateur*’ offers training workshops on word processing, spreadsheets, Internet browsing, as well as on more specific topics (editing photos, for example). The training workshops include six people and a teacher. Sometimes the training sessions are just for introducing people to computers. For example, the training session on 29 August 2008 (session organized in partnership with the Association on Social Service to Migrant Families – ASSFAM – www.assfam.org), had four trainees, including one woman (with her child on her back), all of whom were of African origin. During this session, the four ‘digital trainees’ learned how to use the keyboard (find the keys), write in uppercase and lowercase letters, change the size of characters, and save a document. ‘SOS Computer’ sessions are also available by appointment for people who are having trouble with one specific task:

“We had one woman who came to get help making little street flyers so she could advertise her cleaning services...”

(Interview with the manager of the PIAP *La Goutte d’Ordinateur*, 7 August 2008)

PIAP also play the role of an intermediary for migrants. For example, it directs migrants towards different associations and institutions depending on what their requests are: it could be a local association for people seeking to learn how to read/write in French, a public writer in the area for those seeking help writing a résumé, etc. PIAP thus works in partnership with a social centre called AGO, which gives reading classes:

“People in the process of becoming literate often come to the workshops here. Generally, the classes last one hour and have six/seven women (...). The women can leave their children with a day care service during the classes (...). These workshops work great. The idea is to learn how to use a computer while learning French... They learn how to use forms and there are audio exercises... It means learning how to use a tool with the end-goal being literacy.”

(Interview with the manager of the PIAP *La Goutte d’Ordinateur*, 7 August 2008)

Evaluation of the role of PIAP

One ongoing concern is evaluating how digital spaces are being used. Numerous studies have been carried out in recent years.³¹ Two in particular come to mind: the report by ARTESI on public Internet access in Île de France³² and a survey called ‘Digital Public Spaces: What Missions? What Future?’ (*Espaces Publics Numériques : Quelles missions? Pour quelle avenir?*) that looked at 16 digital public spaces in continental France. This survey reflects the diversity of these locations and the services they offer. It was carried out in 2005 by the association of alumni from the master program on digital public spaces (<http://epnologues.free.fr>)³³ under the authority of the Delegation on Internet Uses.³⁴ The Regional Agency for the Development of an Information Society (ARDESI, in the Midi-

³¹ A list of most studies on PIAP and their uses can be found on the site of the Delegation on Internet Uses (DUI in French): <http://delegation.internet.gouv.fr/netpublic/etudes.htm>. A bibliography and a webography (regional programs and national programs) are available on ARTESI’s site: <http://www.anetville.com/public/dossier.tpl?id=10697&chap=10807> and <http://www.anetville.com/public/dossier.tpl?id=10697&chap=10782>.

³² <http://www.anetville.com/public/dossier.tpl?id=10697>.

³³ The “*Association des Epnologues*” gathers alumni from the former Master program on “Public Internet Access Points” (University of Paris X-Nanterre). With the European process for the diplomas’ harmonization (Bologna process), this Master has been transform into a Master on “Conception and management of digital territorial projects ».

³⁴ www.delegation.internet.gouv.fr/chrgt/focus.pdf.

Pyrénées region, which is the first of its kind in France and was created and financed by the Midi-Pyrénées Region) also provides synopses on its website (www.ardesi.fr)³⁵.

What we see in these studies is an evolution in the trend. Originally, people came to simply learn how to use tools whereas now they are seeking more ‘specialized’ support services (job searches, school support, etc). This is linked to two things. First of all, it is linked to better knowledge of tools (thus we can say that the primary goal of such places has been met, or at least partially). Mastering the tools leads people to want to carry out more personal projects (build a personal site, create a blog, edit digital photos). Secondly, it is linked to the evolution of services offered online.³⁶

We also see a growing presence of people seeking employment (services offered by PIAP are following this trend). In rural areas, PIAP are also frequented by a few elderly persons who come to get training. For example, in the areas inhabited by migrants/IEM in Paris, 4 PIAP (*Espace 19 Multimedia*, *Réseau2000*, *EPN Relais Ménilmontant*, *EPN Belleville*) propose specific training sessions on job hunting.

The role of managers and trainers, who have to juggle highly between different requests and users, is sometimes delicate and their competencies are constantly being put to the test.³⁷

“Six trainees are the maximum one trainer can work with while still ensuring quality training. What is tough is dealing with the different levels. Trainees do not progress and learn at the same speeds. We do the best we can, because we cannot tell people no.”

(Interview with the manager of the PIAP *La Goutte d’Ordinateur*, 7 August 2008)

Since PIAP have had to adapt themselves to demand and various technical, social, and service-related trends, today they are playing a dual role: 1) providing basic computer knowledge (their initial mission) and 2) supporting people trying to use new online services, whether it be for specific users (job hunters, for example) or for a service trend (online administration).³⁸

More importantly, PIAP have succeeded in one essential mission: show people that learning how to use a computer and multimedia is very doable (de-dramatizing the process). The support they provide gives people ‘peace of mind’ and enables some to take the step of purchasing a computer.

“After all, our goal is to make the whole process less dramatic... Sometimes, we see people who are hesitant about using a computer. In the first classes, we look at how computers are built. We teach them that there’s nothing magical about it, that it’s a little like a car: it needs parts to function. The main idea is to show them what they can do with computers.”

(Interview with the manager of the PIAP *La Goutte d’Ordinateur*, 7 August 2008)

This de-dramatization process can even be deeper in the case of migrants. They too are not always confident in their knowledge of the tools, but, in addition, they are not always confident in their knowledge of the language or the environment, and some do not have legal status in France which increases their lack of confidence.

“People feel safe when they come here, even if some of them are illegal immigrants. They know it’s a friendly association. The area implies this as well. There are lots of

³⁵ See in particular their 2006 synopsis: www.ardesi.fr/IMG/pdf/Acces_public_06.pdf.

³⁶ See the 2006 synopsis by ARTESI: www.ardesi.fr/IMG/pdf/Acces_public_06.pdf

³⁷ See ARTESI’s 2006 report: <http://www.anetville.com/public/dossier.tpl?id=10697>.

³⁸ www.anetville.com/public/dossier.tpl?id=10697&chap=10744.

associations. We don't try to create any problems for them. They know they can ask any kind of question. They feel rather free here."

(Interview with the manager of the PIAP *La Goutte d'Ordinateur*, 7 August 2008)

Public and Private Involvements, private access points

PIAP are financed by the State and local government. Among the public financers, we generally find the Delegation on Internet Use (DIU), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, or the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*. But, it is essentially local public institutions (local government) that finance PIAP (and notably who pay employee salaries, etc.). Generally, we find here the town or the 'community of towns' (or 'agglomeration community' / administrative district), the Regional Council, sometimes the General Council, and the County Direction of Work and Employment. Accordingly, the PIAP *Réseau 2000* is financed by the City Hall of Paris, the Regional Council (Île-de-France), and the City Hall of Paris' 19th district provides the premises; the PIAP *La Goutte d'Ordinateur* is financed by the Paris City Hall and the Regional Council (Île-de-France). This PIAP is currently looking to get the Cyberspace label, which would increase the subventions it receives from the State (from the *Caisse des Dépôts* and the City Hall of Paris). Lastly, all PIAP work with a number of voluntary workers (the exact number depends on the size of the PIAP).

Mainly state companies are involved:

- ☒ First, and this is the most involved, the *Caisse des Dépôts*, a national financial institution (See Country Report).
- ☒ *La Poste* (see above the Cyberposte), also a national company.
- ☒ Recently the RAPT (*Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens* / Autonomous Operator of Parisian Transports, also a national company) has launched a project. Since 2006, a partnership agreements have been signed with the RATP and around 10 buses have been equipped with access points (pilot project Cyberbus)
- ☒ *France Télécom* signed, along with the city of Paris, a 'Charter on innovative departments' and participates in the PARVI project. France Télécom has also created some 'Multimedia Spaces in Town' (*Espaces Multimédia dans la Ville – EMV*) based on local dynamics combined with national support. Most of them are specifically addressed to elderly (www.e-seniors.asso.fr), people with disabilities (www.visuf.com) and women (axescyberfemmes.org). France Telecom, a former State company (France's national telecommunications operator) is a limited company where the majority of the capital is held by the State.
- ☒ A few private companies might take part in some PIAP operations, in particular by providing materials or by making monetary donations. For example, the PIAP *La Goutte d'Ordinateur* received computers from the Benelux company when it was created; the PIAP *Espace 19 Multimedia* received 60 computers from the IBM company as well as € 15,000 from Vivendi Universal when the project was launched (*Espace 19 Multimedia* is also financed by the Paris city hall and has the PARVI label).

The involvement of private companies in such projects remains rather uncommon and public/private partnerships in these types of projects are still underdeveloped.

The privately owned ‘communication shop’

*Teleboutiques*³⁹ offer access to international telephone booths. They were set up following the deregulation that occurred on 1 January 1998. It is in such *teleboutiques* that the majority of Internet access points have been developing since late 2000. These ‘shops’ therefore became known as tele-cyberboutiques offering telephone service (with discount rates for calls abroad), Internet access, and pre-paid phone cards. Other modern services related to the notion of free use of devices of digital reproduction also sprang up: one or two copy machines, a photo booth (mainly for identity photos), and a service for sending and receiving faxes.⁴⁰

These ‘communication shops’ are owned by migrants and set up for migrants. There has hence been a marked diversification and specialization of services intended for migrants: Communication shops have been set up close to firms that write (sometimes even public writers) and translate administrative documents.⁴¹ Numerous shops nearby offer as well services that unblock mobile phones (unblocking lets people insert a French chip into a phone purchased abroad or vice-versa).

Since the early 2000s, such shops have been flourishing in areas with IEM such as la Goutte d’Or, Château Rouge (mainly African and North African migrants), Aligre in the 11th district (North African migrants) or La Chapelle (Tamils) in Paris where hundreds of ‘communication shops’ can be found.

These areas are ‘community neighbourhoods’ where people also come to shop, meet friends, or simply ‘feel at home.’ For example, Aroumougam (retired, 60 years-old, and originally from Pondichery, India) lives in the distant suburbs (Brétigny), but prefers:

“coming all the way here [La Chapelle] because there are Indians and Indian restaurants. It feels like home.”

And, he goes to a communication shops in La Chapelle twice a week.

Based on our observations, we were able to elaborate the following general profile for communication shops: a few connection points (2/3 up to some fifteen work stations), in most cases there are telephone booths (normally 4/5), and prepaid phone cards are always sold. The owners are from North Africa, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the vast majority of clients are foreign, or even exclusively foreign in neighbourhoods with a high migrant/IEM population.

Riaz runs a communication shop in La Chapelle (Tamil/Indian neighbourhood) and is from Bangladesh. Most of his clients are Indian or Maghrebian:

“Most clients are Indian or Maghrebian. They work in the food sector and are on break between 3:00 and 6:00 [p.m.]. They come for about two or three hours because they don’t have to go home on their break” (Interview with Riaz, mana 12 August 2008)

Most clients are young (the average in our sample was 25-30) and are men. Women and retired persons – immigrants – are also around, but are rarer. The interviews were held in four

³⁹ French term signifying “communications shop,” which provides access to telephones and proposes discount rates for international calls.

⁴⁰ Claire Scopsi, PhD thesis on *Représentations des TIC en milieu migrant: le cas des «boutiques de communication» de Château-Rouge* (University Paris 10, September 2004).

⁴¹ Ibid.

communication shops: two in La Chapelle (Indian/Sri Lankan neighbourhood) and two in Aligre/Fbg St. Antoine (Maghrebian neighbourhood).

Uses

Migrants/IEM go to communication shops en masse and do so mainly for recreational uses. In fact, communication shops offer users a level of intimacy that PIAP, libraries, or more formal/institutionalized locations do not offer.

“I think that people who use Skype and MSN don’t come here because maybe it’s more relaxed in a communication shops and more friendly. Here, things are a bit more institutional” (Interview with the manager of the PIAP La Goutte d’Ordinateur, 7 August 2008).

“It’s easier to chat here because many Maghrebians live with their family. People can go on chat sites to meet people without having their family staring over their shoulder” (Amar, manager of a communication shop in the 11th district, 6 August 2008).

Some users even admit to having an Internet connection at home but prefer coming to communication shops to check their e-mail and surf the web (Nishanthan, 28, native of Sri Lanka). Nishanthan is married and has one child. He works as a barman in a café nearby. He goes to the communication shop during his breaks and after he finishes work in the evening. Amin (28, Algerian) and Abdou (24, Moroccan⁴²), for example, have computers at home, but they go to communication shops to chat with girls.

“At home, it’s not easy to chat. I have little brothers and it’s annoying. Here, it’s cool” (...).(Abdou, August 6 2008).

This recreational use mainly includes these activities:

- ☒ checking personal e-mail.
- ☒ chatting with friends or family members.
- ☒ reading news/newspapers from the native country.
- ☒ going on meeting sites.

The study conducted by the Beaubourg Library (Centre Pompidou) in 2004 also shows a trend towards more recreational uses: portals and research engines (46% of visits), leisure and online games (11.2%, but 22.4% of visits to non-Francophone sites and only 1.3% of visits to Francophone sites), news (12.5%), administrative portals (like ANPE, 9.2%), meeting sites (5.7%), documentation and learning (6.5% of total visits).⁴³

Indians/Tamils/Sri Lankans

The main reason Indians and Sri Lankans go to communication shops is to:

- ☒ chat – in Tamil – with family and friends back ‘home.’ Priya (a 23 year-old Sri Lankan woman), for instance, was chatting with an old friend from school just before our

⁴² Here, this refers to the interviewees countries of origin. We asked them about their administrative and civil status. We cannot, however, guarantee the sincerity of their replies as far as citizenship or their legal status in France is concerned.

⁴³ These data are based on a survey carried out in 2004: *Les consultations “libres” d’Internet à la Bpi. Etude exploratoire*, by Muriel Amar, Evaluations Unit and Bruno Béguet, Service for Print and Electronic Documents. November 2004, 29 p. Unpublished.

interview. She chats with her family and her old friends at least twice a week. As for Nishantan (28, native of Sri Lanka), he simply chats with ‘anyone who speaks Tamil.’

☒ read the news in Tamil: Pathivu.com and Puthinam.com for Yokam (26, native of Sri Lanka) and Siva (30, native of Sri Lanka). Or, Dinamalar.com for Aroumougam (60, native of India).

☒ visit sites on the latest Indian films (Bollywood), or sites on Indian actors or music. The Lankasri site (cinema and film) for Siva (20, Tamil), and for Priya and Nishanthan. Or also Tamil.cinesouth.com (Yokam, a 26 year-old Tamil)

“I just check out what’s going on over there. I follow the news, find out about music and movies, and lots of things like that.” (Nishanthan, 28, native of Sri Lanka)

☒ download Indian music (Priya, Nishanthan)

☒ visit meeting sites, but exclusively Indian or Sri Lankan meeting sites (in Tamil). (confirmed by Riaz, manager of a communication shop in La Chapelle: *“Indians mostly visit Indian meeting sites”*). The meeting site used by Aroumougam, for example, is Bharatmatrimony.com.

The Tamils (Indians and Sri Lankans) are rebuilding here in France their original area, their own Tamil space: they only read news and magazines in Tamil; they chat only in Tamil with their friends and family in their native country; they spend time finding out about Indian films or actors (Bollywood), but not about French or American films; they sign up for meeting sites exclusively in Tamil, etc. This act of ‘reconstructing’ a ‘Tamil space’ (above and beyond borders and physical spaces) is partially – but not only – due to their lack of fluency in French.

“Indians (...) feel the need to enter into their world. That is done through music, films; they communicate with their family over msn or yahoo. Lots have wives back home. (...) Indians are not as integrated due to language issues. Maghrebians speak the language, so it’s easier for them.”

(Interview with Ryaz, 12 August 2008)

Maghrebians

“Well, as for the Maghrebians, they use meeting sites. Sometimes they come and chat five minutes and if they can get a meeting with the girl, well they leave” (Amar, manager of a communication shop attended by Maghrebians in the 11th district)

Young Maghrebians come to communication shops first of all to check their e-mails. Then they go on meeting sites or start chatting (MSH). They generally sign up for French meeting sites: Skyrock or match.com for Amin (24, Algerian) and Abdou (28, Moroccan): *“Skyrock is free and it’s easy to meet girls”* – Amin); meetic or match.com for Tony (28, Algerian), etc.

They read the Algerian press and visit Algerian or Moroccan information sites: ElKhabar, Alegerieinfo.com, El Watam, kabilie.com.

“It’s just to see what’s going on back home” (Moktar, 27, Algerian)

They might read the French press, but in this case, most of the time they are looking for information about their country:

“I read the French news. I read the headlines to see if anything interests me (...) But, what I’m more interested in is finding out what’s happening back home. You’re not going to find that in a newspaper here” (Tony, 28, Algerian)

They can also download software (Amin), download music, or even print a plane ticket.

Taking care of administrative procedures online is thus not a common practice in communication shops, just like in PIAP or libraries. These migrants occasionally visit sites like the ANPE (National Employment Agency, Nishanthan, Tony, 28, Algerian, for example), the CAF (Family Allowance Funds/Welfare Funds, Aroumougam, 60, or Tony), or sites on social security and taxes. Tony, the only interviewee in our sample with a college education, was also the one who visited the most administrative sites and was the only one who used the Internet for official procedures (to file his taxes).

Migrants might also go to PIAP to do these procedures:

“We have Mr. Labib, who took classes and comes here when he pleases to do all his procedures... So, he signed up for online banking and the social security site all by himself... We are always there to help, because in the beginning he didn’t know how to do everything.”

(Interview with manager of the PIAP *La Goutte d’Ordinateur*, 7 August 2008)

The PIAP *La Goutte d’Ordinateur*, for example, intends to set up small two-hour workshops on how to file taxes online.

In any case, migrants do not carry out online (or very rarely) procedures specifically linked to their situation as a migrant (to the police headquarters, for example). They prefer going there physically:

[Police headquarters] *“I don’t need to go on the Internet. I go there in person. I go pick up the documents, fill them out, and then take them back to the Prefecture” (Tony, 28, Algerian).*

“No, I never go on the Internet for administrative matters. I just go to the prefecture or the city hall” (Moktar, 37, Algerian)

“We don’t see many clients who go on administrative sites. Most of the time, it’s just people who want to print their résumé” (Amar, manager of a communication shop in the 11th district).

Physical contact seems to always be necessary when it comes to sensitive issues or complicated procedures: people need someone to talk to. On the Internet, the migrant is afraid of not understanding and he/she does not entirely trust the system: he/she fears that the request (documents, registration, etc.) will not be taken into account. This is even more so the case when there is a language barrier. For example, Aroumougam (60, Indian) wanted to send an e-mail to the city hall to request housing, but given the difficulty he was having writing an e-mail, he went there in person. Nishanthan provides another example:

“I looked [at the CAF website] to see about changing my wife’s maiden name. I wanted to send an e-mail, but I ended up going there in person. It was easier, because I don’t read that well” (Nishanthan, 28, Sri Lanka).

Online shopping is also very rare. This is the case at BPI as well as at the communication shops. In fact, not one of our interviewees had bought things online more than once. The few examples of online shopping were to buy plane tickets. All admitted a high level of mistrust vis-à-vis online shopping.

Skype and webcam are also not used very often (most communication shops have the material for it, however): Abdou and Amin use webcam to chat with girls; Tony, the 37 year-old Algerian is one of the rare interviewees who more or less masters multimedia and software (he has college education) and uses them a bit more often to chat with friends.

All interviewees – Maghrebians, Sri Lankans, and Indians – visit communication shops between two and five times per week.

Exchange of competences: Initiatives and associations

Various associations working to promote Internet use or the exchange of competence, knowledge, or research are partners with the DIU (Delegation for the Use of the Internet). Some have partnered with local government; we occasionally see partnerships with the private sector.

Selection of associations

☒ ‘Ville Internet’

Ville Internet (Internet City) is a successful support initiative that has been carried out in partnership with the national company *Caisse des Dépôts*. It is a network of local elected representatives and local associations. Their aim is to share their knowledge and experience about Internet and ICT in order to develop local and citizen-involved Internet. This exchange platform relies on more than 1,000 local communities (registered). It awards labels to municipalities (communities/towns) that have made Internet one of their ‘public service’ missions and it also carries out studies.

☒ ‘Artesi Ile-de-France’ (www.artesi.artesi-idf.com/public/artesi/)

The Regional Agency for Technologies and Information Society in Île-de-France (ARTESI) has the goal of promoting the use of ICT within local communities in the region. To meet this goal, Artesi helps local institutions to understand the importance of ICT and their impact on local development. It also promotes city halls that have innovative websites and supports the creation of PIAP by local government.

☒ ‘Médias-Cité’

This association’s mission is to democratize ICT uses in education in cooperation with local and national government. It works as a network for the exchange of competence and experience.

☒ The Observatory of Digital territories (*Observatoire des Territoires Numériques* – OTeN)

The Observatory of Digital territories’ task is to promote the digital development of territories, from the local territories to districts and regions. This association relies directly or indirectly on various players within a given territory: regions, *départements*, and cities. It increases the circulation of information, the exchange of experiences and informs people about the issues related to Information Society. It is supported by local government and by the *Caisse des Dépôts*.

☒ Tour of French Territories (*Tour de France des territoires* – TFT)

The association TFT brings key players (high-ranking civil servants, elected representatives, companies, and civil society) together to discuss and organize digital projects throughout all the country.

☒ The New Generation Internet Foundation (*Fondation Internet nouvelle generation* – FING)

The FING is a collective project that monitors research and development (R&D) and various tests on Internet use. The FING is also a network, a think-tank, and a place to promote innovations and innovators.

The FING is financed by the DUI, France Telecom/Orange, the RATP, and the *Caisse des Dépôts*.

☒ 'Icom'

Icom is a digital resources centre for disabled people. It is supported by local and central government, and by the companies IBM and Microsoft.

☒ Click and trigger (*Clic et déclic*)

This association's task is to raise the awareness of teachers, parents, and high school students about the importance of 'going digital.' It works in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the DUI.

The National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities (*Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances* – ACSE – www.lacse.fr) was set up for improving the life and integration of IEM in France.

ACSE replaced the FASILD in 2006 (Fund for the Support of Integration and Fight against Discrimination – *Fonds d'Action et de Soutien pour l'Intégration et la Lutte contre les Discriminations*). The ACSE is in charge of implementing governmental orientations in terms of town planning, integration, fight against discrimination, and equal opportunities. On one hand, it implements, on the national territory, actions aiming at integrating IEM living in France. It participates in fighting against discriminations and as well in literacy campaigns. On the other hand, it participates in actions in favour of disadvantaged areas (within urban development planning). In this framework, it promotes access to knowledge and culture. Priorities of ACSE are:

- ☒ access to employment for IEM people and fight against discrimination they might face because of their origins
- ☒ equal access to rights
- ☒ actions promoting education to citizenship and mastering civil duties
- ☒ support actions for IEM living in immigrant communities
- ☒ actions specifically dedicated to elderly IEM
- ☒ actions in favour of integration in rural areas

But none of the actions undertaken by ACSE are combining these integration and social cohesion priorities with teaching and using IEM to reach these very priorities.

The case of 'Migration in Besançon' website

<http://migrations.besancon.fr/>

This website, launched in December 2007, is dedicated to the history of migrations in Besançon (a city located in the east of France with around 120,000 inhabitants). 'Better understand each other to better live together' is the goal stated on its website. This 'history' is written through a collaborative website so that everybody can contribute and this history can be written together (cf. country Report).

This website is a good example of collaborations and partnerships, with collaborations relying on citizen commitment, and partnerships involving national and local government institutions or agencies, and a few private partners.

Public partners include the Community Centre for Social Action of the city of Besançon, the University of Franche-Comté, the National City of the History of Immigration,⁴⁴ the National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities (ACSE), the Regional Board for Culture Affairs of Franche-Comté, the Regional Medical Insurance Fund of Franche Comté (CRAM), the Regional Archives of Doubs, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE).⁴⁵

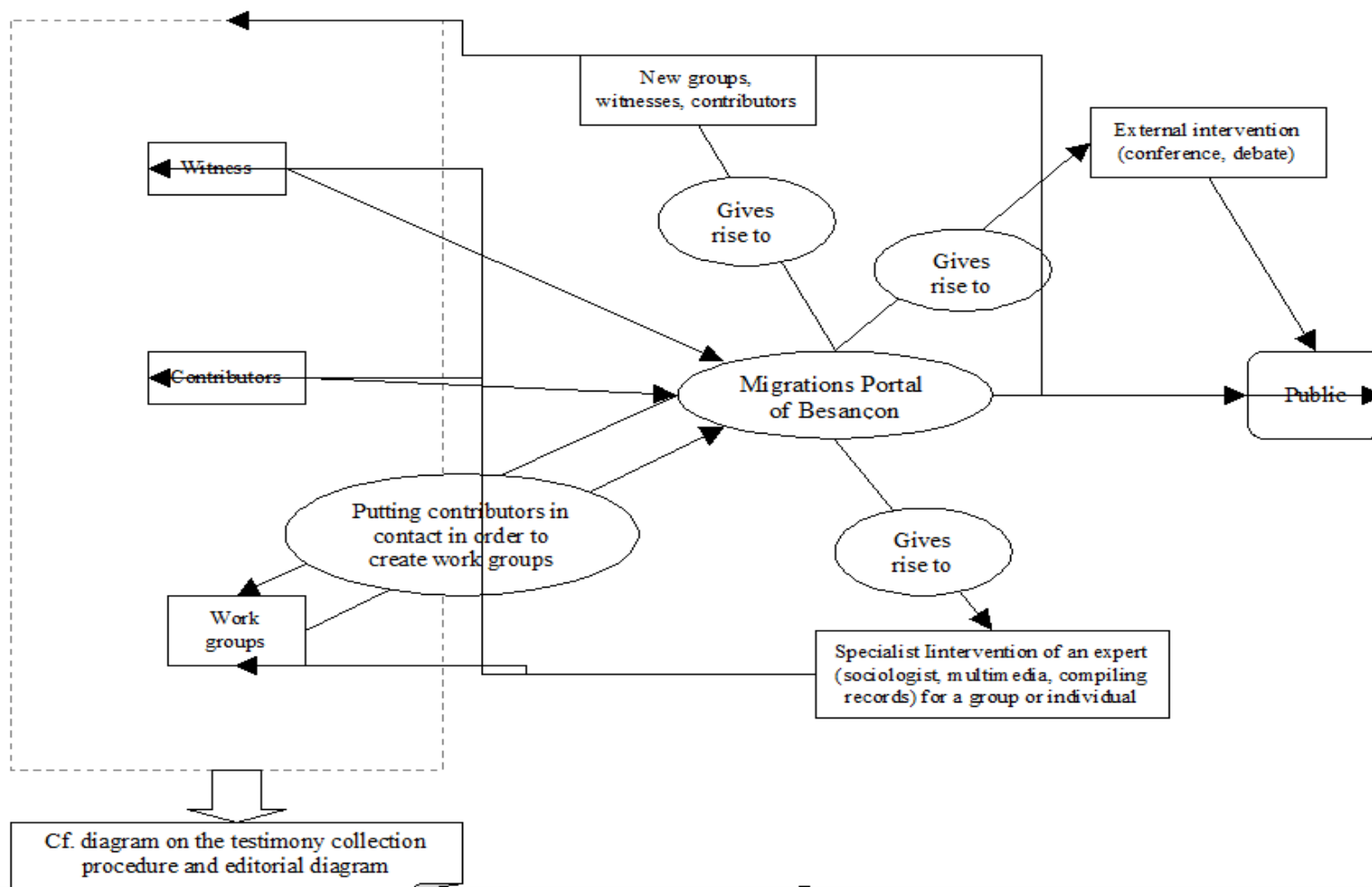
Private partners include: 1. The *Caisse d'Epargne*, a major French bank; 2. The *Fondation de France*, recognized as being of public interest and which redistributes funds in areas related to solidarity and healthcare, and which supports projects in the educational, scientific, social, and/or cultural domains; and 3. *Radio Sud*, a local radio station created in a migrant area inhabited mainly by North African migrants in a suburb of Besançon (Cité de l'Escale).

The following diagrams show how the collective systems on migrations in Besançon work.

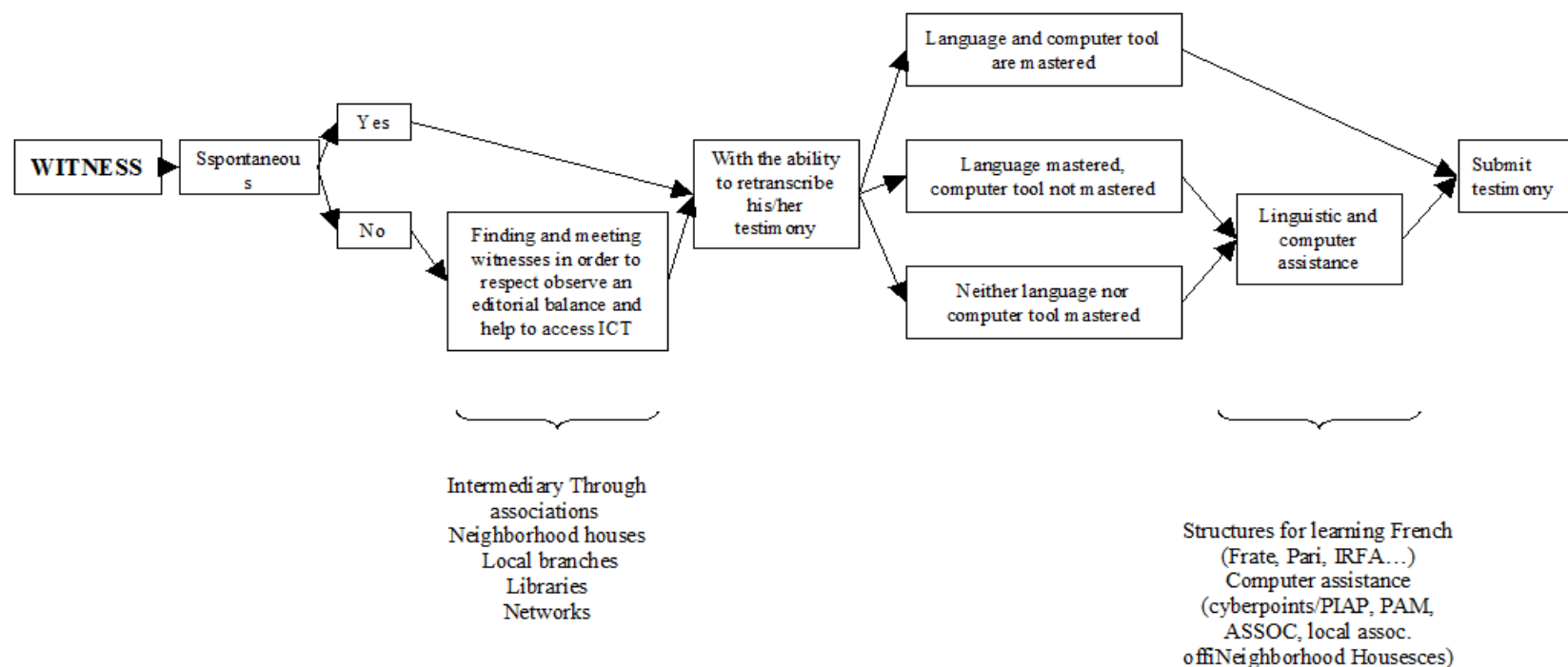
⁴⁴ The National City of the history of Immigration, located in Paris, is dedicated to gather, collect and save all documents, elements related to the history of immigrations in France. It organises as well exhibitions, conferences (www.histoire-immigration.fr).

⁴⁵ National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) is a Directorate General of the Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Employment. It is therefore a government agency.

1. GENERAL PROJECT DIAGRAM



2. INDICATIVE DIAGRAM OF THE TESTIMONY COLLECTION PROCEDURE



1.4 Discussion

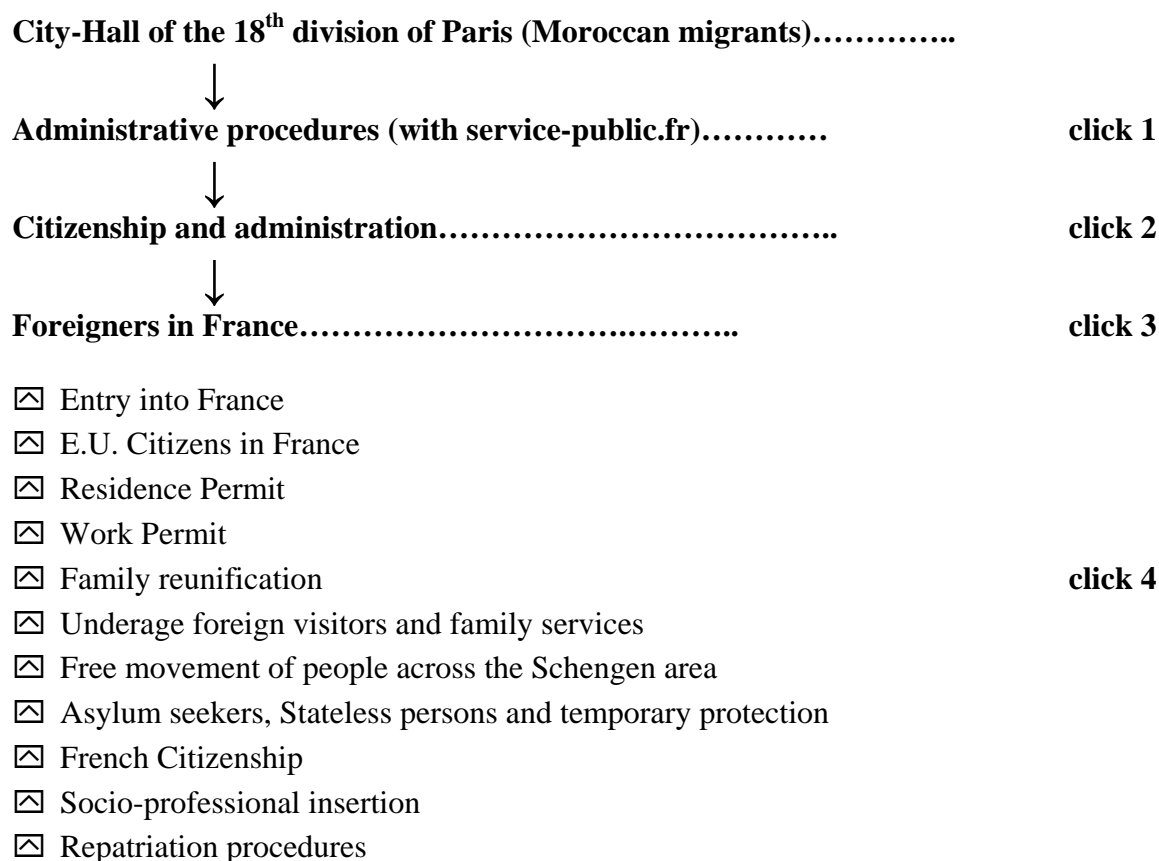
1.4.1 Promoting digitalization and the creation of accessible digital content on platforms

- ☒ The areas French governmental agencies most frequently invest in were messaging and - websites/portals. These areas also represent the most successful initiatives. Online information, online services, online forms, and digital content portals have been developed and promoted. The user can almost always find on government websites: information on rights and formalities, definition, conditions to fulfil, application procedures, steps to be taken, required documents, places where the information is available, references, reports, civil service directory, and sometimes guidelines and online forms.
- ☒ Another positive point is the integration by many local government portals and websites of key information from the central *service-public.fr* portal. It fosters easier access and understanding of the information and simplifies the administrative ‘language’.
- ☒ But, as seen above in the ‘Focus on areas inhabited by Moroccans,’ this cross-reference to the central *service-public* portal as an integrative and unique window onto civil service information has not been implemented by all local government websites. As document no.1 shows, a third of the city hall’s websites have not included any information from ‘service-public’.
- ☒ Delivering key services: Information on procedure and formalities are generally available and detailed.
- ☒ But, although most of the administration websites adopted the *service-public.fr* design, still, for subjects concerning Migrant/IEM, there are not that many services online: 1. not so many electronic documents or application forms (CERFA forms) are online (most of the time, the user can view examples of documents, but cannot fill them out online and users still have to physically go to the premises of the relevant administration to get the form); 2. there are very few guidelines available or informational leaflets to help the user/applicant handle the formalities and understand French administrative language; 3. and, there is no dematerialized (e-procedure) procedure with the exception of the online visa application for biometric visa offered by a few consulates abroad and of the student visa procedure established by CampusFrance (both being services set up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
- ☒ Plus, migrants do not access this information online and do not carry out procedures online.
- ☒ They are distrustful of Internet and prefer going to official offices in person. They fear that their request will not be processed correctly or that they might not understand the instructions. The linguistic question – and the complexity of administrative language in France – is also an obstacle to this type of Internet use.
- ☒ Linguistic diversity (and therefore pluralism) has definitely not been set as a standard or a priority, and initiatives aiming at fostering linguistic diversity are rather rare if not inexistent. Most of the Websites that might be visited by Migrants/IEM do not offer translations of key information in any other language. There is no English translation of the content (or part of the content) of the central portal on the French civil (*service-public.fr*). As far as local government (city halls) websites are concerned, very few of them provide some information in English (when English is available it most often

pertains to tourism). Here, these official Websites follow the official line in France about integration which stipulates that “A foreigner allowed to stay and establish him/herself in France must master the language.”⁴⁶ The noticeable exceptions to this line are 1. the guidelines for asylum application proposed by the OFPRA in Russian, Lingala, Turkish, Tamil, and Arabic; and 2. all the information targeting foreign students: the website of CampusFrance provides an English translation, the city of Paris’ Website offers a guide on studying in Paris (information about housing, necessary steps to settling in, foreign qualifications recognized in France, etc.) and the English, Spanish, and German versions of the section ‘Studying in France’ of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs present even more information than the French.

- ☒ The accessibility of the information: two-thirds of city hall websites have included the information from ‘service-public.fr’ But, among them, some do not present an easy (quick and understandable) access to this portal (see document n°4). A third of the websites do provide easier access (average of 5 clicks to get to the key information).

Diagram of the digital route to get to the information starting from a city hall website.



⁴⁶ See website of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Development Partnerships.

Access to the information.....	click 5
Definition of family reunification	On-line forms
Family reunification recipients	
Conditions to fulfil	<i>Legal References</i>
Process of family reunification	
The arrival in France of members of the family	
Right to stay of the applicant and his family	

1.4.2 Access to computer equipment and training

- ☒ Public Internet Access Points (PIAP) offer access and ICT training and support actions adapted to the needs of excluded groups. None of these PIAP has missions that expressly target IEM, but since they do target unemployed people or inhabitants of disadvantaged areas, they do concern IEM indirectly.
- ☒ While trying to adapt their actions and services, PIAP today fulfil a double mission: raise public awareness and marketing social assistance to specific disadvantaged people.
- ☒ Simplifying/de-dramatizing the use of computers and multimedia is a goal that has been largely accomplished (for those people who attended training sessions). Our interviews and observations clearly indicate this: most people acquire a computer after attending a workshop or training session and then use multimedia and software at home.
- ☒ That said, some people have not entirely appropriated these tools. By using local social centres, many people that were hesitant vis-à-vis ICT have indeed been impacted positively. But, these PIAP are not so numerous in underprivileged neighbourhoods (eight PIAP in areas inhabited by IEM in Paris) and are not specifically targeted to migrants.
- ☒ Simply introducing someone to ICT is not enough. Teachers at PIAP find themselves obligated to offer subsequent assistance to people, to give on-the-spot advice for any given topic related to ICT.
- ☒ These remarks raise questions about the number of PIAP (insufficient), their popularity, and their funding. In fact, all rely on volunteer workers due to inadequate funds for hiring employees. Moreover, the hardware used is often quite outdated.
- ☒ At the same time, whereas the national programs' initial objectives were not always reached, they do tend to call for more specific actions (employment, ICT training) or more specific target groups (inhabitants of disadvantaged areas), or local (i.e. rural) projects to concentrate on local land development issues.
- ☒ Finally, providing access to networks and computer equipment everywhere seems a bit unrealistic (very difficult in some remote and rural areas). Whereas Paris and its suburbs are well equipped with PIAP (59 in Paris, 48 in Val d'Oise, for example), other areas are not as well equipped (12 PIAP in Jura, 28 in Lot et Garonne, 31 in Dordogne, 11 in Cher, 9 in Indre, 24 in Puy de Dôme). These gaps can only be filled by specific regional programs like those in Bretagne, in Nord-pas-de-Calais, in the southeast (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur), and in the two central regions of Limousin and Pays de la Loire. However, IEM are quite rare in rural areas.

- ☒ Students no longer rely on public connection services (while they were numerous when the first PIAP were created in the 90s). They have ICT at home and know how to use it. They therefore are no longer part of underprivileged populations in terms of digital literacy and this includes foreign students.
- ☒ Achieving affordable access is also a delicate matter. Most PIAP are dependent on associations and being a member of that association is required to be able to attend any training courses. One cannot just show up and ask for training or explanations.
- ☒ As for partnerships, collaboration across government agencies and institutions have been developed. The DUI, Ministries and cities participate jointly seek to finance PIAP and therefore to reduce the digital gap. Associations (local and national) play a major role in this type of government support. However, few private companies are involved.

CASE STUDY 2 - THE EDUCATION WITHOUT BORDERS NETWORK: ICT AS A TOOL FOR BOTTOM-UP INTEGRATION



2.1 *Introduction: top-down integration and bottom-up integration*

In France, when we speak of migrant integration – whether it be in political language or in the language of the human sciences – we are most often speaking about insertion or institutional hospitality. In this optic, integration refers to a set of economic, legal, and political procedures for managing immigrant populations in which the State plays the principal role. This kind of integration is rooted in systems: social system, education system, or healthcare system, for example. However, this form of integration, which we can call top-down integration, is not all there is to integration.

Next to this type, or on its margins, there is another type. Depending on what the first type lack and its shortcomings, and this sometimes even goes against immigration policies, various forms of bottom-up integration are developed, a type of hospitality that can be called relational in the sense that it is primarily based on relationships between individuals, degrees of affective proximity, friendship, on feelings of solidarity, etc. In this case, integration occurs no longer through a series of formal steps and phases, but rather through everyday assistance, circumstantial aid, ‘small’ supporting actions, etc. from individuals that could be called migrant sponsors (or mentors): “a person who shares his/her French address book, lets someone else use his/her bank account to deposit checks, or helps another purchase a mobile

phone is not only carrying out acts of kindness (hospitality), he/she is also providing stepping stones towards integration.”⁴⁷

This type of integration does not require ICT to flourish. However, ICT, which has increased the number of vectors and methods of communication and networking, could be seen as playing the role of accelerating or multiplying these everyday factors of bottom-up integration. The Education without Borders Network provides an ideal example for testing this hypothesis.

2.2 What is the Education without Borders Network?

2.2.1 Birth of the network

Education without Borders Network (RESF) was created in June 2004 following a meeting at the Labour Council that included teachers and staff from the National Education Department, students’ parents, educators, associations, unions and human rights organizations.⁴⁸ All parties were alarmed by the precarious situation of undocumented children and adolescents that had received schooling in France and decided to create what they called a ‘solidarity network’ to monitor, circulate information, and mobilize people in favour of giving these children a legal status.

In France, any child who has received schooling cannot be ‘sent back to the border,’ i.e. the child cannot be expelled from the country. But if such a child is not granted a legal status during his/her schooling, what happens when he/she reaches the age of becoming eligible for expulsion? Even if the expulsion is not immediate, the person remains living with permanent fear of an interpellation that could destroy any plans for the future. But in reality this is not the only means of expelling children, because some parents have already been issued an ‘Order to Leave French Territory’ (Obligation de Quitter le Territoire Français, OQTF). And in almost all cases, parents leave together with their children leave. In this area, the French law that is supposed to protect families against split-ups and separation turns a blind eye.

It is now easy to understand why RESF’s initiatives are not limited to children. Very often the issue concerns entire families. In this respect, it is an outright struggle for the entire *sans-papiers*⁴⁹ movement that has been undertaken. RESF’s initiatives are diverse: raising awareness, information diffusion, event organization, mobilization in favour of individuals and families, sponsoring *sans-papiers* children, legal assistance, putting pressure on public authorities, and intervening in interpellations of the police (the ‘raids’) in order to warn the population and uncover new tactics.

It is necessary to point out here that RESF’s struggle is a fight on behalf of individuals who are “already integrated since they have been educated on French soil.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ DIMINESCU D., « Le migrant connecté », *Migrations/Société*, vol.17, n°102, pp. 275-292, <http://www.ticm.msh-paris.fr/spip.php?article32>

⁴⁸ <http://www.educationsansfrontieres.org/?article5>

⁴⁹ French term designating foreign individuals residing in France without an official legal status. “Sans-papiers” literally means “Without Papers” or “Paperless.” While “illegal immigrant,” “illegal alien,” or “undocumented person” would be acceptable translations, these terms do not accurately convey the social and political complexity of the immigrant phenomenon in France. We have therefore decided to maintain the term “*sans-papiers*” in English.

⁵⁰ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008.

2.2.2 Action groups and the network's organization

RESF is organized into action groups, which can be defined as “a group of people working together in a de facto rather than a legal/formal structure.”⁵¹ Of course, RESF includes organizations in the traditional sense of the word (associations, unions, etc.), but “individual participation is highly important in this network that is first and foremost composed of individuals.”⁵² “The RESF network basically operates through individualities, through relations.”⁵³ In general, RESF members know very few other members, and they have physically met even fewer times. No one really knows how many people are included in each action group.⁵⁴ Moreover, the degree of involvement of the different actors is highly variable. RESF action groups are spread throughout French territory, but are also present in Belgium and Morocco.⁵⁵ Each of them diffuses its own information, has its own contacts and electronic mailing lists and, in some cases, its own website.

The actual nature of the action groups is what determines their relations. The structure of the network is unique. There is no vertical and hierarchical structure, but “an informal structure without statutes, without organs, without fixed staff, and without offices”⁵⁶ and whose only internal force lies in the “emotion that arises in the school milieu, and beyond, when a youngster and his/her family admits to their situation and the risks they are facing.”⁵⁷ However, without organization the power of emotion and indignation does not translate into spontaneous action and horizontality. The network has a national office, with regional and sometimes municipal branches, support committees for specific school groups, and other type of action groups able to be incorporated into the network. Each action group has its own organizational principles and their coordination requires permanent interaction. Here, we are in the presence of a transversal operational mode, of an open network. RESF is a “new type of associative and political entity.”⁵⁸

2.3 Research methodology

Our research is based as much on field work (participative observation, documentation, interviews, and questionnaires) as on digital numeric data, namely exchanges on the electronic mailing list *resf75* comprised of RESF members located in Paris.

2.3.1 Interviews and questionnaires

As we said above, we held two interviews with active members in the network. The first was held on 27 November 2007 and the goal was to understand the structure of the network and the role played by electronic mailing lists in the network's various actions (decision-making processes, mobilization, etc). The second interview was with the administrator of the discussion list *resf75* and was held on 10 July 2008. It further addressed the roles of electronic mailing lists, looked into how *sans-papiers* and *sans-papiers* action groups participate in RESF's offline and online actions, and lastly examined sponsorship activities in support of *sans-papiers*.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Only administrators of internet discussion lists have a general view of action groups.

⁵⁵ Cf. <http://www.educationsansfrontieres.org/>

⁵⁶ Interview Jean-Jacques, RESF member, 27 November 2007.

⁵⁷ ELIE M., *Le RESF : un réseau « citoyen » influent fondé sur des usages de l'internet* : <http://www.oui.net/modules/news/article.php?storyid=121>

⁵⁸ Interview with Jean-Jacques, RESF member, 27 November 2007.

Thanks to the help from the administrator of the list *resf75*, we were able to diffuse a questionnaire on all RESF electronic mailing lists. The goal was to identify:

- ☒ the ways RESF members joined the network and the reasons for doing so
- ☒ The various processes sponsors undertake with their *sans-papiers* ‘godchildren’ and the communication methods used (face to face, home telephone, or mobile phone).
- ☒ Types of offline and online participation of *sans-papiers* and *sans-papiers* action groups
- ☒ The various activities in which members are involved (discussions about immigration laws and policy, discussions about practical cases, circulating and signing petitions, protesting and mobilizing in times of crisis, etc).

20 individuals answered to our questionnaire.

2.3.2 What is an electronic mailing list?

The digital numeric data we analyzed came from the electronic mailing list *resf75*. In an electronic mailing list any registered member can send messages to other members whose responses may be made available to everyone on the list. “Thus, actual discussion and information exchanges can happen. Mailing lists of this type are usually topic-oriented (for example, politics, scientific discussion, joke contests), and the topic can range from extremely narrow to ‘anything interesting.’ In this respect, they are similar to Usenet newsgroups, and share the same aversion to off-topic messages. The term discussion group encompasses both these types of lists and newsgroups.”⁵⁹

Electronic mailing lists must not be confused with ‘announcement lists,’ which are used for sending information across a list but only by certain members. We could also mention newsletters.

2.3.3 Analysis of the electronic mailing list *resf75*

We looked at all messages published on the electronic mailing list *resf75* between 25 September 2007 and 4 June 2008. Some statements on the technical aspect of how we processed the messages must be mentioned here:

- ☒ Programming language: we must start by saying that all data presented below was compiled using the C++ programming language.
- ☒ Data source: information to be processed is extracted from raw message files in the Mime⁶⁰ message format. We did not use automatic extraction tools (such as the Smartsave plugin for the Thunderbird messaging program) because these present shortcomings and cause information to be lost.
- ☒ Type of data processed: we analyzed data from message headings and not the body or content of these messages. The heading provides the date of the message, its sender, its subject or title, and lastly the type of message (information about its origin: new message, reply, forward).
- ☒ General comments on the graphs produced: we built graphs using this data. The summits or nodes in the graph belong to several different categories: one of them contains the individuals who sent messages, and the others are based on the subject of messages (it is

⁵⁹ Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_mailing_list

⁶⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIME>

possible to divide subjects into several categories depending on various criteria: proper names or mentioning exterior lists from where the messages were forwarded). There are lines/arcs in the graph between a sender and a subject in cases where the sender authors a mail with this subject.

- ☒ Visualizing the graph: the graphs are then visualized (spatial algorithm, colour coding nodes by category) using the open software Gephi, an independent project whose development is supported by WebAtlas.⁶¹

We will provide a detailed technical explanation of the different applications of this methodology in footnotes in the sections of the present case study that present these applications.

Lastly, we must point out the limits of our methodology, which are mainly due to the fact that we only consider message headings. In effect, some discussions can brutally change subjects without the message heading being changed. Our method did not allow us to take this aspect into account. However, this in no way means that our methodology is not valid, but only that our conclusions must be nuanced, and especially compared to qualitative data.

2.4 Who are RESF members?

The following observations are based on responses to our questionnaire.

2.4.1 Socio-professional profiles

The average age of people who took the questionnaire is 50. 60% of respondents are over 50 and 20% are retired.

40% live in Paris (the *arrondissements* represented include the 11th, 18th, 19th, and the 20th), 15% live in greater Paris, and 40% from the rest of continental France (Bordeaux, Le Havre, Montpellier, etc.). One respondent lives in an overseas territory (Guyana).

In terms of profession, 60% of respondents were professors or teachers. We should note that in and around Paris, these professions represented only 40% of our sample whereas elsewhere in France they represented 87.5%. So we could hypothesize – although this remains to be proven using a much larger sample – that in Paris RESF brings together diverse socio-professional categories which are not necessarily in contact with *sans-papiers* whereas RESF members from the rest of France are people directly concerned with the difficulties encountered by *sans-papiers* students.

Our sample also included one lawyer, one journalist, two therapists, and two computer specialists.

2.4.2 The first contacts and engagement in RESF

If we want to speak about the first contacts of RESF actors with the network and the origins of their engagement, we must also consider a multitude of events, circumstances, and individual motivations. As we have already said, RESF is organized into action groups composed first and foremost of individuals. But this does not mean we should underestimate the role of associations, unions, etc. in this type of contact: 25% of respondents belonged to a union (*Sud Education, Syndicat National Unitaire des Instituteurs, Professeurs des écoles et*

⁶¹ <http://www.webatlas.fr/>

Pegc), an association (*Associations pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne*) or the League of Human Rights. While the organization itself might become engaged in RESF (namely by creating an action group), engagement also regularly arises from ties of friendship within the organization or even through an 'individual approach.' In this case, the organization forms a place for activist activity rooted in personal engagement: 15% of respondents mentioned their activist activity (against the governmental procedures regarding foreigners' entry, residency, and right to asylum, the CESEDA, or involvement in questions linked to foreigners' right to reside in France, etc.) as the reason they joined RESF.

We observed that proximity, friendship, and more generally the 'so and so said' phenomenon can be considered as common vectors of engagement (20% of respondents). But, role of proximity, namely affective, is even more apparent when it comes to proximity to the *sans-papiers* themselves. 25% of respondents who were teachers or students' parents became activists because they directly observed the difficult situations facing some *sans-papiers* children having received schooling in France.

2 respondents did not remember why they joined RESF, with one of them claiming to have been part of the network since it was created.

Lastly, 20% of respondents got in contact with RESF via the Internet. One of them heard about RESF in a protest and then signed up via e-mail. Another was notified about the network in an e-mail in 2004; there was not yet an action group in this individual's department (Indre et Loire). We can hypothesize that the other respondents joined RESF by signing up on the electronic mailing lists.

2.4.3 Reasons for joining RESF

To explain the reasons for joining RESF, we will first present responses obtained to the 'options' proposed in the questionnaire: 1) affective proximity with one or more *sans-papiers*, 2) human rights, 3) defence of the family and child rights, 4) feelings of injustice, anger, etc.⁶²

Reasons (options in the questionnaire)	% of responses
Affective proximity with one or more <i>sans-papiers</i>	33.33
Human rights (human dignity)	88.89
Defence of the family and child rights	20
Feelings of injustice, anger, appalled by existing situation	50

Respondents also mentioned other reasons, which are even more significant given that respondents wrote them in (they were not proposed as options).

Reasons (not options in the questionnaire)	% of responses
Fight against France's immigration policies	44.44
Political activism	33.33

⁶² Our results were based on a panel of 18 people (two people did not reply to this question).

2.5 ICT as a weapon for the integration of sans-papiers

2.5.1 Activism and ICT – general overview

The emergence of Internet has favoured the genesis and development of new forms of social critique. While ICT is certainly not the ‘creator,’ it has shown itself to be perfectly adapted to these new forms that Fabien Granjon defines as follows:

*“We are seeking new forms of activist engagement appear that point to a passage from ‘traditional’ activism to distanced activism (neo-activism, a ‘new’ social critique), the symptoms of which can be seen in the renewal of collective modes of action as well as in the new forms of sociability this brings about. The main characteristic of this evolution is undoubtedly the declining influence of the federal system in favour of an organizational model based on networks. Neo-activists therefore prefer to express their concerns through multiple outlets, which are more modest and often devoted to a particular cause. Engagement plays out more so through a multiplicity of protest activities performed on a collective and individual level. What counts most for a neo-activist is no longer belonging to a specific ideological organization but rather generating projects or becoming involved in projects initiated by others and to utilize all connections that could be beneficial for a given project.”*⁶³

The Internet is a major tool for this type of activism. New figures of social critique are appearing that also play the roles of network facilitators, or ‘linkers’: the main example is the passers whose prime role is to “circulate throughout the network of networks more or less informal information that is produced within a restricted activist circle.” For passers, “online engagement cannot be dissociated from life experience.” Then there are the filterers who seek to “reassure activists-internet users threatened by the inflation of data and to help facilitate managing and appropriating transmitted information,” with the principles and norms for selection being defined collectively and according to a logic of auto-organization. Lastly, there are the interpreters, whose participation may be exclusively ‘online’ and who appear as experts that ‘convey meaning’ and who provide discussion tools to be used by activists.⁶⁴

Combining offline and online engagement qualifies as what Jacques Ion called post-it activism as opposed to ‘membership’ activism and which “offers activists engaged in an organization with a high online presence the possibility of withdrawing temporarily from the action while still staying informed of what is happening and hence able to ‘reenlist’ without problem when he/she so desires.”⁶⁵ Moreover, using these communication tools facilitates the diffusion of knowledge, the creation of knowledge capital, and the emergence of what we will call a ‘memory’ on the struggles.

2.5.2 Pre-ICT and the mobile phone: the sans-papiers of Saint-Bernard church

On 18 March 1996, Paris’ Saint-Bernard Church was occupied by more than 300 illegal immigrants who chose to call themselves *Sans-Papiers*. Choosing this name was part of a strategy to challenge the representations of ‘illegality’ or the ‘illegal’ status in favour of using

⁶³ GRANJON F., « Les militants-internautes : passeurs, filtreurs et interprètes », *Communication* (Université Laval. Département d’information et de communication), 2002, vol. 22, n°1, pp. 11-32 ; <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/spip.php?article260>

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ «L’internet militant, entretien avec Fabien Granjon», *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, Juillet-Septembre 2005, n°79, p. 25

a language of entitlement in order to reconcile the ambivalence or rather contradiction of de facto exclusion with the right to be present, or included. The right the *sans-papiers* were demanding was the right to be seen and heard. Put differently, the basic rights in any *democracy*. As demonstrated by E. Balibar in a text read on 25 March 1997 in honour of Saint-Bernard's *sans-papiers*, what these people showed was that democracy is never granted by some higher authority but that it is instituted by collective debate. This explains why those seeking to produce democracy face the risk of repression. These *sans-papiers* also showed that citizenship was not an institution or a status, but rather a collective practice.⁶⁶ Excluded among the excluded, these *sans-papiers*, or subalterns as some would say, "have ceased to simply play the victims in order to become the actors of democratic politics."⁶⁷ To assert their right to visibility, they raised their voices so that the voice of the voiceless could be heard.

Mobile technologies played a decisive role in this act of speaking out. The mobile phone, whose use then was much less frequent than today⁶⁸ and which was already a symbol of modernity, has become a collective combat weapon, a vector for negotiating with public authorities, an instrument for communicating with the press, but also a potential source of internal conflict given that the phone would often be monopolized by representatives of the *sans-papiers* and hence become a symbol of individual power in some situations.⁶⁹ This has been brilliantly illustrated by Madjiguène Cissé, representative and spokesperson for the *sans-papiers* of Saint Bernard, in her book *Paroles de sans-papiers*⁷⁰ (The Voices of the *Sans-papiers*; we should note the focus on the act of speaking), namely in the chapter called 'The Chicken and the Mobile' where she discusses the hybridization in the *sans-papiers* movement of animist practices and cutting-edge technologies, especially the mobile phone, this "distinguishing mark of the *sans-papiers*' spokesperson." Cissé also describes a traumatic scene: after the policemen raided the church, women police officers forced her to strip in front of her daughter, the goal being humiliation. But, the scene was made worse by the policemen's sarcastic comments like "*Ah ! Ah ! Elle ne l'a plus son portable, la porte-parole*" (play on words signifying "*Ha! Ha! Looks like the spokeslady's lost her speaker*") insinuating that as a foreigner, as an African, as a black woman "who just climbed out of her tree" there is no way she could have actually acquired this symbol of modernity and learned how to use it unless, of course, by copying others clumsily. It is here that the trauma is once again worsened, humiliation and nakedness becoming the loss of this combat weapon that was her mobile phone. This stripped her of her right to speech and therefore of her citizenship: it was no longer possible to hear the 'voice of the voiceless.'

This is an example of what Frantz Fanon calls the *quasi-invention* of a technique,⁷¹ or even inventing a new tool itself or at least innovative practices. The *sans-papiers* from Saint-Bernard church had no use for the telephone as a tool for individual communication but rather

⁶⁶ BALIBAR É., "What We Owe to the *Sans-Papiers*" in GUENTHER L. and HEESTERS C. (eds.), *Social Insecurity: Alphabet City No. 7*, Toronto: Anansi, 2000, pp. 42–43.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ It was the Sud PTT Union that distributed mobile phones to the representatives of the *sans-papiers*.

⁶⁹ DIMINESCU D., «L'usage du téléphone portable par les migrants en situation précaire», *Hommes et migrations*, n°1240, 2002. "The mobile phone took on a strategic dimension in the *sans-papiers* movement when Sud-PTT Union offered its support and gave representatives a mobile phone instead of walkie-talkies previously used in the traditional coordination of street protests. Above and beyond the organizational aspect, this instrument has become the medium through which several negotiations with public authorities have been held and through which contact with the press is maintained. It is also through the mobile phone that effective measures have been taken in tense moments."

⁷⁰ Cisse M., *Parole de sans-papiers*, La Dispute, Paris, 1998, p. 107

⁷¹ FANON F., « *This the Voice of Algeria* » in *A Dying Colonialism*, Grove Press, 2000.

erected it to the status of a collective weapon. In this sense, the sarcastic remarks the policemen made to Cissé were not only rooted in the stereotype that it is impossible for men and women of colour to enter into modernity. It was also based on a lack of understanding. Indeed, this was not only a question of repeating or imitating modern elements by those seen as the antithesis of modernity, but also a question of the production of new and original alternative modernities.

2.5.3 RESF and ICT – electronic mailing lists

F. Granjon writes: “whenever an organization’s scope of activity goes beyond national frontiers and must collaborate with different partners on all continents, the Internet is obviously an ideal tool that is easy to use and relatively inexpensive.”⁷² The same considerations hold true and can be taken even further when we look at RESF. We can say that RESF is simply a network of action groups composed of dispersed partners the coordination and reciprocal organization of which requires communication technologies. What Granjon said about the national and international scopes also applies to RESF within national borders and applies to any juncture between the ‘local’ and the ‘global.’

For RESF, the Internet is an amplifier, a tool that enables ensuring rapid national coverage (and now international), obtaining support from teacher unions, associations specialized in foreigners’ rights, and most importantly the multiple individuals for whom the Internet in some cases was the first form of engagement (with on-site engagement coming later). This tool enabled ‘globalizing’ activities of local action groups mainly through sharing experience about practical cases. It also enabled better circulation of information and helped each actor become more aware of official texts, etc.

Here we have touched upon one of the essential aspects of activism via ICT: using online interactions to build a base of practical knowledge, an internal memory that is “composed of all sorts of knowledge coherently organized and pooled online (...) with the net, this memory is diffused and shared much more widely.”⁷³ As a tool for diffusing knowledge, the internet also facilitates the development of genuine expertise, which was necessary for example when RESF moved its struggle onto the administrative and legal arena or when it set up republican sponsorship systems. RESF has created a genuine knowledge base on these practices online.⁷⁴

Combining online and offline activism is highly adapted to organizations which “are trying to structure themselves in a non-hierarchic way and become vectors of a type of social critique related to precariousness” (or the entire *sans* phenomenon: *sans-papiers*, *sans-droits*, etc).⁷⁵ In this respect, the ‘electronic mailing list’ tool is for RESF an essential weapon that is perfectly adapted to operating in an open network.⁷⁶ This tool has also helped improve coordination between action groups because the same individuals can be present on several lists at the same time, but especially thanks to the possibility of sending messages, namely petitions, from one list to the next.⁷⁷

⁷² «L’internet militant, entretien avec Fabien Granjon», op. cit., p. 29. Cf. également DIMINESCU D., «L’usage du téléphone portable par les migrants en situation précaire», op. cit.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁴ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the internet discussion list *resf75* on 10 July 2008.

⁷⁵ «L’internet militant, entretien avec Fabien Granjon», op. cit., p. 24

⁷⁶ Interview with Jean-Jacques, RESF member, 27 November 2007

⁷⁷ Ibid.

To conclude this section, we will say that RESF's originality resides in a certain corridor on the edges of the hybridisation of real and virtual, and the physical and digital modes of sociability, decision-making, and collective action.⁷⁸

2.5.4 Actions carried out by RESF members

In order to better understand the 'physical' and online activism within RESF, we must take a closer look at RESF members' activities.

We can start by saying that the levels of involvement within RESF are highly variable: "it ranges from people who are *only in charge of one sans papiers* on the school level to people with a global vision. There are also people with address books who know influential figures; this is the case of a journalist who knows where information must be diffused for it to have an impact."⁷⁹ In Paris, "we could very roughly estimate that there are 30 very active members."⁸⁰

These various forms of involvement imply different uses of ICT. In fact, someone whose main task is to support one *sans-papiers* makes limited or no use of ICT. On the other hand, someone with a 'global vision' intervenes more systematically on the electronic mailing lists.⁸¹ There also exist people that "one rarely sees (...), but to really be involved in RESF, one must participate physically. Someone who is only present on internet provides support, but that person is not engaged."⁸²

These differences also stem from inequalities in terms of knowing how to use ICT. "There are people who don't really know how to use e-mail; using e-mail in RESF depends on the professional and daily use or non-use of electronic messaging. We could easily identify a few typical writing styles."⁸³

Moreover, there are also action groups that use electronic mailing lists relatively little. The RESF action group in the Somme department "is led by a group of retired people" who themselves claim to be 'working the Somme.' They use their car and phones and carry out a massive amount of relational work."⁸⁴ Although this is an exception, it does nonetheless show how online interactions must always be accompanied by offline relations.

Lastly, all RESF members do not have the same level of access to ICT: some only have access to them at work while others only have access to them at home.

We can now give an overview of the activities in which the RESF members who responded to our questionnaire participate.

⁷⁸ Here we are not referring to the role played by the mobile phone, namely *emergency telephones* that are shared between RESF members in order to ensure that alerts are heard and information diffused about them: arrests of *sans-papiers*, announcing a "raid" on *sans-papiers*, etc.

⁷⁹ Interview with Sylvie, animator of the internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid. "this does not mean that engagement is only done through protesting or offering concrete support to *sans-papiers*. An intellectual or a researcher who organizes conferences or writes books is also highly engaged. The same goes for people who give their time and energy."

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Activities	Participation %			
	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
Discussion about legal texts and immigration policies	60	35	0	5
Discussion about practical cases	75	20	5	0
Circulating and signing petitions	90	5	5	0
Concrete actions (protests, mobilization, alerts, etc.)	85	15	0	0

Most RESF members in our sample regularly participate in all the network's activities. We must specify that while concrete actions are, for obvious reasons, exclusively offline, the other activities are held online and offline (in the field, in meetings, etc.). While circulating and signing petitions is the most regular activity (one of the respondents referred to it as 'a routine activity'), most likely due to the limited personal investment this requires, discussions about practical cases and especially 'concrete actions' also play significant roles. The figures for discussions about legal texts and immigration policies are a little bit lower. What we noted was that within the network there was no division between individuals carrying out exclusively or almost exclusively online activities and those who focus more on ground-level work.

In addition, we noted that almost all respondents checked the box corresponding to 'other activities.' This was often done to give more detail about concrete actions, to indicate the global process undertaken with *sans-papiers* (which was the subject of another question to which we will return later). In other cases, it was a question of a variety of activities. Here are some examples:

- ☒ Meeting *sans-papiers* at school organized by the support committee for *sans-papiers*
- ☒ Organizing sponsorship ceremonies at the town hall, protests to complement other RESF movements
- ☒ Implanting RESF in Belgium
- ☒ Self-learning in legal matters alongside the GISTI⁸⁵

The latter is an example of an *expert* activity. We also see a group of activities that entail joint initiatives on the part of RESF and unions: 'member of the Immigration/Sans-Papiers Commission of Sud-Education.' There are activities linked to communication: 'writing press releases,' 'parliamentary alerts.' Lastly, we can point out activities involving ICT: 'computer workshops for young adults'; 'updating the *resf37* website – managing *resf37*'s mailbox.'

2.5.5 The electronic mailing list *resf75* – combining online and offline activities

Interactions on the electronic mailing lists form an important, necessary, yet incomplete part of the network's activities. It remains to be known what exactly people speak about on these lists. We must start by specifying that each list has particular content depending on whether it is local or 'global.' The wider the geographical area covered by the list then the more

⁸⁵ GISTI: Groupe d'Information et de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés (Information and Support Group for Immigrant Workers)

interactions tend to deal with discussions, reflections, or organization.⁸⁶ Accordingly, on RESF's national list, a significant part of exchanges are devoted to discussing decision-making processes within RESF: finding out "how decisions are made and who makes them."⁸⁷ Inversely, on a local list, interactions deal much more with practical cases and emergency situations (arrests of *sans-papiers*, 'raids,' etc.). We have reason to think that in a certain respect, the case of the list *resf75* represents a median point.

We collected messages on the list posted between 25 September 2007 and June 4 2008. We obtained 11,437 messages over 113 days for an average of 101 messages per day. We were able to concoct a typology of interactions on the list⁸⁸ (which corresponds to a part of our classification of activities of RESF members):

- ☑ Discussions and reflections about legal texts and immigration policies, etc: these constitute a significant part of exchanges on the list although they are difficult to quantify. Here are some examples of message headings: 'Sarkozy's Speech on Morocco,' 'Immigration and Creation Debate.'
- ☑ Discussions and advice regarding practical cases: it is during these discussions that knowledge is pooled, that expertise develops, namely in legal matters regarding immigration.
- ☑ Alerts – support and mobilization in support of one single *sans-papiers*, 'anti-raid' actions: alerts are an extremely part of the exchanges on the list; the list enables 'instantly' diffusing information in order to mobilize rapidly (in these cases, however, Internet is often seconded by the mobile phone).⁸⁹ The word 'alert' is a real signal: it appears in the heading of 376 messages. This is even more the case for the word 'emergency' (or 'urgent'), which appears in the heading of 1,238 messages (10.82% of all messages). We can also cite the word 'arrest,' which is present in 879 messages and in most cases refers to specific cases.
- ☑ Petitions: circulating and signing petitions is, as we have seen, one of the most common activities. The word 'petition' appears in 191 messages from the list.
- ☑ Organisation and information about protests, gatherings, etc.: as in any activist activity, protests and shows of support are an essential element within RESF. The list can be used for scheduling, organizing, and especially diffusing information about such events. The word 'protest' is found in 171 messages and the word 'gathering' in 196 messages.
- ☑ Network organization, meetings, planning: the electronic mailing list also helps organize the network as well as plan and schedule meetings. The word 'meeting' appears in 148 messages, the word 'schedule' in 306 messages; therefore, at least 4% of messages deal with some type of organizing activity.
- ☑ Debates (controversy): the discussion list is sometimes the place for debates about for example the decision-making process within RESF. This was the case for example when RESF paid 5,000 euro to have an advertisement in the French newspaper *Le Monde*.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Interview with Jean-Jacques, RESF member, on 27 November 2007

⁸⁷ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), on 10 July 2007.

⁸⁸ This is based on our own observations, namely by quantifying key-words from the list. These observations were reviewed and corrected by Sylvie, the list's administrator.

⁸⁹ Interview with Jean-Jacques, RESF member, 27 November 2007.

⁹⁰ RESF had just received 75,000 euro from actor Kad Merad, which he had made during a television series on TF1. See the hateful articles on this topic: <http://www.generation-nt.com/reponses/tf1-soutient-resf-entraide-2238381.html> ; <http://uniondespatriotes.hautefort.com/tag/kad%20merad>

After the decision was made, many raised their voices in opposition, claiming they had not been consulted. The discussion soon turned into a debate.

- ☒ Marginal topics: these are discussions dealing with topics that are on the outskirts of the main issues addressed by RESF: ‘student database,’⁹¹ housing issues, etc.

So, these numbers show that it is for urgent calls to mobilize in support of one or more *sans-papiers* that the list is most frequently used. We are therefore not dealing with an online/offline duality, an opposition, but rather with a key combination of two dimensions, which complement one another.

2.5.6 Links with other discussion lists

We can also ask ourselves about any links between the list *resf75* and other discussion lists. Unfortunately, we were unable to determine the lists to which messages initially published on *resf75* were forwarded. We could, however, identify the ‘source lists’ of messages forwarded to *resf75*, since the heading of these messages contained the following type of indication: ‘Fwd: [resf-montreuil].’

We must start by noting the significant volume of messages that circulate from list to list, and from one action group to the next within the RESF network. 2,339 messages (20.45%) came from or were responses to messages from RESF lists, with the most visible being *RESF.burot* (national), *RESF.idf* (Ile de France region), *RESFparisest* (east Paris), *RESF1234* (central Paris), *ResfParis19* (19th arrondissement of Paris). Therefore, the most represented lists were the most significant ones in terms of ‘location’ (we also found, although to a lesser extent, lists from other French regions). Here again, this demonstrates the role of the discussion list as a tool for action groups in the network in that it enables step by step sharing and coordination.

In addition to these lists ‘inside’ the network, we can also extract other lists that are highly represented:

- ☒ immigration.jetable:⁹² 169 messages
- ☒ zpajol:⁹³ 76 messages
- ☒ urgence-foyer-tc:⁹⁴ 46 messages
- ☒ TERRA-Quotidien:⁹⁵ 30 messages
- ☒ Comites_citoyens_Montmartre:⁹⁶ 14 messages
- ☒ exiles10:⁹⁷ 13

We can therefore note that RESF is mainly linked to other support groups for migrants, *sans-papiers*, or exiles. In this sense, the ‘discussion’ list tool does not only enable coordinating

⁹¹ <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Base-%C3%A9%C3%A8ves>

⁹² <http://www.immigrationjetable.org/>

⁹³ <http://pajol.eu.org/article177.html> : “The list called zpajol was created by Fil in July 96. It is devoted to information and debates about the *sans-papiers* movements in France and elsewhere in the world, to immigration and asylum questions as well as the right to circulate freely. It is linked to the site pajol, created at the same by Marc Chemillier.”

⁹⁴ <http://fr.groups.yahoo.com/group/urgence-foyer-tc/?v=1&t=directory&ch=web&pub=groups&sec=dir&slk=15>

⁹⁵ <http://terra.rezo.net/>; <http://listes.cines.fr/info/terra>

⁹⁶ http://www.akynou.fr/citoyens_photos/. This site has a link to the RESF site.

⁹⁷ <http://www.exiles10.org/>

action groups within RESF, but it also enables combining this network with other networks and organizations working for the same cause.

2.6 Sponsorships in RESF

We have observed that individuals' engagement in RESF very often depended on relationships of affective or social proximity with *sans-papiers*. This proximity reveals non-institutional integration models: bottom-up integration based on hospitality rooted in friendship, solidarity, and individual relationships. Within RESF, this notion is reflected by the word 'sponsorship.'⁹⁸

2.6.1 Republican sponsorships

In RESF, sponsorship primarily signifies what we can call the 'republican sponsorship' of *sans-papiers*, an "action that has worked very well until now and that remains effective."⁹⁹ It has exactly the same origin and value as civil sponsoring (civil baptism is based on the same principle), a non-religious variation of the ceremony during which one, two, or more people are chosen to provide moral and practical support to a child. Republican sponsorship does not carry any legal weight:

*With an uncertain legal foundation falling between the 26 June 1792 Decree, the 20 September 1792 Law and the 8 June 1794 Decree, republican sponsorship is not covered by any legislation. The mayor or other authorized civil servant is not expected to celebrate it since sponsorship is not a civil act with a predetermined ceremonial structure. Sponsors (like godparents) only make a moral commitment and any certificates or documents issued during the sponsorship ceremony have no legal value. In fact, one cannot confound the republican sponsorship ceremony with the designation of a legal guardian. Republican sponsoring or civil baptism are only symbolic events intended to bring the sponsored (or 'godchild') into the republican community and ensure he/she adheres to its values.*¹⁰⁰

However, these *sans-papiers* 'godchildren' do have a sponsorship card, which, as a sign of support from the hosting society, protects *sans-papiers*: "policemen are more hesitant to arrest *sans-papiers* if they see this sponsorship card"¹⁰¹ (although some sponsored *sans-papiers* have been expelled from the country). Sponsorship provides protection that has no legal value but does establish power relationships between people with prerogatives. This is why it is important to get State representatives involved.

The symbolic aspect of sponsorship is essential: "it is important that the sponsorship ceremony be held in a town hall. It could also be held in a public school because a school is a symbol of citizenship."¹⁰² Sometimes during the ceremonies "*sans-papiers* are very emotional because they feel they are being accepted by French society."¹⁰³ In Paris, only one mayor (Paris has a city mayor as well as mayors for each *arrondissement*) has refused to celebrate sponsorships for *sans-papiers* (the mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë did accept to

⁹⁸ 89 occurrences in the list.

⁹⁹ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75*, 10 July 2008

¹⁰⁰ JULLIARD E. *Les parrainages républicains de sans-papiers, 2005-2008 : entre soutien aux sans-papiers et construction du pouvoir politique local - Etude de cas dans le 13e arrondissement de Paris*, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris 1), Masters thesis in political science, Dir. J.valluy, June 2008. http://terra.rezo.net/IMG/doc/JULLIARD_Emilien.doc

¹⁰¹ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

celebrate them). No mayor from the right has accepted, but some of them have acted off the record to support *sans-papiers*.¹⁰⁴

Most often the sponsor is an individual who knows the *sans-papiers* child personally: it can be a teacher or a parent of another student. It can also be someone who wants to become a sponsor but does not know any *sans-papiers* children. In this case, the potential sponsor is put in contact with a *sans-papiers* child: “it is from this point that affective relations start to take form.”¹⁰⁵ Whether it be before or after the ceremony, the affective relationship, or even friendship, is a key factor in sponsorships. “Creating ties is more important than the actual ceremony itself.”¹⁰⁶ The sponsor is someone who is prepared to ‘lend a helping hand’ to the ‘godchild’ above and beyond the regularization process. “Sponsoring is first and foremost about the ‘small things’” and entails offering everyday support.

In this sense, republican sponsorships are part of what we called bottom-up integration. But, we cannot say that it is in opposition to top-down integration. On the contrary, we saw that it used the same symbols as those used in institutional or governmental integration. Yet this is not a form of ‘nostalgia’ vis-a-vis formal hospitality but rather a ‘re-routing’, or subversion.

Among the 20 people who took our questionnaire, 85% of them are republican sponsors of one or several *sans-papiers* individuals or families. The RESF members in our sample sponsor between 1 and 3 individuals, the average being exactly 2 individuals or families.

This figures only account for republican sponsoring, which is an official or ‘formal’ type of sponsorship. In fact, numerous respondents said they ‘personally’ took care of *sans-papiers* dossiers without being an actual sponsor. One of them wrote: “no formal sponsoring activity, but I am looking after several dozen young adult men.” Another said “Unofficial sponsorships: around a hundred families and 46 single people.” Another wrote: “I sponsor one, but I look after several families”. In the *department* of Hérault, RESF makes a distinction between official sponsorship (republican) and shared sponsorships, an unofficial form.¹⁰⁷

2.6.2 Person to person relationships

As we have seen, there is a wide variety of relationship types between RESF members and the *sans-papiers* in regards to sponsorships, which can be seen as solidarity, a person to person¹⁰⁸ affective relationship. This relational model is the foundation of RESF.

To put this hypothesis to the test, we wanted to find out “who talks about who?” on the discussion list *resf75*. We identified the proper names in the subjects of messages on the list. These were almost exclusively the names of *sans-papiers*¹⁰⁹ about which alerts had been posted. For each of these names, we extracted the author of the message (RESF member). We then generated a graph on which the red notes represent RESF members and the green

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

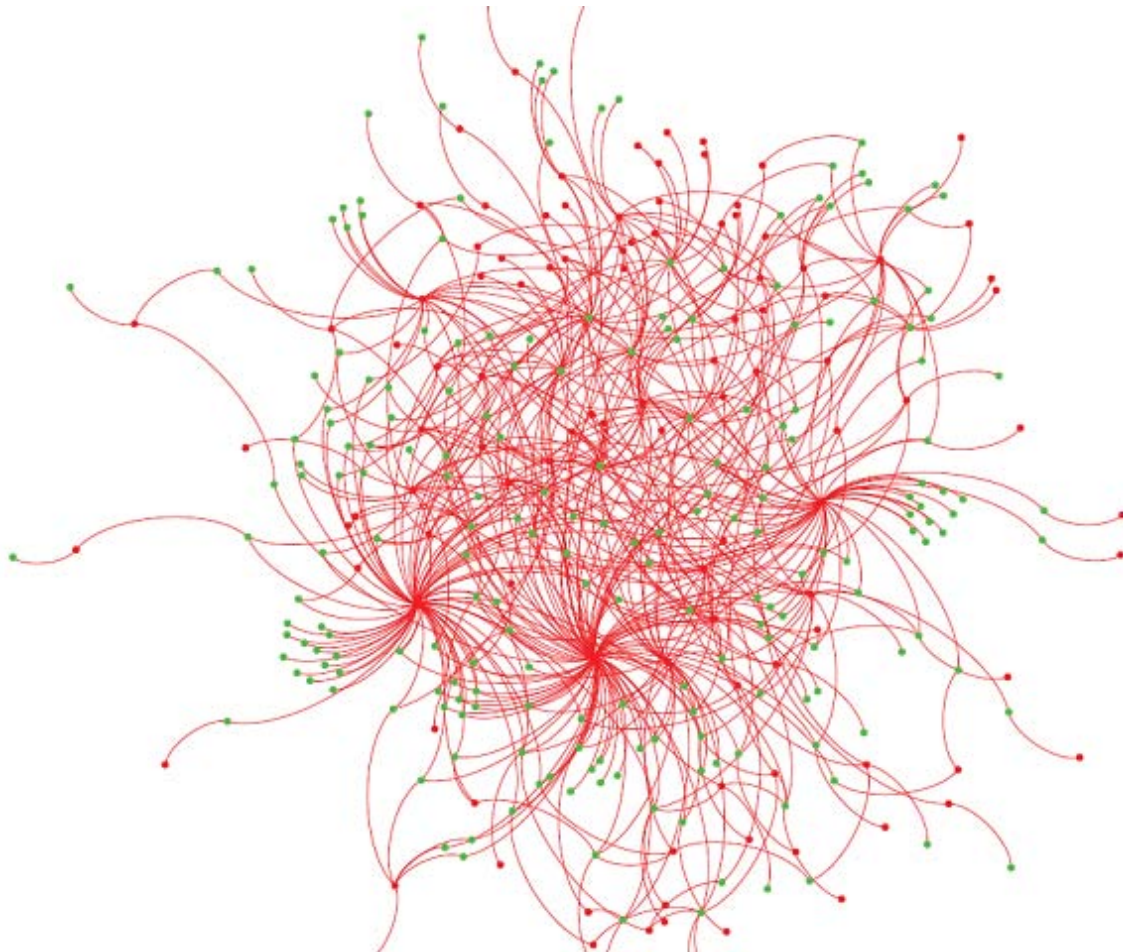
¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ There also exist ways of supporting *sans-papiers* that do not require becoming a sponsor. While becoming a sponsor requires being very familiar with the “godchild’s” particular situation, this knowledge is not required to accompany a *sans-papiers* to the prefecture, the objectives being to ensure he/she is not alone in the event of an arrest and to provide explanations if needed.

¹⁰⁸ We could still speak of *p2p* relationships if we remove the “digital” connotation from the notion.

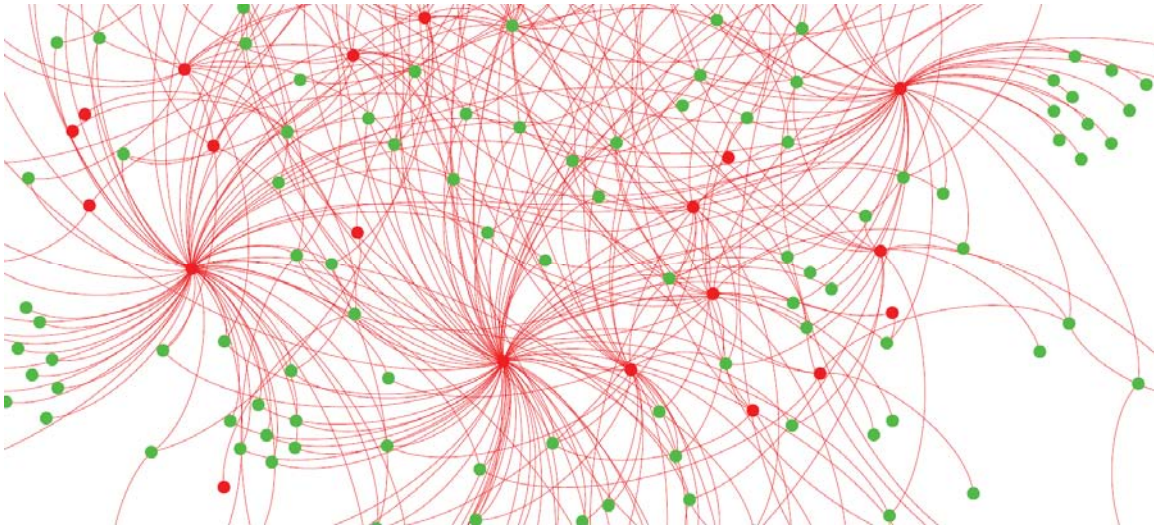
¹⁰⁹ Although we also find the name of president Nicolas Sarkozy, as well as that of the minister of integration, national identity, and solidarity development, Brice Hortefeux.

nodes the *sans-papiers*. A link appears between a RESF member and a *sans-papier* from the moment the former talks about the latter in at least one message. The graph is presented below (a more readable version is available at: http://ostap.bender.free.fr/TIC-Migrations/ICT_IEM/RESFNomsslabel.pdf), but hides the names of the people for obvious reasons.

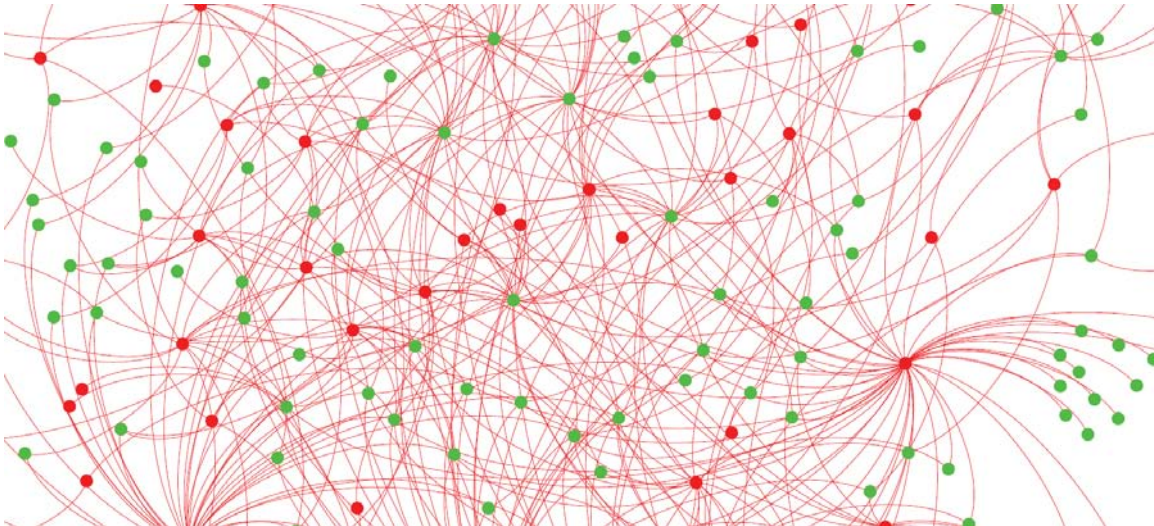


Before interpreting this graph, one must remember that there are many degrees of involvement of RESF members: from the person looking after one single *sans-papiers* to the people who have a genuine global vision of the network, or at least a specific geographical area.

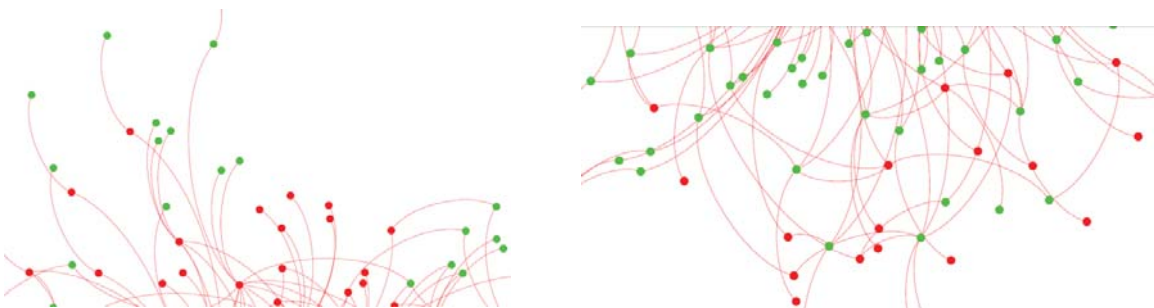
These different degrees of involvement can be seen clearly on the graph. In effect, we see some 'RESF actor nodes that are strongly connected. In the sub-graph below, we present the three most active members that partake in the majority of interactions.



Next, we have a few actors who participate in a lesser yet still a significant number of cases:



We can also see the actors who are only involved with a few or just one *sans-papiers*:



We can reinterpret these different sub-graphs based on the position of the *sans-papiers*. In a first phase, when a *sans-papiers* is not immediately threatened, he/she is assigned to a particular RESF member who can, for example, request practical advice on regularization

issues (hence the fact that other members are also connected to the same *sans-papiers*). In this instance, the *sans-papiers* is located on the borders of the graph.¹¹⁰ As the situation becomes more complicated or dangerous, a growing number of RESF members partake in the interactions and this brings the node towards the centre of the graph. Lastly, some *sans-papiers* cases can become ‘historical cases’ within RESF due to their duration, their complexity, or the accompanying tragedy. These cases migrate away from their peripheral attachments and become even more central. These are hypotheses that merit much further analysis.

2.6.3 How sponsors help their ‘godchildren’

Lastly, we will give an overview of the processes the sponsors undertake with their ‘godchildren.’ For this, we will use the responses to our questionnaire (as we already stated, 17 respondents were sponsors: the following data relates to this panel). Without a doubt sponsors’ main activity consists in helping with regularization processes, or obtaining papers: assistance with administrations, compiling a dossier, accompanying the *sans-papiers* to the police station to request resident cards, etc. This is the primary mission of sponsors: 88.23% of them mention this aspect, with one person adding that their support went well beyond these aspects. We can add that this support overlaps with the role of protector or shield played by the sponsor.

Another fundamental activity is assistance in emergency situations: for example, appeals to a higher court when residency is refused or when legal measures are taken (Order to Leave French Territory, Prefectural Notice of Expulsion from the Country). This activity entails a series of interventions on behalf of the *sans-papiers* in prefectures, police stations, or even governmental organs: sending faxes, e-mails, compiling dossiers in urgent situations. This includes visits to the Centre of Administrative Retention (*Centre de Retention Administrative*, CRA), follow-up on *sans-papiers* being held by police forces, contacts (doctor, family), etc. 23.52% of those interviewed took part in these types of action.

Other forms of support were also mentioned: housing assistance (11.76% of respondents); registering in the school system, scholastic guidance, learning French (namely post-regularization) (17.65%); psychological and moral support (11.76%), etc.

2.7 *Sans-papiers* and ICT

Until now, we have observed ICT practices among RESF members. We also provided an overview of sponsorships that link RESF members to *sans-papiers*. We lastly wanted to find out how the *sans-papiers* themselves used ICT. To find this out, however, we must first examine the *sans-papiers*’ participation in RESF actions in general while paying particular attention to offline actions.

2.7.1 *Sans-papiers*’ involvement in RESF’s offline actions

Here again we relied on responses to our questionnaire. One of the respondents claimed that *sans*-participation in RESF was very low, if not inexistent. Another even went to so far as to say that RESF’s actions were sometimes very similar to welfare handouts. However, more than half of respondents indicated that *sans-papiers* were occasionally or even regularly

¹¹⁰ The algorithm used for generating the graph operates as follows: two nodes with a common link attract one another; two nodes without links separate from one another. This explains why the least connected nodes are generally found on the margins of the graph.

present at gatherings¹¹¹ and protests (or local events). It was also noted that this type of participation can be ‘dangerous’ in that it exposes *sans-papiers* to the risk of being arrested. “If their status isn’t too dodgy, they come out of the shadow and take part in the protests.” Participating in protests therefore depends on the level of risk involved. One of the respondents pointed out that this participation is on the rise.

Whatever the case, presence at protests is most often compared to participation in meetings to which *sans-papiers* are often invited. This participation is extremely rare, or even inexistent in some action groups. “*Sans-papiers* rarely attend general meetings.” Only one person stated that *sans-papiers* regularly attended meetings.

It was also noted that *sans-papiers*’ participation in RESF comes from the affective relationships that link them to RESF members. The *sans-papiers* demonstrate ‘solidarity and hospitality’ vis-à-vis RESF. In this sense, we could say that support is reversed, or rather that solidarity has a double-meaning: the *sans-papiers* support the very people who support them. One of the respondents told us that *sans-papiers* participated in RESF actions when they were informed by poster or brochure. This could be interpreted negatively to mean that there are rather few forms of communication between *sans-papiers* and RESF members (outside of sponsor-sponsored relationships). Another person told us that *sans-papiers* “were better suited to action groups” (*sans-papiers* action groups).

2.7.2 Sans-papiers’ involvement in RESF’s online activities

We can now ask ourselves about *sans-papiers*’ involvement in RESF’s online activities. In an article on RESF, Michel Elie (who also responded to our questionnaire) gives the example of a young *sans-papiers* who asks for help on a discussion list.

Subject: I am concerned
Date: Sun, 11 Jun 2006 14:46:54 +0200
From: brondentche ba3e <casadijon@hotmail.fr>
For: resf78@ouvaton.org

Hello, I’m a high-school student in Bourgogne, Dijon to be exact and I don’t have any papers. I’m asking you to help me with what I need to do or not do to get them, and especially give me contact information for an association like you and who has the same objectives in Dijon! Thanks a lot and please write back fast.

Should we therefore assume that this type of participation in discussion lists is commonplace? Let’s see what our respondents said.

Among the 17 people who answered this question, 41.18% claim that *sans-papiers* do not participate at all in the discussion lists, in which case there would be no online presence of *sans-papiers*. 35.30% claimed that participation was low. 11.76% said that *sans-papiers* used e-mail in case of emergency, or that they were just as present as anyone else on the discussion lists. Lastly, 11.76 said that this depended on whether or not the *sans-papiers* had

¹¹¹ RESF organizes monthly gatherings at metro “Belleville” in Paris on the 2nd Tuesday or each month. These gatherings are based on the model of the *folles de mai* in Argentina: http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_102686471/Folles_de_mai_mouvement_des.html

access to Internet (and pointed out that, in this case, they visit the website more than they participate in the lists), or their level of education or French.

These final remarks are crucial. In effect, among the people who claimed very low or no participation, there were many who gave reasons that corresponded with what the administrator of the list *resf75* said. The three main reasons are:

- ☒ difficulties accessing Internet and more generally a computer: “*Sans-papiers* are rarely on the lists: this might be due to problems accessing Internet or not knowing how to use it.”¹¹²
- ☒ Not mastering French well enough (and more generally level of education). “The problem might also have to do with French language and writing.”¹¹³
- ☒ Preference for *face to face* meetings. For threatened individuals, being present on Internet might be felt like a type of exposure. They might also be afraid of expressing themselves online. The physical meeting lets the person “know exactly who he is dealing with. And, it is friendlier.”¹¹⁴ This preference might also have something to do with the language factor.

As put by F. Granjon: “To contribute to a discussion list, one first needs a certain financial capital in order to buy a computer and software and subscribe to an internet service provider. Cultural capital is also needed: one must know how to use a computer, write, read, and look for information. Lastly, one must have rather specific technological competencies: how to use and integrate new technologies.”¹¹⁵ It is this type of financial and cultural capital that *sans-papiers* most often lack.

“Sure, young people and legalized *sans-papiers* are a little more present, but it’s still rare.”¹¹⁶ “We occasionally see messages requesting help from *sans-papiers* not registered on the list. *Sans-papiers* might use RESF online as an occasional life line, but there is no real participation.”¹¹⁷ One of the respondents regretted this lack of participation, which, for him, was not only due to the reasons mentioned above, but was also due to an error by RESF: “make *sans-papiers* targets for support and not partners.”¹¹⁸ We will come back to this question later.

Several respondents also insisted on the fact that while discussion lists receive few visits from *sans-papiers*, they did rely heavily on mobile phone use.

Lastly, two other respondents pointed out the fact that it is rather in *sans-papiers* action groups that these individuals were more likely to participate in online interactions, namely discussion lists. In this sense, it would be worthwhile to point out the potential online interactions between RESF and *sans-papiers* action groups.

¹¹² Interview with Sylvie, the administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ «L’internet militant, entretien avec Fabien Granjon», *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, Juillet-Septembre 2005, n°79, p. 29

¹¹⁶ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008

¹¹⁷ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008

¹¹⁸ We will return to this question when we look at the “politics of representation.”

2.7.3 Are there online relationships between RESF and *sans-papiers* action groups?

The list *resf75* contains messages that were forwarded by *sans-papiers* action groups. For example, we see 22 messages from or responses to messages from the list (*csp19*) of the *Sans-papiers* Action Group of the 19th (arrondissement of Paris). There are relatively few of these messages, however; they kind of melt into the mass of messages from organizations struggling for *sans-papiers*. Moreover, the people sending these forwarded messages are most often “RESF members that are active in *sans-papiers* action groups and/or registered on the discussion lists,”¹¹⁹ and not *sans-papiers* themselves.

In this sense, messages between RESF and *sans-papiers* action groups teach us little about how *sans-papiers* are using ICT within RESF. We could add that it would be highly interesting to study ICT uses in *sans-papiers* action groups, but this question goes beyond the scope of the present study.

2.7.4 Means of communication between sponsors and their ‘godchildren’

Perhaps it is in the actual relationship between sponsor/godchild that we can hope to be able to observe *sans-papiers* putting ICT to use.

100% of sponsors who took our questionnaire communicate with their godchildren *face to face*. 88.24% communicate by mobile telephone (11.76 by home phone/landline); 29.41 communicate via Internet. So we see that physical meetings and the mobile phone are the two preferred modes of communicating: 58.82% of sponsor/godchildren relationships utilize *exclusively* the ‘face to face/mobile phone’ combination.

Regarding electronic messaging (e-mail), it is never used alone, nor even combined with only face to face meetings; it is always accompanied by the ‘face to face/mobile phone’ combination. In addition, we must note that this use carries a variety of conditions: one of the respondents claimed to only use Internet with *sans-papiers* students; another pointed out that Internet only worked in some cases and that they “only forwarded information by e-mail when they knew there would be a mediator to transmit the message to *sans-papiers* or show them how to access the information.” In fact, we can say that only 17.64% of sponsor/godchild couples regularly use electronic messaging.

2.8 RESF and the politics of representation

2.8.1 ‘Speak and act on behalf of’ vs. ‘Speak and act on one’s own behalf’

Our research led us to the conclusion that ICT played an essential role in RESF’s activist activities (tool for organizing and emergency mobilization, etc), but that they had a much lesser role in the practices of *sans-papiers* themselves. We mentioned some reasons for this, such as *sans-papiers*’ access to ICT, linguistic difficulties, etc. But are these the only reasons? Certain respondents did, in effect, point to an ‘error’ by RESF: its goal of being ‘supporters’ of and not *partners with sans-papiers*. In this respect, is it not the politics of representation in RESF that are at least partially called into question? Could the fact that *sans-papiers* overlook what could be a major weapon (namely the Internet discussion lists) be due to the fact that RESF members seek to speak and act on behalf of *sans-papiers* instead of helping them speak and act on their own behalf?

¹¹⁹ Interview with Sylvie, administrator of the Internet discussion list *resf75* (Paris), 10 July 2008

In this respect, it is fitting to mention what A. Papatheorodou refers to as the “fantasy that internet promises a new democracy”: “this remains to be proven, because it would remain a democracy of initiates. This poses a problem, for example, for a movement like that of the *sans-papiers*: the majority of people speaking on their discussion list are, in fact, more their ‘supporters’ than anything else.”¹²⁰ Thus we could say that while still blind to forms of digital exclusion, the RESF network, which presents itself as a fervent defender and promoter of democracy, would continue working in a space where the subalterns do not have a voice.

2.8.2 The ‘speak and act with’ alternative and the question of ICT

These considerations, however, are largely insufficient insofar as they splinter the actual form of the relationships between RESF members and *sans-papiers*: sponsorship, without which we could not understand the politics of representation in place. Sponsorship, broadly meaning affective relations and person-to-person solidarity and which we can now say seems to be a paradigm of bottom-up integration, forces us to move beyond the opposition between ‘speak and act on behalf of’ on one hand and ‘speak and act on one’s own behalf’ on the other.

What sponsorships promote is ‘speaking and acting with.’ The first role of a sponsor is not to replace the *sans-papiers* in the regularization process or to act for him/her, but rather to accompany, assist, and act with the person. This is the profound meaning of solidarity. But, in cases of arrest or court hearings, etc. solidarity is hardly possible. In these instances, RESF members speak and act *for* the *sans-papiers* precisely because it is in these instances that the *sans-papiers* is denied the possibility of acting or speaking on his/her own behalf.

Thus, it is through this model of ‘acting with’ – sponsorship – that we should interpret the use of ICT within RESF. Contrasting use by RESF members with the non-use by *sans-papiers* is insufficient because this overlooks the relations that link the former to the latter. It would be more fitting to say that RESF members play the role of a public writer for *sans-papiers*. While they do not elaborate the content of the message, they do structure it, organize it, format it, and make sure it is heard. When Hannah Arendt affirmed that the rightless¹²¹ was he who was denied the act of speaking, she surely did not mean that he lacked the capacity of speaking but rather that he was denied the possibility of his words having meaning, of people hearing them.¹²² In this sense, *sans-papiers* are not foreign to using ICT within RESF: in a certain sense, they are the co-authors of messages even though they are not the carriers of such messages. In this respect, ICT are a prime tool in sponsorships within the RESF movement.

In conclusion, we will restate that RESF’s struggle is carried out in the name of democratic ideals, in the name of liberty and justice, in the name of human rights. In the name of human rights, indeed, but not according to a ‘politics of human rights’.¹²³ This is a question of pushing humanist principles to their limit, or put differently, of contesting the truth value in order to formulate ‘risky postulates or hypothesis.’¹²⁴ It is a question of understanding and opposing processes that split humanity, of seeing solidarity as a dynamic of ‘conciliation’

¹²⁰ PAPATHEORODOU A., «Samizdat.net, l’histoire d’un projet de médias alternatifs sur l’Internet», *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, Juillet-Septembre 2005, n°79, p. 61.

¹²¹ *Sans-papiers* regularly refer to themselves as the *rightless*.

¹²² ARENDT H., *Imperialism, Part Two of the Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt Trade Publishers, 1996.

G. C. Spivak’s positions in his “Can the Subaltern Speak?” are, in this respect, rather similar to those of Arendt.

¹²³ Cf. BALIBAR M., «La construction du racisme», *Actuel Marx*, n°38, Le racisme après les races.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

much more than of assuming that inequality results from an unjustly destroyed primordial unity, demanding ‘reconciliation’. In other words, it is a question of considering not the human species but rather the human community.

2.9 RESF, the Riga goals and social capital

The question we asked ourselves here was the following: to what extent does the use of ICT in RESF meet the objectives of e-inclusion, namely relational integration and the development of computer knowledge. We then address the question regarding the potential of this use for developing the social capital of migrants.

2.9.1 ICT uses in RESF and the relational integration of IEM

The prime aim of ICT use in RESF is not integration since RESF justifies its actions in favour of the regularization of *sans-papiers* by the fact that it supports individuals who are already integrated because it is a question of children having received education in France. However, it is a minimal form of institutional integration in that RESF’s main goal is to help *sans-papiers* obtain residence cards. But if what we generally call integration is downstream from this kind of integration, then all of RESF’s work lies in some respects upstream. Yet, as we have seen, it is a completely different type of integration, or bottom-up integration based on sponsorships, that RESF is producing with *sans-papiers*. In this respect, this represents a high degree of relational integration. Indeed, what RESF promotes as integration is first and foremost based on affective and social relationships in the host country.

Regarding ICT, they only rarely play a role in contacts between RESF members and *sans-papiers*. In addition, the latter make almost no use of digital tools (primarily the discussion lists) put in place by the network. As we have seen, however, through their online practices, RESF members in some respects play the role of public writers for *sans-papiers*. From this angle, *sans-papiers* are at least partly involved in online actions.

2.9.2 ICT use in RESF and skill building

We have seen that while the activities of helping and training *sans-papiers* to use ICT are not inexistent on the network, they are rooted in individual approaches. Some RESF actors may, in this sense, offer training workshops dealing with ICT.

While difficulties in accessing Internet and computer material do provide some answers as to why *sans-papiers* make little use of electronic messaging and discussion lists, they do not explain the whole picture. Here, we must remind readers that helping *sans-papiers* appropriate ICT is not one of the network’s objectives. In the network, there is an explicit preference for face to face relationships. We did, however, note the very widespread use of the mobile phone among *sans-papiers*.

2.9.3 ICT uses in RESF and social capital

Lastly, we will look at the question as to whether or not using ICT in RESF can develop the social capital of *sans-papiers*. We must once again point out that the very low use of computer tools (little participation from *sans-papiers* on discussion lists, infrequent use of Internet as a tool of communication between sponsors and ‘godchildren’) hardly shows there is this potential. However, let us not forget that sponsorship is mostly a question of ‘creating links’: therefore sponsorship is in and of itself a source of social capital development; and since ICT are a support for sponsorships insofar as the sponsor is a ‘public writer,’ we must

therefore confirm that ICT use by RESF members (for the vast majority of those originally from the host country) helps develop the social capital of migrants, particularly in the form of bridging.

CASE STUDY 3 – IMMIGRANTS, ETHNIC MINORITIES AND THE MATRIMONIAL WEB: ECONOMIC ASPECTS

3.1 Introduction: research issues

The online universe of what we can call the ‘Love Web’ (dating, meeting, marriage, etc.) is flourishing in both Europe and North America.¹²⁵ The Love Web is a very profitable business too. Let us have a look at the internet service called Meetic. Meetic is available in 13 European countries and in 12 languages. The internet service is enhanced by mobile telephony (MeeticMobile, which implies partnerships with telephone companies), a feature for organizing parties (Meetic Live, etc.), and other components. Considering only Meetic’s French version (Meetic.fr), we note that it is ranked 542nd worldwide in terms of audience and 16th in France (43rd in Belgium).¹²⁶ Signing up for Meetic is free, but entering into contact with other registered members is not. Meetic counts more than 300 employees. In 2005, only three years after its creation, it was already the European leader in the field of online meeting: it had over 13.9 million registered members and held 23.16% of the market share as of September 2005¹²⁷ with a yearly sales figure of 29.7 million Euros. At the end of the first trimester of 2008, it had already recorded 31.9 million Euros¹²⁸ in revenues (96% in Europe, 4% elsewhere).

Meeting and matrimonial services on the web are indeed a lucrative business. However, meeting is not the only object of business. In other words, links between meeting and economic issues are not only external, but fall under the very logic of web meeting. In effect, “the structure of meeting websites corresponds to a market structure. This constitutes an obvious rupture with the tradition of love.”¹²⁹ Due to the abundance of the offer (in terms of the number of potential partners) and to the simplicity of communication, we are seeing a growth and an acceleration of exchanges (interactions) and consumption in the domain of love.¹³⁰ What is crucial for the actors/commodities is being able to better their market position. “It is interesting to note that the transformation of meetings into economic transactions produced by internet is not ignored by the majority of its users. (...) Almost all the individuals that I have questioned in Israel and the United States told me that, before an appointment, they feel compelled to ‘do their marketing.’”¹³¹ The author adds that the fundamental principles of mass consumption are present on meeting websites: abundance, liberty of choice, efficiency, rationalisation, selective targeting, standardisation.

¹²⁵ See, LARDELLIER P., *Le coeur net : Célibat et amour sur le web*, Belin, 2004 ; TISSERON S., *Virtuel mon amour, penser, aimer, souffrir à l'ère des nouvelles technologies*, Albin Michel, 2007; ILLOUZ E., *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, Polity, 2007; KAUFMANN J. C., *La femme seule et le prince charmant*, Pocket, 2004.

¹²⁶ See http://www.alexa.com/data/details/traffic_details/meetic.fr. The major part of data on our next audience will be extracted from the search engine *Alexa* : www.alexa.com

¹²⁷ Source Nielsen/Net Ratings. See <http://www.communique-depresse.com/200601044629/Entreprise.actualites.resultats/MEETIC.leader.europeen.de.la.rencontre.en.ligne.annonce.le.lancement.de.Superlol.html>

¹²⁸ Meetic’s press release, May 5th 2008 : <http://www.zonebourse.com/MEETIC-5136/actualite/Meetic-Chiffre-d-affaires-du-premier-trimestre-2008-504727/>

¹²⁹ E. Illouz, “Réseaux amoureux sur Internet”, *Réseaux*, 2006/4, n°138, p. 246. Our translation.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 252.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 254.

The high importance of the economic dimension of meeting websites gives us reason to think that they may constitute a major source of opportunities for IEM in terms of improving their economic participation *in* the host country.¹³² In the framework of this study, we will only focus on the most ‘serious’ (so to speak) meeting websites, namely the matrimonial websites. Moreover, although we will focus on France, we will sometimes (namely in the case of Indians) consider Europe in general in order to provide further evidence.

What interests us is that the online marriage business is clearly linked to some fundamental migration realities. In effect, it deals with some essential issues: a scattered community’s reproduction beyond the home country’s borders; family and familial organization. In terms of the Riga goals, the issue of economic participation is thus closely tied to the one of community re-generation. Finally, this business deals with the issue of instruments of international mobility in the context of Europe’s border reinforcement and the difficulties in obtaining residence permits, etc. In this sense, it is eminently political.

We will especially focus on the business and the potential incomes generated by matrimonial websites. However, as mentioned before, such a business cannot be externally related to its object – in this case marriage – because marriage, especially in the context of migrations, may have, among other things, economic motives or reasons. We will therefore also pay attention to these motives.

Furthermore, the three IEM communities we chose present very different configurations in relationship to what we can call a digital economy of marriage. Certainly, we could find a common denominator (for example, by focusing especially on websites dedicated to marriage within each community). However, it seemed to us more interesting to unveil the more salient features of each IEM group in terms of business activities. To put it briefly:

- ☒ Regarding Indians, we focus on one major website - www.shaadi.com - dedicated to helping scattered individuals within the Indian community meet and find marriage. We wanted to shed light on Shaadi’s business universe by paying attention to the social and cultural dimension of the Indian community, especially to the family aspect.
- ☒ Regarding Russians, we were interested in the flourishing business of mixed marriages between European men and Russian women. We studied both the service offers (“to find your soul mate”) of various websites and, in to a lesser extent, the social status of some Russians seeking marriage with French citizens.
- ☒ Regarding Moroccans, we studied the numerous websites dedicated to planning traditional Moroccan weddings in France (apparel rental, halal catering, hairdressing, car rentals, etc.). We established an overview of the offer and the main actors.

The singularity of each of these ‘angles of attack’ required specific research methodology.

¹³² But also in the *in-between* zone between home and host countries in the sense that they often involve the latter by generating *new* migration flows, providing on-site work, etc.

3.2 Shaadi.com: matrimonial strategies, immigration and ICT

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3.2.1 Introduction: history, contextualization

In the 1980s, the Indian subcontinent and its Diaspora were home to 'marriage fairs' that brought together hundreds of young men and women in the hopes of finding future marriage partners. It was the events' organizers who overtook marriage agencies in terms of innovation and became known as a last resort for those without connections. Marriage agencies, however, have continued to prosper in spite of this. Real centres of research on the subject of marriage, they are 'enterprises of happiness' for Indians abroad. These agencies offer 'marriage plans' in prices and packages of all kinds. Magazines specializing in personal ads for marriage have thus brought about the creation of 'bridal magazines.' Personal marriage ads also found their way into the mainstream media of India as well as throughout South East Asia as a whole. India played the role of the propagator, especially by way of its cinema which typically puts the family unit at the heart of its narratives, and has in fact created a culture of marriage management with its own customs and morals. Due to the existence of castes, agencies specialize in ethnic, religious and regional groups. Putting men and women into contact requires a real know-how. The agencies not only sell profiles to the participants, they are also engaged in mediation, and, sometimes even help organize actual events. This requires a constant mobilization of logistic and human resources whereby the candidates, their families, attendants, and organizers actively participate in the marriage. Expensive, and difficult because of the energy required to orchestrate such an event, the dimensions of ritual, religion, initiation, and spectacle all play a role. The instrument which facilitates these activities in a globalized world is, of course, the internet.

The immigration question comes into play here. At the heart of immigration lie marriage and the family unit. Matrimonial agencies and organizations are found in the countries of Indian immigration, namely in the USA, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. The 'marriage business' has a long history in Indian society and its Diaspora.

The advent of Internet has catalyzed three dynamics that are of interest for our analysis. The first is the transfer of all the previously mentioned traditions to Internet. Internet has become the new meeting place of Indian marriage. It does not replace matrimonial agencies or families, but rather adds to them. The second dynamic is assembling all the actors of Indian marriage onto one platform. The third is the unlimited potential made possible by the databanks of hundreds of marriage sites providing profiles, photographs, videos, and precise personal information. These new services became standard from the start-up of Internet, well before the creation of *shaadi.com*. The first Internet site specializing in Indian marriage dates to 1990: BharatMatrimony.com. In fact, the site's founder found his wife on his own site. Since then, hundreds, in fact, thousands of matrimonial sites have blossomed. The myriad forms of marriage are shown in all their diversity. Sites that are frequently visited are: *starmatrimonials*, *Muslim matrimonial*, *Desidesh*, *Shaadikaro*, *Free Indian Matrimonial Classifieds*, *eMatrimonials*, *Zawaj.com*, *Matricorp*, *iMilap.com*, *MyMatrimonial.com*, *MarriageSolutions.com*, *MatrimonialBank.com*, *Brahmins Matrimony*, *Thirumanam.com*, *101 Hot Singles*, *Asian Matches*, *Gujarati matrimonial Website*, *IndiMela Matrimonial*, *Kamaconnection.com*, *Pyar.com*, *Shubhphere.com*, *Tamilmatrimony*, *Islamic Singles*, *GodBless Matrimonials*, *India Canada Marriage*, *Kerala Connect* and *Manamalai*. In the business of Indian matrimonial sites, the Indian diaspora is very active, both as owner and client. Indians in the USA and Great Britain are pioneers in this domain. Their double-culture is what fuels these innovations. The history of *shaadi.com* is the story of a double culture.

In the meantime, the strength of *shaadi.com* lies in its fusion of the specificities of ethnicity, religion and caste to which its predecessors catered. The added value is that it proposes a marriage platform for all ethnicities, religions, and higher castes of India. Any variety of marriage is possible. But its real accumulative value and strength lies in the fact that its members have very precise profiles and clearly state their expectations. A *shaadi* profile includes 40 criteria, while the others are made up of only a dozen or so. The 'match' found through *shaadi.com* is therefore very precise. The elements of a search can include criteria like profession, location, religion, race or ethnicity, or even alimentary restrictions. No category is omitted. The *shaadi* environment is, in addition, interactive, in contrast to other sites: SMS and e-mails are sent through the program, which keeps participants interested and involved. Unlike other sites, participants can receive e-mail directly without passing through a filter or Webmaster. *Shaadi* provides a chat line for its members called *Shaadi Messenger* which allows for online discussion between *shaadinautes*. This interactivity generates freshness and emotion. Physical contact is possible through the hundreds of points of contact where one can meet *shaadinautes*, ask for advice, or do research on computers. The 24-hour *hotline shaadi* is available to clear up any problems the client might have. With no organizational, functional, and technological equal, *shaadi.com* is the most important Internet site for Indian marriage in India, and its Diaspora in the USA, Europe and the Middle East. It is also a marketplace, a seller, a brand name and a label which continues to innovate to maintain its *premier* standing.

"We had partnerships with Yahoo, MSN, Rediff, and more. As a result, anywhere one went on the Internet they would see *Shaadi.com* as the matrimonial partners. I believe distribution was the key to ensuring that people saw the brand all over the place. One more thing we did was that we kept very quite about our business model so most people did not know what we were doing. Well, they all wondered if we were just burning money in the business."

The story of shaadi.com is therefore not only a story about an Indian matrimonial site. It is also that of a US Indian who provides technological solutions to his community. The former student of Boston University comes from a family of textile merchants and businessmen anchored in Indian culture and society. His studies in management and his long stay in the USA have not loosened his ties to India. On the contrary, Anupam Mittal wishes to 'serve' Indian society. His first challenge was to make the components of Indian marriage technological and profitable. Married to an American, his desire to flourish in this economic sector is less clear.

His Internet site addresses the dominant classes and castes, and this is the base of his business. An economic choice as well, the middle-class is financially equipped to use the additional services related to his matrimonial services. In exchange, he gives them a unique tool: an unlimited data bank, profiles detailed according to ethnicity and profession, and a very open matrix in which to match variables. Anupam Mittal transposes the authentic content of marriage onto the Internet, including its constraints. As with an 'arranged marriage,' there are no surprises for the participants. That is certainly the main difference of *shaadi.com*. Other sites are often qualified as sites of meeting, leaving the possibility open for incertitude, the unexpected and surprises. This is not the case for *shaadi.com*. It is the last step before the meeting of the two families- another perilous step.

Shaadi.com is the site for singles of 'good families.' Created in 1997 in India, it was overwhelmed by the sheer demand of its clients. Single at the founding of his site, Anupam Mittal now possesses 50% of the matrimonial market in India. Before launching *shaadi.com*, he had created *mauj.com*, a site for downloading mobile phone ringtones. His ringtones cover a range from the entire repertory of *Bollywood* to Indian folklore. In a country of a billion inhabitants, the matter and market are unlimited. The multinational *Shaadi* was born from this mercantile inventiveness which transformed a 'social and cultural ritual' into an economic and transnational bonanza.

3.2.2 Research methodology

This work is based on two methodologies. The first one comes from the social sciences and includes the study of *shaadi.com*, the analysis of contents, and the analysis of images. Fieldwork in London enabled us to hold interviews and discussions with shaadi representatives and make field observations. The second comes from computing and ICT.

The goal of the latter was to extract profiles of Shaadi members in their entirety. For this, we used Navicrawler,¹³³ a plug-in for the Firefox browser. This tool allows spreading heuristics, or series of instructions (coded in XML and referring to the Document Object Model of a web page) that are used to extract data.

Using another Firefox plug-in called Flem,¹³⁴ these profiles are transformed into a slide show of pages displaying and succeeding one another automatically at regular intervals. During the slide show, a second heuristics is used to extract all profile data.

Lastly, we used a script (coded in Perl) to process the data extracted and to present it as an Excel table, which enabled generating statistical data.

¹³³ <http://www.webatlas.fr/index.php?page=Navicrawler>

¹³⁴ <http://www.web-mining.fr/flem> (firefox links explorer module)

The results of this research are based on both of these methodologies.

3.2.3 Fropper.com: the site for 'pre-marital friendship' or the antechamber of shaadi.com

People Group, the name of the company which owns *shaadi*, also owns *fropper.com*, a 'friendship site.' Once again, the idea of meeting in the occidental context is avoided. The risky meeting takes place between people of the same castes and the same social standing. *Fropper.com* is the antechamber of *shaadi.com*. Youth have started using this outlet to get to know one another without any particular commitment. The objectives of the site are formulated in the following manner: "*Fropper*, short for friend hopper, extends the philosophy -- beautiful relationships begin with friendship -- and is your destination for building, maintaining and enjoying meaningful relationships. Be it a platonic relation, a loving relationship, a marriage or business networking, *Fropper* hopes to empower, enrich and enable you to make your world more beautiful. *Fropper* coins the verb 'to frop' which means, to hop with friends, existing and new. Just like a snowball that grows larger, when rolled, you can frop with friends and grow. Grow socially and emotionally as a person who believes in forming meaningful relationships. *Fropper's* mission is to allow everyone to frop in a convenient, clean manner so that they can eliminate loneliness from their lives, succeed and find happiness. Its mission is also to help you - our valued customer - in the best manner possible. To be with you at all times, to guide you, to support you and yes, to help you grow as an individual. Our vision, which has been set in motion by DesiCupid, is a world where one can make new friends, find dates & have fun by being a part of *Fropper*. Just as one refers to an address book to find contact numbers, people will refer to *Fropper* and find friends instantly. When you are bored and want to go out, or when they are lonely and want to talk to someone, you will login to *Fropper* and in a couple of clicks get what you need."

It is a space of meeting with simply defined profiles: age, gender and country. The objective is to meet 'quality people' and to forge quality relationships. *Fropper* is inclusive in the sense that one encounters people with various profiles. A classic meeting site, there are no risks involved. It is an antechamber for relationships *sans* involvement, and also for those considering a marriage of love. Limited in its use only by one's imagination, it prefigures and prepares adolescents for entry into the real marketplace of the *shaadinautes*.

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3.2.4 Astrolife: finding the perfect match

Astrolife works with India's complex and diverse astrological system. The astrologists are first involved in determining the compatibility of the future couple: the manglik. This operation is as important as the choice of a partner. *Astrolife* provides 'shaadinautes experts' who deal in daily horoscopes, birth charts, matchmaking, the career questions, astrologic tables, numerology, feng shui, Vaastu, handwriting, and Indian tarot. *Astrolife* offers these free services so that one can 'know oneself according to Vedic charts,' 'consult an oracle,' 'read the tarot,' 'win the wheel of fortune,' 'have good luck at home or at work,' 'understand accounting,' 'understand numbers in the scheme of life,' 'change one's name,' or 'understand lucky dates and colours.' The client has the possibility of asking questions to an astrologist and of obtaining an 'astro-graph' or 'astro-report.' Completing this panoply is a guide to Indian astrology, numerology, feng shui, tarot and the Vaastu. There is also an on-line boutique where the accessories of Indian astrology can be purchased: books, reports, programs, astrological gems, stones and other divination items. It brings members into contact with gurus ready to be consulted at any time. Payments are processed via e-mail.

"*Astrolife.com* is an online portal for astrological services providing the widest range of astrological and divination services in India. All products and services offered by *Astrolife.com* reflect the philosophy that the purpose of Astrology is to stimulate the personal growth of individuals and create inter-personal harmony. Our services include online consultations and counselling built around Tarot, Numerology, Western Astrology, Vedic Astrology, Chinese Astrology, Vastu, Feng Shui, Biorhythm, etc. backed by an internationally renowned panel of astrologers from across the world." It is a transnational astrological offer, crossing the frontiers of India and attracting an international clientele. By integrating Asian and Western astrology, *astrolife* has become the largest astrological site in the world. Its services are available in English, and, as with any other business, each service delivered has its price. *Astrolife* manages the mystic and religious side of marriage as well. This astrology of the intimate is a commercial niche which reorganizes several kinds of know-how onto the same technological platform. The site has partnerships with astrologists, businessmen and creators of computer programs. Because astrological needs are often 'eternal,' *astrolife* is a business that is constantly evolving. The insecurities and uncertainties of our era are favourable to its development. Allied to technology, resources are centralized. In fact, the 'astrological' rite is a tool of social control of the individual. Once involved in the project of marriage, the individual renounces his role to his astronomer in respecting his counsel to the letter in word and deed. Ideologically, the individual gives himself over by putting his will, his freedom, and his reasoning on hold. In this case, the marriage is a process of exchange whereby that which couples lose in freedom and reasoning, they gain in love and networking.



3.2.5 Shaadi Point: leaving the virtual

Shaadi.com presents itself as a complete site on Indian marriage. It employs 400 people worldwide. Shaadi has established a partner entity named Shaadi Point that is used to arrange face-to-face meetings between potential love mates and their parents. It also provides advice to participants and families, and has on-site computer services with unlimited data banks facilitating the proper 'arrangement' of the marriage. Tradition is at the heart of Shaadi and is the matrix of its capitalism. There are more than 500 shaadi centres in India with the same objectives:

“At Shaadi.com Centre we are committed to providing quality service. Our entire purpose of existence is to make the process of marriage easier for you. Shaadi.com Centre has the strength of over 10 million members across the globe and you can search through this databank to help you get the right match. Shaadi.com Centre has members from all Indian communities and now you can find a match not only in your city but from all over the world. Computer literacy is not necessary. Don't feel disheartened if you are not familiar with technology. We at Shaadi.com Centre understand this limitation & service parents who would not be able to use computers independently for the purpose of matchmaking. Our Relationship Advisors are equipped to manage your requirements with comfort and ease. Prior to running a search the advisor takes a complete brief on your preferred partner choice & would explain each part of the search process to you. A Helping Hand. Our Relationship Advisor is trained to use the search engine and draw a closest possible match for your daughter. The Relationship Advisor's experience of running a search is the key to quality servicing. The Advisor will manage your account and will proactively work towards getting the best results for you. Search Made Easy. Shaadi.com Centre services are available to you in 87 cities through a wide network of 155 centres. Shaadi.com Centres are accessible to every common man and has therefore gained the trust of millions across India. To enhance your experience with us, our user interface is available in 4 languages. Value for money. Shaadi.com Centre's

membership plans are designed to ensure that you derive maximum benefit. The memberships are based on period and you can select from a minimum duration of 3 months to maximum of 12 months. Easy renewals on membership are also available. Our pricing strategy is transparent & standardized. In comparison to other unorganized service providers we don't charge any commission after a match is fixed nor are there any additional hidden costs during your service period. Astrology. To provide you a complete solution we also have astrology services to assist you in kundalini matching. Various other Astro reports on career, wealth & marriage are also packaged along with your membership.”

Shaadi.com: Sikh Matrimonials The No.1 Sikh Matrimonial Site

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3.2.6 Shaadi: a place for testimonials from couples and their families

Testimonies have a highly unique importance: they constitute a commercial instrument that grabs the ordinary client. *Shaadi* is a place for telling personal stories. The first types are those that couples share with the public. At times there is a fictional touch, giving publicity to the media. The abundance of such stories illustrates the success of *shaadi* as an operational tool. More than 800,000 marriages are counted in the tally of success stories; separations and break-ups are not mentioned. The second type of testimony comes from the parents of the couple. The stories can be very emotional: “I didn't know how to use the internet and I thought I would not be able to take the advantage of the new matchmaking system. But then I found out about *Shaadi.com*'s offline services. It made life easy. We are extremely thankful to the people behind *Shaadi.com* Centre who helped me find the perfect partner for daughter. Mr. M. Laxman.”

“I got my son registered at Shaadi.com Centre and took up a six months premium membership and we found his match within 2 months. My daughter in law is a Doctor. We wanted someone who is as well educated as our son and comes from the similar background. She was an apt choice because of her simple family background and education. Shaadi.com Centre is indeed very the best solution. Mrs. Anandita Tipnis.”

Photos provided by past clients (the ‘eye witnesses’) are the supreme proof. What is the role of such stage-setting in terms of business? Testimonials are an instrument that captivate and convince clientele. Such an argument is irrefutable because no one can dispute its veracity. The story becomes, at one and the same time, that of *Shaadi* and the *shaadinautes*.

The screenshot shows the Shaadi.com Centre website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, About us, How we work, and Become our Franchise. Below this is a search bar for locating the nearest centre, with a dropdown menu showing 'Mumbai (Maharashtra)' and a 'Locate' button. On the left side, there is a sidebar menu with links: Uniqueness of service, Benefits of our service, Success Stories, Testimonials (highlighted), Memberships, Special offers, Quick Guide, and Letter from CMD. The main content area is titled 'Testimonials' and features two testimonials. The first testimonial is from Mr. M. Laxman, who is shown in a photo. He writes: 'I didn't know how to use the Internet & I thought I would not be able to take the advantage of the new matchmaking system. But then I found out about Shaadi.com's offline services. It made life easy. We are extremely thankful to the people behind Shaadi.com Centre who helped me find the perfect partner for daughter.' The second testimonial is from Mrs. Anandita Tipnis, who is shown in a photo. She writes: 'I got my son registered at Shaadi.com Centre & took up a six months premium membership and we found his match within 2 months. My daughter in law is a Doctor. We wanted someone who is as well educated as our son & comes from the similar background. she was an apt choice because of her simple family background & education. Shaadi.com Centre is indeed very the best solution.'

3.2.7 Shaadi Times: a catalogue devoted to couples

Annexed to *shaadi.com*, *Shaadi Times* is a magazine that provides information and legal advice. The couple finds links and addresses for preparing their marriage, their home, and their honeymoon. Lawyers and jurists sell legal information to couples regarding emigration, and marriage laws in the country of immigration. *Shaadi Times* therefore answers a logistic need of the market. Every step is important for the couples, even though each requires spending. The couple is caught in a vice of sellers representing themselves as experts of the Indian tradition. The pressure on the client is great in the face of the long list of merchants. The organization of the site corresponds to this logic. The objective of *Shaadi* is to create an ‘economy of marriage’ as the study of the site, its logic and the views presented presuppose.

3.2.8 Shaadi and the quest for Bollywood fiction

One of the strengths of *Shaadi* is that, in many ways, it plays on the universe of *Bollywood* fiction films. The horizon Indian fiction turns towards is the ‘dream of marriage’- based on love and luxury. *Shaadi Times* also shares the marriages of stars with its clients. This matrimonial matrix of Indian cinema stimulates the imagination and this is a central element in the *shaadi* concept. To put it simply, those of the upper castes are in a position to aspire to this ‘love marriage’ of which both rich and poor dream. This mix between fiction and reality is one of the important symbolic resources of *shaadi.com*.

Marriages of stars are recounted in the manner of a *Bollywood* film sequence. Mini-captions give all the details: The marriage of Summan and Bunty (actor). When: 25 August 2006. Where: In Mumbai. With whom: Bunty Walia. The couple's outfit on the day of the wedding: "I wore a rose pink chiffon sari and the entire sari was embroidered with small silvery flowers and a simple blouse with a diamond brooch at the back. It was accessorized by a pretty diamond set. Bunty wore a black suit with a white bush shirt. Arranged marriage or love-marriage: Love. Length of courtship: 3 months. The wedding ring: A pretty diamond ring. Qualities of the partner: A balanced and sensitive person for whom family comes first. Expenses: We didn't go overboard with the marriage. It was a simple registered marriage with only close friends and family and then we went to Paris for our honeymoon. Type of marriage ceremony: We did not have a formal wedding ceremony as such but we had a small puja at home which was a mixture of South Indian style and Sikh style. For the registered marriage the three witnesses present were Sanjay Dutt, my best friend Bhavnesh and Kumar Gaurav. The same evening we had a reception at Olive for about 200 friends. Particular event related to the marriage: I feel that we should have invited some more people for the reception because when I meet them now they give me an angry look!"

This entry is in and of itself a story pulled from a *Bollywood* film: a 'love marriage,' a luxurious ceremony, a diamond ring and a honeymoon in Paris. The poor are not even in the picture: the site recruits very few profiles from people of the lower castes. *Shaadi* is then a tool which supports and brands caste markers, and participates in the reproduction of castes and their ideological and social bases. Emancipated, ingenious, possessing degrees and other special qualities, persons who participate in *Shaadi* belong to the dominant classes. The circulation of these narratives reinforces the ideology of this milieu through their dissemination. These tailor made marriages are not for poor people. This means that it facilitates an exclusive matrimonial circulation of the elite by giving them an unlimited choice of possible spouses.

The marriage of stars has become a kind of horizon- a model and a measuring stick. *Shaadi Times* presents real stories, which, in spite of their anecdotal side, bring to light the role of the 'narrative' in the whole affair. A 'good marriage' is possible and 'beautiful couples' exist. This is the message behind these recitations of the marriages of Bollywood actors. They are aimed to reinforce such an image of marriage, and to push people into a sort of competition for a 'good match.' *Shaadi.com* participates in this concept which attracts millions of clients. In the end, this vast, transnational matrimonial enterprise makes its capital gains from being a central social marker.

One of the stories of a *Bollywood* couple is entitled: 'Vindu and Dina Singh: All in the name of love...' It begins in this way: "A good love story is like chicken soup for the soul... it nurtures your heart while filling your soul." In this tale, every word seems to have been crafted for the *shaadinautes*. Vindu, the husband speaks of Dina Singh his wife: "Yes, at first I have to say I was attracted to Dina's physical beauty. She is tall, fair, lean and extremely gorgeous. I fell immediately in love with her flaming red hair and her fiery wit and love for life." The word of stars (and their representations) on the subject of love (like their life) is a kind of sacred work which serves as a reference point. And so the marriage of Vindu and Dina Singh becomes a model. This founding principle of *shaadi.com* capitalizes on the impact Indian cinema has had on the popular conscience. This 'matrimonial fiction' generates projects and matrimonial paradigms. The latter is imposed as a type of framework for individual marriage projects.

To add the finishing touches to the dream, *shaadi* puts its members into contact with companies offering all types of services: designers of nuptial havens, jewellers, (rings, earrings, make-up), couturiers, interior designers for wedding halls and banquets. Those who create accessories also have their part in providing shoes, socks, scarves, bags, evening shoes, etc. Counsellors on style are proposed to the couple. *Shaadi* puts its members into contact with its network of specialists for manicures and pedicures, furniture and housing experts, travel agents and lawyers. *Shaadi* is therefore a platform of other economic actors. The relationship between *Shaadi* and this business is of interest for our study. The turnover of *shaadi.com* is much more than the sum produced by managing profiles and introducing potential spouses. A publicity machine, *Shaadi*'s clients are net-users and companies. Its role is strategic in an e-economy that is little more than an extension of reality. In effect, here we see an 'economy of marriage' where the actors are put on-line. With its colossal resources, *Shaadi* is a distributor of resources and a centre of matrimonial services. The quest for the *Bollywood* dream – a 'luxurious love-marriage' – is intimately linked to this economy of marriage. It is certainly not a coincidence if the founder of *Shaadi* also owns a film production company. The components of these matrimonial mega fictions sustain one another. Because of the disposition of these elements, fiction becomes reality and dreams come true. The difficulties are removed: dream and reality inhabit one and the same space: *shaadi.com*.

3.2.9 The question of immigration: marriage, divorce, and family in migration

One of the vocations of *shaadi.com* is to inform its members about the conditions of immigration, principally in the USA, Europe, and the Middle East. General information regarding family rights, entry, and settlement is proposed to the client. As with other subjects, the principle is the same: there are no surprises since clients pay for the services. The candidate for a *Shaadi* marriage possesses all relevant information beforehand: he is able to foresee everything, up to and including the time of arrival of his soul mate in New York, Toronto, Dubai, or London. The most important information regards entry conditions, property management, money transfers, and labour laws. The Internet site disposes of a battery of consultants who can be contacted as needed. This organization implies, from the beginning, permanent networks in several countries with knowledge of the diverse rules and laws of immigration. This knowledge is available to any client willing to pay the price.

3.2.10 Finance and money questions on shaadi.com

The question of money is at the heart of the *Shaadi* enterprise. It is not a charity community site. On the contrary, it is a for-profit community service. *Shaadi* proposes four types of marriage packages which allow the client to access its data bank: *Free membership*, *Gold Membership*, *Diamond Membership* and *Platinum Membership*. *Free membership* is a free, premier service which allows one to post a profile, to manifest interest in another person, to give contact information, to respond to invitations, to respond to electronic messages, and show photos, videos, and horoscopes. With this type of membership, the member cannot write messages, but can answer. In order to take advantage of these services, he must choose between three different packages according to length of time: 3 months, 6 months or 12 months. The 3-month package costs 67 dollars. In addition to the elementary services cited above, the *Gold Membership* allows one to write and answer mails to other registered clients, including online chat. It includes a system created by *Shaadi* which allows one to pair up 'good matches.' The *eMatchmaker* 'lookout' functions in the following manner: The *eMatchmaker* is a sophisticated proprietary application developed specially for *Shaadi.com*

members to ensure a higher degree of matrimonial success by matching matrimonial profiles with a high degree of potential compatibility. Here's how *eMatchmaker* works:

“-Geeta is a 22-year old Hindu working girl, slim and fair. She is looking for a 25-year old Hindu boy, working as a computer professional in the USA.

-Sunil is 25-year old, Hindu, and a computer professional in USA. He is looking for a 22-year old Hindu working girl who is slim and fair.

-Thus, there is potential compatibility between Geeta and Sunil i.e. a two-way eMatch has occurred! The eMatchmaker works automatically once you have set up your profile and partner profile. For the eMatchmaker service to work effectively, you must include as many details as possible in your personal profile and also specify a partner profile.” The service costs 98 dollars.

The 6-month package is called Diamond Membership and includes, in addition to the services listed above, Bold Listing, which spotlights a member's profile in order to lure potential partners. Finally, the Platinum Membership lasts for 12 months. It includes all services, such as shaadi messenger and a system for calculating profile compatibility. Its use is illustrated in the following:

“-Geeta is a 22 year old Hindu working girl, slim and fair. She is looking for Hindu boys, in the age group of 22-26, between 5'3" and 5'7", working as a computer professional.

“-You are Hindu, 25 years of age, 5'6" tall and a computer professional. Thus, your Personal Profile matches Geeta's partner requirements. So, your Personal Profile Matcher list will include Geeta. (Of course, Geeta's profile may not necessarily match your Partner requirements. For such a match, you will need to use eMatchmaker.” This service costs 149 dollars.

In 2007, the company's turnover was estimated at 30 million dollars. *Shaadi* has 10 million members, and counts more than 800,000 marriages. A transnational success, *Shaadi* is most well-represented in India, the USA, Great Britain, Canada, Pakistan, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, and South Africa.

The origin of *Shaadinautes* can be broken down as follows: India, 59.9%; United States 14.7%; United Kingdom 4.8%; Pakistan 4.2%; United Arab Emirates, 1.3%; Canada 1.2%; Saudi Arabia 0.9%; Australia 0.9%; Tanzania 0.6%; Kuwait 0.6%; Qatar 0.5%; Oman 0.3%; South Africa 0.3%, etc.

The Indian market is the crux of *Shaadi* business. Nonetheless, the other markets have an important demand as well. The demand is on the increase in Great Britain, the Emirates, and in India. India is the leading matrimonial market because of its population, and the Indian diaspora the second, because of its purchasing power.

3.2.11 Matrimonial strategies and migrations at shaadi.com

The profiles diffused over Internet are fabrications of oneself for another that give information about the candidate. This is the beginning of step-by-step matrimonial strategies which are as diverse as they are complex. The immigration question is not a sufficient reason for action. In order to be eligible for marriage, one needs professional, human, social and even 'cosmic' qualifications. It is, however, possible to note several tendencies to be found in India, the USA, in Great Britain and in Canada. This analysis is based on 8000 profiles of 'potential spouses' extracted from shaadi.com. This list is comprised of persons from all over Europe and from countries of Indian immigration. There are 265 profiles from India, 475 from Canada, 391 from the USA and 295 from Great Britain.

The creation of a profile serves as an introduction to the definitive formalities of marriage. Here is an example:

Login : hemantricks †, Posted by : Parent / Guardian, Last Online : 11-Apr 2008, Activity Factor: †100%†, Age : 22, Marital Status : Never Married, Children : No, Height : 5' 4", Complexion : Fair, Manglik/KujaDosham : No, Special Cases : None, Blood Group : B+, Education : Masters – Finance, Profession : Customer Support Professional, Annual Income : Rs.5,00,001 - 10,00,000, Diet : Non-Veg, Drink : No, Smoke : No, Religion : Hindu, Caste/Sect : Khatri, Sub Caste/Sect : -, Mother Tongue : Punjabi, Annual Income : Rs.5,00,001 - 10,00,000, Gotra/Gothram : - , Family Values : Traditional, Father : Business, Mother : Homemaker, Brother(s) : 1, Brother(s) Married : 0, Sister(s) : 0, Sister(s) Married : 0, Country of Birth : India, Grew up in : India, Personal Values : Traditional, Can Speak : English, Hindi, Punjabi, Current Residence : Essex, United Kingdom, Residency Status : Student Visa, Country of Birth : India, Hobbies : Will tell you later, Interests : Driving, Favourite Music : Bhangra, Ghazals, Indipop, Jazz, Qawalis, R&B / Soul, Rap, Favourite Reads : Not much of a reader, Preferred Movies : Comedy, Drama, Sport/Fitness Activities : Badminton, Cricket, Volleyball, Favourite Cuisine : Chinese, Continental, Italian, North Indian, Punjabi, Preferred Dress Style : Will tell you later, Partner Age : 18 to 25, Partner Marital Status : Never Married, Partner Height : 5' 3"(160cm) to 5' 8"(172cm), Partner Body Type : Doesn't Matter, Partner Mangli/Kuja Dosham : Doesn't Matter, Partner Special Cases : None, Partner HIV Positive : No, Partner Diet : Doesn't Matter, Partner Drink : No, Partner Smoke : No, Partner Religion : Doesn't Matter, Partner Mother Tongue : Doesn't Matter, Partner Family Values : Doesn't Matter, Partner Education : Doesn't Matter, Partner Profession : Doesn't Matter, Partner Country of Residence : USA, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, New Zealand, Partner State of Residence : Doesn't Matter, Partner Residency status : Doesn't Matter”

Each element is important because it is coded. One who reads the passage literally will not grasp its meaning. The empty boxes are not to be interpreted as missing data: they can be understood as a weakness, or as a social or astrological handicap; then again, the ‘doesn’t matter’ can be interpreted as a kind of openness in terms of one question, or as conservatism in terms of another. The expression ‘family values’ can serve to define the boundaries of receptivity regarding one’s conception of the world, or openness to a certain degree of ‘Westernness.’ The fact that ‘potential spouses’ are so precise assures a circulation of common codes and values in the alliance of families from the same castes. Indians require matching social, economic, political, religious and astrological conditions for marriage. This logic of perfection transforms marriage into a spectacle: an event, a spectacle that attracts an audience who is also there to ‘watch’ the marriage. That which is left unsaid or is suppressed, imprecise, and voluntarily omitted are ‘matrimonial signifiers’ the intricacies of which only Indians master.

The land of Mahatma Gandhi, with its billion inhabitants, is the most important market of *shaadi.com*. The site therefore enacts an Indo-centric strategy. India is the focal point of the choice of candidates for those living in India. In most cases, Indians seek Indians living in India.

Canada, the USA, Great Britain and Australia are choices as well as India, with none of the occidental countries having priority over the others. The information analyzed is from all European countries. Those of Indian immigration are better serviced and researched.

“Indians seek out Indians, and vice versa,” one could say, contrary to many other communities where marriage is open to outsiders.

In the USA, clients look for spouses in India, the USA, the United Arab Emirates, and Canada. The search for a spouse is done in the countries of significant Indian immigration. It is then enlarged to include the entire world. However, in 390 profiles, 140 ‘blanks’ and 141 ‘doesn’t matter’ can be counted. These can be considered as a sign of openness towards the origin of the potential spouse. From the same list, 20 people chose India, 19 chose India and the UAE together, while 13 chose the UAE alone.

One finds the same strategy in Canada. India and Canada vie for the first place, while 160 profiles list ‘doesn’t matter’ and 121 were blank. More than half opted for ‘flexibility of residence.’ It is important to verify the other categories. The choice of India can be interpreted in several ways: a quest for tradition, values or principles, etc. Canada is also a choice, while Great Britain is repeatedly cited as a type of occidental reply to India. One can see a striking contradiction in terms of partner choice. The British had 82 preferences for Great Britain, 74 ‘doesn’t matter,’ and 75 ‘blanks.’ India occupies a modest position with 8 preferences. The profiles most highly desired by the Asian British are NRI Canadians, NRI Europeans, and NRI Americans.

The Occident-Occident matrimonial flux constitutes a heavy trend in the requests. This situation does not translate into a rejection of India, but the reproduction of an implacable logic: ‘a compatible profile.’ Clients have a tendency to look for partners with similar educational and professional levels. They also tend to want to remain in the region, city, and even neighbourhood where they currently live. Analysis of the residential choices of the candidates in London shows a pronounced matrimonial localism. This is just as valid for India as for Canada, the USA and Europe. Distance tends to have a ‘corrupting’ influence on the choice of spouse. Leaving one’s place of birth also means distancing oneself from reciprocal affection between the couple and their families- aunts and uncles... and by extension, their social, cultural and cosmic rights and duties. Separation delays societal interaction with the greater family in terms of a network of solidarity.

The tendency Occident-India, India-Occident is a transversal option that creates problems for all involved. At first glance, one could assume that this trend would be dominant because of the great potential of emigration from countries in the South. However, this is not significant in terms of numbers. An excessive interest in emigration (‘take-away bride’ can possibly be read as the desire to hide a handicap, be it physical, cultural or cosmic.

The ‘professional marketplace’ is dominated by occupations with a high market value. Some of the professions below have exceptional value when searching for a spouse:

Accountant, Acting Professional, Actor, Administration Professional, Advertising Professional, Air Hostess, Architect, Artisan, Audiologist, Banker, Beautician, Business Person, Chartered Accountant, Civil Engineer, Commercial Pilot, Company Secretary, Computer Professional, Consultant, , Cost Accountant, Creative Person, Customer Support Professional, Dentist, Designer, Doctor, Doesn't Matter, Economist, Engineer (Mechanical), Engineer (Project), Entertainment Professional, Event Manager, Executive, Factory worker, Farmer, Fash Fashion Designer, Finance Professional, Government Employee, Health Care Professional, Home Maker, Human Resources Professional, In Not working, Interior Designer, Investment Professional, IT / Telecom Professional, IT /Real Estate Professional,

Lawyer, Lecturer, Legal Professional, Manager, Marketing Professional, Medical Professional, Medical Transcriptionist, Non-mainstream professional, Not working, Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Optician, Partner Profession, Pharmacist, Physician Assistant, Physicist, Physiotherapist, Pilot, Professor, Psychologist, Research Scholar, Scientist, Self-employed Person, Software, Software Consultant, Software, Consultant, Student, Telecom Professional.

The flux of matrimonial migration translates into a circulation of the Indian elite and middle-classes. The professions which are the most sought after are engineers, doctors, dentists, architects, accountants, and computer experts. These professions are typically synonymous with high net worth. In order for an occupation to exist on the Indian stock market, it needs to be financially viable, and favour national and international mobility.

3.2.12 Conclusion

Shaadi is a business founded on the fusion of symbolic and financial capital. The Indian marriage culture serves as symbolic capital. *Bollywood* cinema is a treasure chest for *Shaadi*. The central place of marriage in Indian fiction has made it an almost immutable paradigm of the society. *Bollywood* molds consciousness and drives the economy of marriage. The cinema and its spin-offs, (posters, music, modes, gadgets, etc) have contributed to the dissemination of this culture. Anupam Mittal simply applied the laws of capitalism: he transformed information about marriage into merchandise. One of the lessons to be learned from *Shaadi* is the transformation of a marker of identity into a source of transnational commerce.

The middle-class and the bourgeoisie from the higher castes are the principal clients of *shaadi.com*. The site is therefore a sales platform for those who dominate. *Shaadi* also favours the mobility of the groups and professions who are the most prized in Europe and around the world: computer specialists, doctors, dentists, nurses, etc. It supports the circulation of the dominant elite on every level.

In its conception of information, the local Indian orients the global. In fact, it is traditional Indian culture which propagates itself through its imposition on the educated elite. This group reproduces the values that protect its interests. *Shaadi* is well adapted to the spirit of a wild neoliberal globalization that is unwaveringly devoted to the rich. In this sense, it transmits an indo-centric culture which is imposed on Indians all over the world. Europe has no place in this system.

Shaadi is in sync with a world that is increasingly dominated by castes and the constraints of ethnicity. It is a world where Europe is a fortress and the Occident a series of protected enclaves. In the grip of globalization that selects individuals according to their competences and market needs, the criteria Indian marriage poses are not exceptional. 'Desired immigration' and 'immigration by quota' which are gaining ground in Europe, DNA tests, the search for rich, competent and competitive immigrants – all these are close to the criteria of Indian marriage. The practical use of these qualifiers is becoming with time an administrative *savoir-faire* and a cultural universe in which Indians are at ease. The success of *Shaadi* also stems from the fact that a globalized world echoes Indian reality.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ *Bibliography* : PALRIWALA R., UBEROI P., Marriage, migration and Gender, Sage, 2008 ; PACHE-HUBER V. : Le mariage de l'amour et de la raison, Stratégies matrimoniales de la classe moyenne en Inde, Freiburger Sozialanthropologische Studien, Christian Giordano(Universität Friburg, Schweiz), Lit Verlag

3.3 *The Russians and the business of 'love migrations'*

3.3.1 Introduction: Research issues

As regards Russia and Russian migrants in relation to France, the online matrimonial economy is dominated by mixed marriages. The market is mostly female; in other words, it involves almost exclusively French men and Russian women.

We must specify that 'Russian' is often meant as an ethnic category, so it refers to Eastern European women as well. Nonetheless, in this study, we will try to consider only women of Russian nationality. Another point to be raised is that the border between secure matrimonial websites and sex business websites is unclear and many hybrids take advantage of this gray-area generated by the varying motives of users on these kinds of websites.¹³⁶ In this sense, some websites use a method which consists in proving their seriousness by denouncing the practices of "a certain number of technically and morally unskilled individuals who invest in this profitable niche without mastering the ins and outs."¹³⁷

The balance between online and offline services in international matrimonial agencies is highly variable.

- ☒ Most of the agencies are almost exclusively web-based: they give entire access to their 'women databases,' provide online services like e-mail translation, gifts sending, etc. The only offline services offered involve travelling to Russia (apartment rental) so male clients can meet potential wives.¹³⁸ These websites are not always linked to a precise physical location. It is sometimes difficult to evaluate their seriousness. We will pay attention to some of these websites in order to show the different services/commodities of this marriage market.
- ☒ The others matrimonial agencies, which are much less numerous, combine online and offline activities. Their websites contain some functionalities of meeting websites: registration and creation of a personal profile; searching profiles according to various criteria; meeting request, etc. However, the next steps (communication and meeting with the potential soul mate) require making an appointment in a traditional matrimonial office. We will pay attention to the main agency of this kind, namely Eurochallenges.¹³⁹ We will also consider the socioeconomic status of the Russian women registered in this agency.

Münster 2004; LEON-DUFOUR S., «Les bonnes affaires du « meetic » indien », <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2008/01/25>; GRALLET G., «Shaadi: des rencontres très, très fructueuses », <http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite>, 18/4/2007.

¹³⁶ Let us share this interesting observation: we wanted to know the audience of www.eurochallenges.com, the (online and offline) leader of "international marriages" in France which is considered to be a very "serious" agency. The Alexa search engine gave us (on July 16th 2008) the following data: only 9.9% of the users of this website live in France. 38% live in Algeria, 9.5% in Tunisia, 7.3% live in Ivory Coast (where it is the 303rd most visited website). Now, Eurochallenges agency provides no services for these countries. We can consequently make the hypothesis that users in these countries are visiting *Eurochallenges* to look at profiles and women's photographs in a manner that may resemble visits of pornographic websites. We will study more in-depth the case of Eurochallenges in the following of this study.

¹³⁷ <http://www.natclub.com/>; Our translation.

¹³⁸ See for example: <http://www.femmesrusses.com>; <http://fr.annabarmina.com/>; <http://www.natclub.com/>, etc. Let us add that some of them have a call number for their subscribers.

¹³⁹ <http://www.eurochallenges.com/>. We can also refer to <http://www.cypris-alliance.com/> although the website is foremost a "showcase" for the offline activities (only a small part of the "women database" is available online)

We can conclude by saying that whatever type of international marriage agency we deal with, we have to raise the following questions: who are the beneficiaries of this business? Are they natives of the home countries or of the host countries? Are they migrants? If so, where do they live? Answering this question will help us to determine if the digital economy of marriage is likely to booster the economic participation of IEM.¹⁴⁰

3.3.2 Research methodology

Regarding what we called web-based matrimonial agencies, our methodology is the following: we queried words like ‘marriage,’ ‘meeting,’ ‘women,’ or ‘Russian’ on Google. We then eliminated all websites obviously linked to sex. We enumerated the different services provided, considered their prices, and also paid attention to the data on uses provided by Alexa search engine.

As for Eurochallenges, we started by describing the agency’s online and offline business activities and services. Next, we used the same profile extraction method that we used for the Indian case previously examined. We extracted all the profiles of exclusively Russian women registered in the agency and put all the information in an excel format file. By using Google Maps and Application Programming Interfaces (API), we look at the geographical distribution of these marriage candidates.

3.3.3 The market of love relations

It would be insincere to claim to provide an exclusive list of web-based matrimonial agencies dedicated to marriage with Russian women or, more generally, women from Eastern Europe. First, they are too numerous to be listed. Second, it would be pointless insofar as they offer a generic range of services, as we will show later. We will now present a short list of such websites (specifically dedicated to French people; or dedicated to French people among others) and provide some information on their audience.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Such an economy raise many others crucial issues (especially political, ethical, gender issues relating to the not-new phenomenon of “mail-order brides”) that, unfortunately, we will not be able to address here. See for example See VARTTI R., “Equal partners online ? German matchmaking web sites and trafficking in women” in in MOROKVASIC-MULLER M, EREL U., SHINOZAKI K (Dir.), *Crossing Borders and shifting Boundaries*, vol 1: Gender on the Move, Leske + Budrich,Opladen, p177-206, <http://www.kolumbus.fi/riitta.vartti/ifu.html>;

TALENTINO R. B., “Bodies, Letters, Catalogs: Filipinas in Transnational Space”, *Social Text*, n°48 (Autumn, 1996), pp. 49-76.

¹⁴¹ Source : www.alexa.com (07/17/08)

Site	Traffic Rank (World)	Traffic Rank (France)
http://inter-mariage.com/	421,637	81,093
http://fr.annabarmina.com	784,232	?
http://www.europalove.com	1,472,873	221,483
http://www.activelovemeeting.com	1,941,370	113,203
http://www.femmesrusses.com	3,391,492	?
http://premium-mariage-international.com	5,664,243	?
http://accords-franco-russes.com	7,634,105	?
http://www.natclub.com	10,379,359	?
http://www.femmes-russes.be	12,842,858	461,943



Result of a profile search on Accords-franco-russes

There are some differences between these agencies. For example, Inter-marriage insists on being different from “meeting clubs that sell Russian women’s addresses,”¹⁴² whereas *Femmesrusses*’ authors write: “The first step consists in buying from us the information regarding your soul mate.”¹⁴³ However, such differences are foremost declared differences relating to seriousness, and sometimes ethics (respect of woman, for example). The main issue is the fight against scams.¹⁴⁴ However, although it is a crucial issue, we cannot address it

¹⁴² <http://inter-mariage.com/>

¹⁴³ <http://www.femmesrusses.com/>

¹⁴⁴ See <http://www.anti-scam.org/> : “SCAM is obtaining money by means of deception. We are interested in those women who practice this regularly, who are in the business of cheating and scamming men.”

in this study. Yet, if we forget it, we observe that these agencies present almost the same range of services. What interest here is how this offer of services creates an actual ‘market of love’:

- ☒ Membership subscription: Most sites require subscribing in order to become a member. Subscribing gives users unlimited or limited access a set of services (some will be described later). To only take one example, the site Premium-marriage-international offers two different subscription types called ‘Premium A’ and ‘Premium First Class.’ The first starts at 78.50 €monthly and the second starts at 103.75 €monthly.¹⁴⁵
- ☒ E-mail sending: this is a crucial service given the physical distance between the potential partners and the first contact is generally made by e-mail. This is why the primary merchandise sold on these sites that constitute the ‘love market’ is Russian women’s e-mail addresses. In a certain respect, this is a database economy. Agencies therefore implement specific pricing¹⁴⁶ that generally has a very simple principle: the unit cost for an address decreases the more addresses one buys (contacts requested). The cost of messages depends on their size; attaching photographs may also require additional spending, etc.¹⁴⁷ We should add that contact can also be made over the telephone or by videoconference¹⁴⁸ with the presence of an interpreter in France or in Russia.
- ☒ Translation: this service compliments the former. Most agencies¹⁴⁹ offer this service for the obvious reasons of linguistic understanding between the two people engaging in the interaction.¹⁵⁰ The cost depends not only on the number of words to translate but also on the nature of the text: translating poetry, for instance, may cost more than translating prose.¹⁵¹
- ☒ Gifts sending: this service is offered by a few sites:¹⁵² it lets members send flowers, chocolates, perfumes, stuffed animals, etc. to any woman on the site.
- ☒ Romantic Travel: in addition to putting clients in contact via e-mail, this is another important service offered in this market of love relations.¹⁵³ This is the service upon which this market seems to be really based. Travelling to the country of residence of the woman, or more generally the selected women is the second step following e-mail or

¹⁴⁵ <http://premium-mariage-international.com/servicestarifs.php>; Also see: <http://www.inter-mariage.com/fr/phtm/membre.php>. On <http://www.femmesrusses.com/member.shtml> one reads: “Here’s what your membership package includes: Addresses of 120 women for 100.00 €(normal cost is 1,200.00 € if you buy addresses individually or 336.00 €if you buy in bulk). Good free translation of your introductory letter (normal price is 8.00 €for 1 typed page).

¹⁴⁶ See for example: <http://natclub.com/services.php>

¹⁴⁷ See for example: <http://fr.annabarmina.com/letters.shtml>

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.inter-mariage.com/fr/phtm/videoconf.php>

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.inter-mariage.com/fr/phtm/fonction.php>; <http://www.femmesrusses.com/letters.shtml> : “We offer translation services only along with mail forwarding. Translations are €8.00 up to one typed page (650 words per page), additional words are 1.5 eurocents each. Please note that we do not use computer software to translate our letters because auto translators do a very poor job of translating the correct meaning of the Russian language, therefore we use only people whose native language is Russian. Most introduction services are charging 5 cents per word which is about €25 for an average one page letter! The reason we are able to do it cheaper is because your letter is sent to a former Soviet Union country where the actual translation takes place.”

¹⁵⁰ We will later see that the offline/online agency Eurochallenges requires that registered women speak either French or English.

¹⁵¹ <http://www.natclub.com/traduction.php>

¹⁵² <http://fr.annabarmina.com>; <http://www.femmesrusses.com>.

¹⁵³ <http://www.femmesrusses.com/tour.shtml>; <http://fr.annabarmina.com/tour.shtml>; <http://premium-mariage-international.com/premium-express.php>; <http://www.europalove.com/voyage-saint-petersbourg.php#Accompagnement>

telephone contact. Agencies may arrange part or all of these ‘romantic trips’: invitation (required for obtaining a visa), hotel or apartment reservation,¹⁵⁴ on-site contact (often a dedicated ‘advisor’), organizing meetings,¹⁵⁵ etc. To give but one example, the site *Accords-Franco-Russes*¹⁵⁶ proposes a travel package for Saint Petersburg for €1,990 that includes viewing data on members, assistance from a psychological advisor, creating a schedule, follow-up on meetings.¹⁵⁷

Dnepropetrovsk
Dnepropetrovsk- apartment 2
 Located in the center of Dnepropetrovsk with the beautiful green park, restaurant, and casino across the street. Big living room and two bedrooms
 2 TVs - in living room and bedroom
 30+ Channels of Cable TV
 King Size Bed
 Washing machine



Sumy
 We have a 2-room apartment for our guests. Our apartment is located in downtown and in 7 minutes walk from our office. It is comfortable, clean, safe, furnished and well equipped (phone, PC PII-233 with Windows 98, different software and unlimited internet access, TV) . Please note our power supply voltage is 220V. If you plan to bring your own electrical equipment make sure it works with local voltage. Our kitchen has china, fridge, coffee-maker. The phone (with answering machine) in apartment is only for local calls.



Apartments for rent in Annabarmina

Gifts on Femmerusses.com

This series of services is a considerable offer on the market of love relations that plays out through ICT. Regarding monetary value, far from being hidden, it is clearly shown. To put it abruptly, these sites focus on women and money (the preferred payment method is by credit card or PayPal¹⁵⁸). However, it is very difficult to evaluate the demand for these types of services.

Let us finish here by saying that if we want to identify the various entities competing on this market, we cannot look just at the websites themselves. In effect, there are multiple sites that are part of agencies’ networks. This is the case for example of *Angelika Network*,¹⁵⁹ which includes the sites <http://fr.annabarmina.com> and <http://www.femmesrusses.com>. One relatively reliable way of identifying such networks is to explore the profiles of registered women: in effect, members of these networks often contain the same profiles. Systems that

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.europalove.com/appartements-st-petersbourg.php>

¹⁵⁵ In the majority of cases, clients must pay for their own plane ticket.

¹⁵⁶ <http://accords-franco-russes.com/fr/voyage.php>

¹⁵⁷ Additional paying services are proposed: transportation from airport to hotel, car rental, etc.

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.paypal.com/>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.angelika.net/aboutus.shtml>

enable new agencies to register on these networks are starting to appear. For this, agencies must share their profiles after adopting a common format (xml) for describing the ‘candidates,’ or a common profile format.

3.3.4 Online/offline agencies: the case of Eurochallenges

In the case of Eurochallenges,¹⁶⁰ we are faced with a very different reality. Eurochallenges is a French matrimonial agency created in 1996. At the start, it only addressed French men and women and was having financial difficulties. The site then became specialized in mixed or international marriages.

As we have previously said, Eurochallenges stands out for the fact that it balances both online and offline activities. While the first searches and profile visits are done online, the next steps, namely the meeting, require the interested person to make an appointment in one of Eurochallenges’ physical agencies; there are 14 agencies in 12 different French cities.¹⁶¹ The agency is also known for the bilateral nature of the meetings. In effect, on most of the Russian marriage sites, especially the ones we previously examined, it was the French man who decided which women he would meet in Russia, with the women having little say in the matter. On the contrary, with Eurochallenges, the Russian woman must accept the male candidate’s profile before meeting him. Another important aspect is that in order to register with the agency, the women must speak either English or French, which eliminates the need for translation services. However, we should state that this publicized bilateralism¹⁶² is highly relative. Eurochallenges only presents profiles of foreign women and not those of the male members. This means that men almost always initiate the contact and the women can only chose from among the men who have previously chosen them.

Eurochallenges is linked to a group of partner matrimonial agencies in the countries represented on the sites. The vast majority of these agencies are located in Russia. These agencies are encouraged to collaborate amongst themselves, the goal being to develop a full-blown network for international marriage.¹⁶³

Geographic distribution of Eurochallenges’ partner agencies



¹⁶⁰ <http://www.eurochallenges.com/>. We could also refer to the various reports and articles (<http://www.eurochallenges.com/a16.revue-de-presse-tv.html>) (<http://www.eurochallenges.com/a17.revue-de-presse-presse.html>) on Eurochallenges that have appeared on French television or in the French press.

¹⁶¹ http://www.eurochallenges.com/3_agence-matrimoniale.html

¹⁶² See in particular: http://www.eurochallenges.com/502_agence-matrimoniale.html

Eurochallenges is also linked to a group of partner travel agencies devoted to organizing meetings. This is leading to the development of a travel love market (what Eurochallenges calls VIP Tours). These agencies have a service offer that goes from obtaining visas to on-site lodging, from cruises on the Volga to journeys through Siberia.¹⁶⁴

Members' (French men) profiles are varied: "Some are mature men, some are divorced, and others are just looking to expand their sentimental horizons. We have young single women from 18 to 25, who already have a stable professional life, and would like to start a family. Many French girls of their age aren't ready for that type of thing. In fact, our members are from 18 to 80, come from all socio-professional categories and various backgrounds, both urban and rural."¹⁶⁵

The process going from a first meeting to marriage is the following: "based on photos and some other information, the member chooses twelve women from the thousands present in our database. We then present these women with the man's complete profile via the most modern communication methods. The man's file contains photos and a moral overview. If one of the women responds favourably, we then give her contact information for the male member so that they may begin personal correspondence. In the early stages, the member is in contact with several women so he can make comparisons and then choose someone he already feels close to. The two candidates then decide to meet, either in the woman's country, or in France. Then, after a few months of visiting comes the marriage!"¹⁶⁶

Regarding the economy of this international marriage market, it was not possible for us to find out the exact nature of the offer's monetary value. While in the case of "web-based" agencies, we could observe the very *content* of the marketing of love relations, this remained hidden on Eurochallenges; the money questions are not addressed until the offline appointment.¹⁶⁷ We can nonetheless note that Anne Muser, founder of the agency, claims to have created around 10,000 stable relationships since founding the site in 1996.¹⁶⁸

We will now look at the real role played by ICT in how this economy operates. While in cases of web-based agencies ICT are undoubtedly the principal medium for meetings, the question does merit further investigation when it comes to online/offline agencies.

To start, it would be useful to note that the very existence of an organized international marriage market presupposes the existence of technologies that enable the various parties

¹⁶³ http://www.eurochallenges.com/6_agences-partenaires.html

¹⁶⁴ http://femmes-russes.eurochallenges.com/479_voyages-russie.html

¹⁶⁵ http://www.eurochallenges.com/526_mariage-femme-de-l-est.html

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Anne-Marie Muser, founder of *Eurochallenges*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 3 July 2008: http://www.eurochallenges.com/526_mariage-femme-de-l-est.html

¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, our request for an interview with the administrative director of *Eurochallenges* was not answered.

¹⁶⁸ http://www.eurochallenges.com/526_mariage-femme-de-l-est.html. In this same interview, Anne Muser talks about a few success stories. This is very common on matrimonial sites. We also find them on *NatClub*: <http://natclub.com/mariages.php?PHPSESSID=c43d49d79882f569936b9827d8651f16>; or on *Europalove*: http://www.europalove.com/sankt-petersburg-women/temoignages_introduction.php

involved to interact and make transactions.¹⁶⁹ These ‘parties’ are constituted first and foremost of the matrimonial agencies located in users’ home countries. One of the criteria for choosing agencies is whether or not there is the possibility of creating a link with the services offered by Eurochallenges. Yet, among these services one obviously is the online presentation of candidates’ profiles. It is necessary that agencies have the means and technical know-how for sharing their profiles and for ongoing communication with Eurochallenges. Without that, it is impossible to create an effective and productive network.

ICT play a key role in the steps leading up to the first contact, and we have reason to think they play an even more important role in clients’ decisions to join Eurochallenges. In effect, being able to browse thousands of profiles with photos online thanks to an easy-to-use search engine is certainly the best possible publicity for Eurochallenges. The agency’s website is, in this respect, much more than a showcase. It is the 42,765th most visited site in the world; 10% of visitors are from France¹⁷⁰ where it is the 8,435th most visited site.

Moreover, given the considerable geographical distances between the two candidates, the need for extreme rapidity or even quasi synchronicity in exchanges requires adopting the most modern methods of communication. Here again, ICT are at the forefront. In reality, it is only during the last phase – the meeting ‘in the flesh’ – that technological mediation is no longer required.

3.3.5 Who are the women? What do women want? Marriage candidates’ socioeconomic status

Who are these women, especially those of Russian nationality, seeking international marriages? To paraphrase Freud: “What do (these) women want?”

We will first refer to what the actual matrimonial agencies say about themselves starting with the web-based agencies. The Russian, Slavic or Eastern categories of women are found on a large number of sites.

Describing the image of the Russian woman built in this way would entail another research project and would distract from our present focus. We will nonetheless site a few characterizations:

*A Russian Woman is pretty, faithful, feminine, tender and devoted, she has strong moral values. She is cultured, thoughtful and flexible. The hardship she lives through makes her courageous, smart and humble, with an excellent adaptability. She is attached to true traditional family values. The criteria of a Russian woman in the choice of her future companion are not about his height, social and financial situation, they focus on his moral values.*¹⁷¹

*While each woman has her own personality, Russian and Slavic women all have the will and capacity to love and to take care of their future husband in the long run. Russian women are undoubtedly the best mothers in the world. Regarding work, they are all strong and determined.*¹⁷²

According to a widely accepted opinion, Russian women are generally more interested in creating a stable family than most women from the rest of the world. (...) Even

¹⁶⁹ We should not be surprised then that the boom of *Eurochallenges* corresponds more or less to the democratization of the internet.

¹⁷⁰ We previously noted the high number of visitors from Algeria, Tunisia, and the Ivory Coast.

¹⁷¹ http://accords-franco-russes.com/fr/femme_russe.php

¹⁷² <http://premium-mariage-international.com/caracteres.php>

*those women with very active professional lives yearn for a happy family based on love with an attentive husband, children, and a warm family atmosphere.*¹⁷³

The image created therefore is one of a working woman who has maintained strong moral values, values that are generally tied to the family. Yet, this has not prevented her from keeping her femininity intact. In short, the Russian woman combines elements that are generally seen as mutually exclusive: femininity/maternity, family/work, etc. In a certain sense, she is a “synthesis” of opposites.¹⁷⁴

But where did Russian women get this capacity to synthesize, this ‘capacity to adapt?’ The tough times she has been through, her living conditions, etc. Yet, these factors would also explain their desire to marry a man from Western Europe. According to the sites, the economic factor is not the most important. The main reason seems to be that women have hard time finding men worth loving in Russia:

*In too many cases, she will not find a loving man able to share life’s ups and downs in Russia. Many Russian men are chauvinists, unemployed, or unstable.*¹⁷⁵

*Nowadays, a great number of Russian women have not managed to find happiness in their country. Unfortunately, not all Russian men are sincere, honest, affectionate, stable, respectful and ready to take on the responsibility of their couple. There are also problems of alcohol, violence, infantilism that exist in the Russian society.*¹⁷⁶

*The women were stronger than men (with some men falling into depression or alcohol) and they keep fighting courageously to find work and stay positive in a Russia that has been turned upside down.*¹⁷⁷

Therefore it is not only an image of the Russian woman that these agencies are creating, but also an image of the Russian man that depicts him as a pathological being. As was pointed out in an article from *Le Monde* from 23 October 2003, such an image is nonetheless based on some objective data. For example, “Between 1990 and 2001, the number of male deaths attributed to alcoholism increased three-fold. Life expectancy of women is 72. For men, it has continuously declined and now sits at 58.”¹⁷⁸

The founder of Eurochallenges also evokes this negative image of the Russian man, but specifies that it is mostly based on reputation: “Russian men have a bad reputation of being womanizers and a bit too interested in vodka.”¹⁷⁹ In addition, she refers to the myth about French men stating that he “makes women dream because he embodies gallantry, affection, and respect for women.”¹⁸⁰ Lastly, regarding the female members on Eurochallenges, she

¹⁷³ http://www.europalove.com/guide-femmes-russes-st-petersbourg.php#femmes_russes. Also see: <http://www.inter-mariage.com/fr/phtm/femmesrusses.php>; <http://www.femmesrusses.com/>; http://www.femmes-russes.be/femme-russe_.html

¹⁷⁴ Yet, this synthesis is primarily imagined or fabricated. Put differently, it is rooted in dreams or fantasies, which, as Freud taught us, have little regard for logic. In this sense, it would be more apt to talk about an ambivalence than a synthesis.

¹⁷⁵ <http://premium-mariage-international.com/caracteres.php>

¹⁷⁶ http://accords-franco-russes.com/fr/femme_russe.php

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.inter-mariage.com/fr/phtm/femmesrusses.php>

¹⁷⁸ Marie-Pierre Subtil, « Rêves de femmes à Toulou », *Le Monde*, 23/10/2003 : <http://www.cypris-alliance.com/2-reve-de-femme-russe.php>

¹⁷⁹ http://www.eurochallenges.com/526_mariage-femme-de-l-est.html

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.


points out that not all of them ‘live in misery’ and they are mostly looking for ‘a stable life.’¹⁸¹

We randomly selected 1,635 profiles of Russian women registered on Eurochallenges, which will allow us to draw some conclusions about the socioeconomic profile of these marriage candidates. But, before doing so, we will give a few numbers about the breakdown of the various nationalities present on Eurochallenges. The agency publishes online profiles of Russian and Eastern European Women, Asian women, and women from Africa, the Orient, and the Indian Ocean. Looking at the number of profiles in each category,¹⁸² we can estimate that the first category, or the one of interest to us here, represents roughly 68.6% of the pool of profiles (4,232 out of 6,172). Now if we only consider women with Russian nationality, they represent 54.6% of all Eastern women, or 37.4% of all profiles.¹⁸³

Information available on the profiles includes: name, nationality, home country, city, birthday, education, profession, matrimonial status, number of children, and religion.

Accueil » Rencontre en vue mariage avec femme Russe » Inscription gratuite « page précédente

PRÉSENTATION



LYUDMILA
REF.
EC.38236 DE
RUSSIE.

Nationalité : Russe
Ville : Khabarovsk
Age : 36 ans
Née le : 24/05/1972
Niveau d'étude : Niveau
Bac+2/3
Profession : Comptable
Statut matrimonial :
Célibataire
Nombre d'enfants :
Aucun
En Savoir Plus
▶ Voir tous les profils
d'Europe de l'Est
▶ Voir tous les profils de
Russie
▶ Voir tous les profils de
Khabarovsk

DÉJÀ INSCRIT ?
Votre e-mail
Mot de passe oublié ?
Femmes russes »
Rencontre asiatique »

**Nos conseillères
à votre écoute**
04 72 56 93 73

EN SAVOIR PLUS
▶ Le N°1 des
Rencontres
Internationales :
Eurochallenges, N°1 des
Rencontres Internationales,

RENCONTRE & MARIAGE > INSCRIPTION GRATUITE

Cliquez pour rencontrer Lyudmila ➡



A profile on Eurochallenges

¹⁸¹ http://www.eurochallenges.com/526_mariage-femme-de-l-est.html. We should not forget that *Eurochallenges* requires that its members speak either French or English: there is therefore no doubt that their level of education is on average higher than that of women registered with “web-based” agencies, which have no linguistic requirements.

¹⁸² <http://www.eurochallenges.com/recherche.php>

¹⁸³ Calculated on 17 July 2008

We will now take a closer look at Russian women's profiles, starting with their level of education.

Level of education	Number of members	Percentage
University, grad school	1040	63.61%
Technical/vocational training	248	15.17%
Associates/some college	205	12.54%
High school/secondary diploma	80	4.89%
Some high school/secondary education	26	1.59%
Elementary/primary	5	0.31%
Other	31	1.89%

This confirms what was stated by the founder of *Eurochallenges*: female members are, in effect, highly qualified, with $\frac{3}{4}$ of them having at least some college education. Now, let's look at the most common professions of female members:

Profession	Number of members	Percentage
Professor/teacher	261	15.96%
Accountant	197	12.05%
Employed	100	6.12%
Doctor/dentist	84	5.14%
Engineer	76	4.65%
Business manager	59	3.61%
Student	59	3.61%
Other	799	48.86%

This data is very inexact in that it overlooks certain professional categories and in that many of these professions could be sub-divided into more distinct professions. Nonetheless, the data does clearly indicate the heavy presence of members from the teaching sector;¹⁸⁴ the data also shows that the members' professions corroborate with the members' various levels of education. We also note that there is not a single unemployed woman, or at least a woman describing herself as such.

If we now turn to marriage status, we note that 57.13% of female members (934) are divorced, 34.41% (579) have never been married, and 6.30% (103) are widows.¹⁸⁵ Regarding

¹⁸⁴ This is probably one particularity of the agency *Eurochallenges* since it requires linguistic knowledge.

¹⁸⁵ The others left the field blank or specified "Doesn't matter."

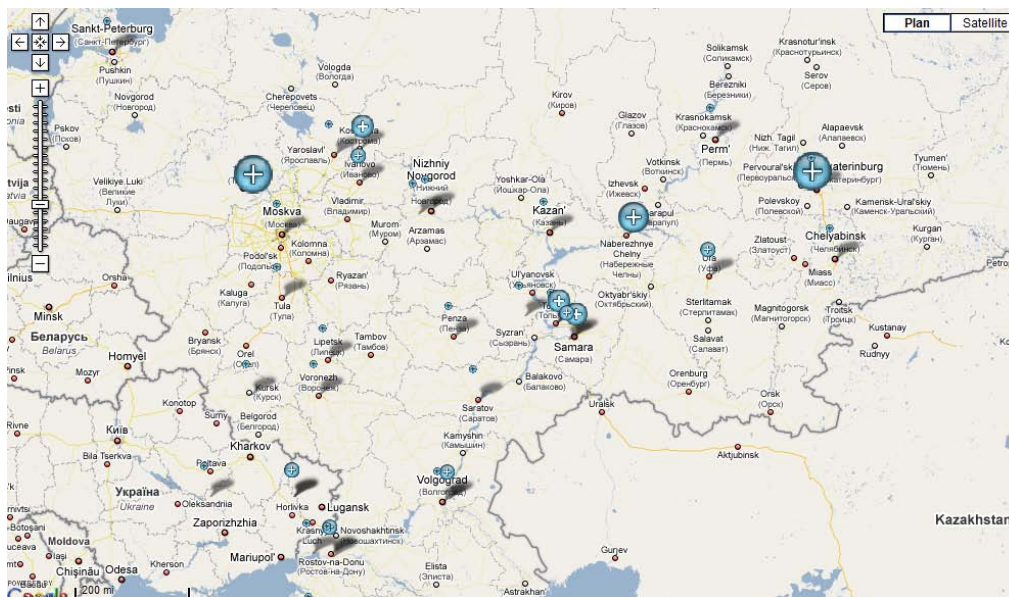
children, 38.90% (636) have no children and 60.91% (1,096) have at least one child (67.16% of them with exactly one child). Lastly, as far as age goes, we note that 48.50% (793) of members are at least 40, 36.76% (601) between 30 and 39, and 14.74% (241) between 18 and 29.

These numbers are quite surprising. It is probable that they are rather close to data we could have obtained from a traditional matrimonial agency, but this remains to be proven. For the sake of comparison, in the web-based agency Annabarmina, women 37 and over only represent 20.21% of total members (1,967 out of 9,734), less than the number of women between 19 and 22, which represents 20.76 (2,021). Most other agencies fall somewhere between these two “extremes.” On Inter-Mariage, for example, 29.22% (643 out of 2,201) of women are at least 40, 43.66% are between 30 and 40 (961) and 27.12% (597) are under 30.

Returning to Eurochallenges, we can now present an illustration¹⁸⁶ of the geographical breakdown of female members (only cities with at least 5 members are shown; the size of the icons depicts the members/city population ratio).



¹⁸⁶ Built using API Google Maps available at the following address: http://ostap.bender.free.fr/TIC-Migrations/ICT_IEM/MapRusse/eurochallenges1.html



This data merits an in-depth analysis that is not possible here. We can nonetheless point out a high concentration around the city of Samara (where Eurochallenges has a partner agency) in the Volga region. We also see some mid-sized cities with a significant number of members: Pervouralsk (close to Ekaterinburg), Naberezhnye Chelny, Tver (near Moscow). In the extreme east of the country, the city of Khabarovsk stands out with 99 members. *Eurochallenges* also has an agency in this city. This is also the case of *Femmes-russes.be*, a site which even presents a video clip about this city.¹⁸⁷

3.3.6 Who are the beneficiaries?

In order to find out how the digital economy of marriage can encourage economic participation of IEM, it is necessary to ask the following questions: “Who are the beneficiaries?” which leads us to the next question: “Where are they located? In the home countries, the host countries, or elsewhere?”

We will take two sites as examples: *Annabarmina* and *Femmesrusses*. Both sites are part of the *Angelika* network that has as many agencies in home countries (Belorussia, Moldavia, Russia, etc.) as in the potential host countries (Australia, France, Germany).¹⁸⁸ We noted, however, that while physical addresses in the home countries are numerous and clearly indicated, it is altogether different of the host countries where often no address is given. In fact, we only found three: one in Switzerland and two in the United Kingdom (for French clients, the address for *Annabarmina* is the address in Switzerland whereas *Femmesrusses* indicates no address). It is hard to tell who is actually working for these agencies, with the exception of the network “director.”¹⁸⁹

The problems we encountered in identifying the actors are common on this market. One only has to visit sites like *Activelovemeeting*, *Premium-marriage-international*, *Natclub*, or *Femmes-russes*. We were unable to find out where the actors were located. If we add to this the fact that the online/offline agency is managed by a French team, we can hypothesize that

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.femmes-russes.be/>

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.angelika.net/aboutus.shtml>

¹⁸⁹ We should point out that she is a computer engineer: <http://www.angelika.net/contact.shtml>

migrants have a very low presence on this market, at least as network actors. In effect, they are actors insofar as they are the object with love being the merchandise.

However, the previous example of the Angelika network showed us how individuals could assume a role in this market. The same goes for Inter-marriage located in Domarin in the region of Isère (which has a contact number) and managed, it seems, by one person: a woman with Russian origins. The same also goes for *Accords-franco-russes.com* located in Paris' 8th district and also managed by a Russian woman.¹⁹⁰ Lastly, we could cite the offline/online agency called *Cypris-alliance* located in Paris and managed by two Russian women. In this sense, we can say that migrants are participating in the economy of international marriage but that this participation hinges exclusively on individual initiatives.

But if we turn away from individuals and look at structures, we have reason to think that, with the exception of major agencies like *Eurochallenges*, the home countries are drawing the most benefits. All agencies whether they be web-based or not work with a group of matrimonial agencies in home countries, especially Russia. Romantic tourism (which sometimes borders on sex tourism) represents an important source of revenue in these countries where the services go far beyond matrimonial agencies: apartment rentals, hotel reservations, transportation, etc. *Travel agencies* are also taking advantage of this market. But the last example indirectly shows that migrants can benefit from developing this type of "romantic tourism" as shown by the example of *Amslav*, Eurochallenge's prime partner, located in France, whose staffs knows "the area perfectly since they were born and lived there."¹⁹¹ In this sense, international marriage mediated by internet creates a market that is not exclusively digital in that it plays on relations between home countries and host countries and includes a set of related services that migrants may provide.

We will finish here by mentioning a last possibility linked to marriage candidates' profiles on Eurochallenges. It could be said then in a certain sense that by presenting mostly highly qualified women, this agency (as well as the others) does not contribute directly to the economic participation of migrants but does, however, encourage foreigners with a guaranteed potential to make an economic contribution to come to France. We know, however, that "converting" Russian diplomas in France is not a simple formality and that there is a certain devaluation that could make it hard to find work and result in lost "intellectual capital."

3.4 The Moroccans and wedding planning in France

3.4.1 Introduction: research issues

In the universe of Moroccan marriage for migrants presented on the Web, it is the organization of the event and the set of related services that caught our attention. The offer for such services is so vast that they merit a separate study. This is why we have decided to focus our study on the question of marriage as an event (wedding) and have left out the meeting and the actual union.

What we wanted to observe first of all were the actors on the Moroccan marriage market on the Web. We hoped to be able to identify the key actors by analyzing structural data and the position of actors on the network in terms of function (connectivity in terms of hyperlinks) and audience. The relations (here again in terms of hyperlinks) between these actors could

¹⁹⁰ http://accords-franco-russes.com/fr/a_propos.php

¹⁹¹ <http://www.amslav.com/>

help us uncover partner networks (and in some cases actors' repertoires). We also wanted to establish a typology of the proposed services.

Another question we asked ourselves dealt with the Web uses on this market: were we dealing with personal sites created by the actors themselves, sites created by web design agencies (if yes, which ones), or even blogs or spaces on social networks? Lastly, what was the role of these sites: a simple showcase or a full-blown "boutique?"

3.4.2 Research methodology

The first steps in this research involved combing the web for sites on Moroccan marriage (using search engines). What we observed was interplay of information pages, videos, forum discussions, and lastly service offers related to marriage. It was no easy task to dissociate these various categories of data. Nonetheless, we did uncover one key-word that almost always generated hits from the last category. It was the word *Negafa* (we should note that the expression "halal catering" generated similar results). A Negafa is a dresser in Maghrebian marriages, and more generally Moroccan marriages: her task is to help the bride change outfits several times throughout the event. We must state at present that it might be impossible to isolate a site devoted exclusively to Moroccan marriage from the general websites on Maghrebian marriage. By using the word Negafa as our point of departure, we certainly do not get around this problem, but we can settle with referring to a notion that often refers to an exclusively Moroccan phenomenon. In addition, there was no reason to fear focusing on one particular marriage service to the exclusion of others, because we shall see that they are closely related on the web.

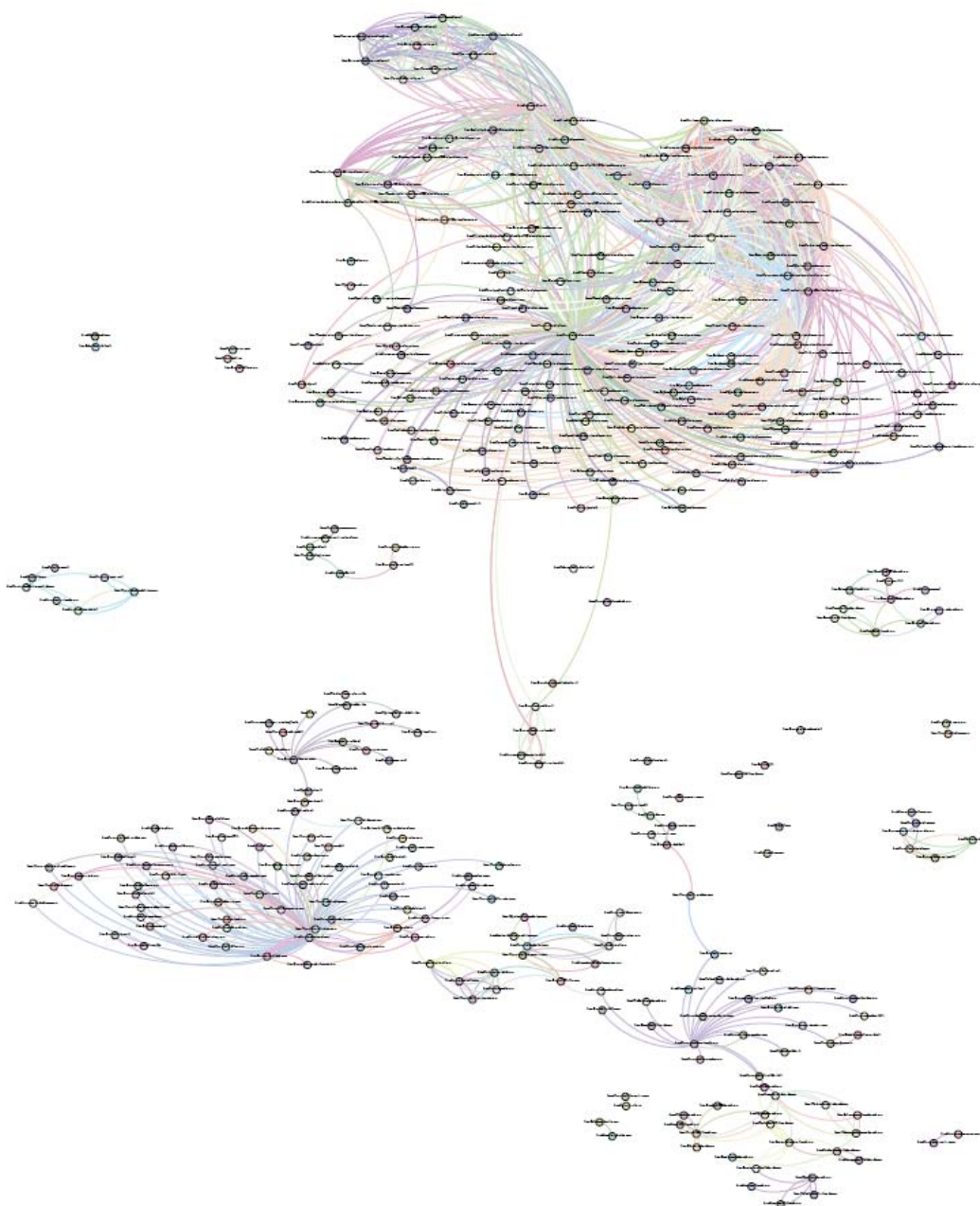
Our methodology was the following. We did a Google search for the keyword "Negafa" and selected the first 30 results. We explored and followed the links between each of these pages using Navicrawler until we arrived to pages that did not deal with our topic (marriage services). We then built a graph of our focal area in which nodes represented all websites offering services and the arcs represented hyperlinks between them. We then visualized this graph using the open software called Gephi, an independent project whose development is supported by Webatlas.¹⁹² This is how we were able to reconstitute the universe of online marriage planning.

We then noticed that a high number of web pages were hosted on the social platform for blogs called Skyblog. We did another Google search for the word Negafa, but this time limited the search to the Skyblog page. As we previously did, we selected the first 30 results and then explored their links using Navicrawler until we arrived to the 'off topic' nodes. We did however conserve these, but marked them differently.

3.4.3 The online universe of Moroccan wedding planning

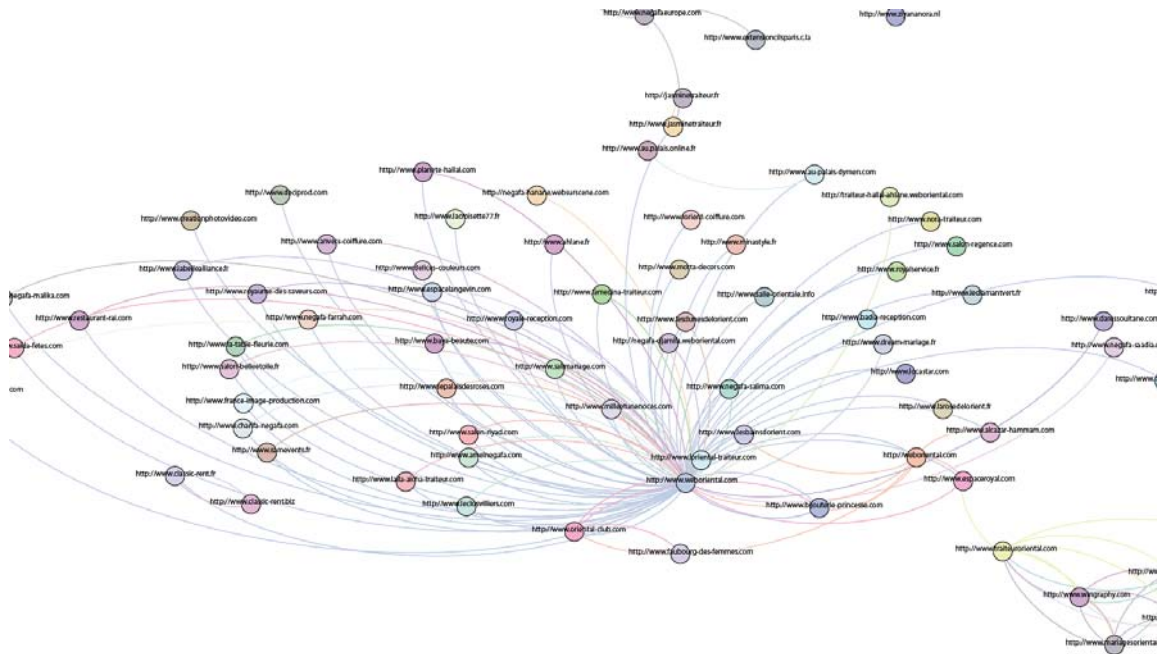
Let us start by looking at the graph illustrating the online universe of Moroccan wedding. We will then study the salient zones and nodes/actors from the graph (http://ostap.bender.free.fr/TIC-Migrations/ICT_IEM/Negafa.pdf).

¹⁹² <http://www.webatlas.fr/>



The online universe of Moroccan wedding planning

Now let us explore the various parts of this graph starting with the bottom-left portion:

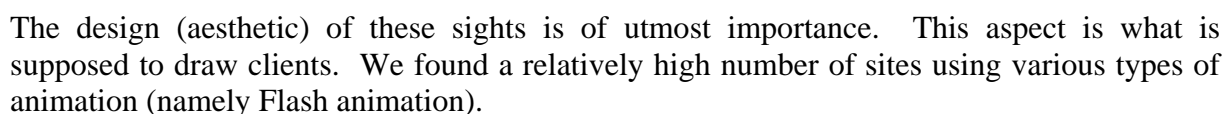


Here we find sites devoted to various services needed for planning Moroccan marriages. Almost all service providers are located in France and address migrants:

- ☑ *Apparel rental and Negafa* (<http://www.lesdunesdelorient.com/>, <http://www.dream-mariage.fr/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Henna* (<http://www.milleetunenoces.com/>, <http://www.negafa-salima.com/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Jewelry* (<http://www.salimariage.com/>, <http://www.minastyle.fr/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Hair* (<http://www.baya-beaute.com/>, <http://www.anvers-coiffure.com/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Halal catering* (<http://www.planete-hallal.com/>, <http://traiteur-hallal-ahlane.weboriental.com/>, <http://www.loriental-traiteur.com/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Cakes and sweets* (<http://www.royaume-des-saveurs.com/>, <http://www.salle-orientale.info/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Reception room rentals* (<http://www.salon-riyad.com/>, <http://www.lepalaisdesroses.com/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Decorations* (<http://royale-reception.com/>, <http://negafa-hanane.websurscene.com/>, <http://www.delices-couleurs.com/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Activities, music* (<http://www.larosedelorient.fr/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Photographers and cameramen* (<http://creationphotovideo.com/>, <http://deciprod.com/>, <http://www.france-image-production.com/>, etc.)
- ☑ *Car rental* (<http://www.classic-rent.fr/>, <http://www.classic-rent.biz/>)

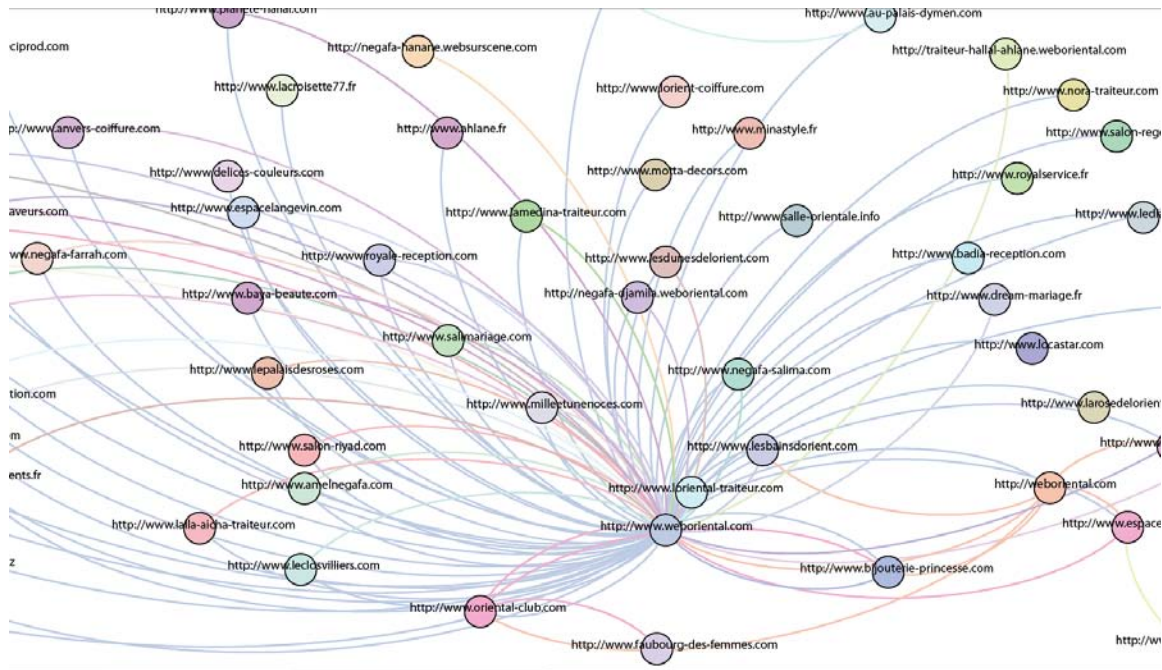
We should specify that the above categories are far from being exclusive. In fact, they are very closely related and often combined. In this sense, many examples of sites listed above could have just as easily fallen under another category. For example, apparel rental and Negafa, henna makeup, jewellery (sometimes hair) are part of the same offer. The same goes for halal catering and cakes/sweets. The same also applies to room/hall rental and decoration. More generally, we see almost any possible combinations with certain actors present on all

More than anything else, these sites are places to present the offer. They are therefore showcases of what the market actors can offer. In effect, it is not possible to order services online, which is obviously due to the type of services offered. This leads us to think that there is no real potential of developing a purely online economy in the marriage sector. In effect, potential clients refer to the sites' contact page in order to continue the process.



There are very few if any links between these sites. What makes them part of the same group is that they are all linked to the site <http://weboriental.com>, a veritable centre of connectivity. In effect, Weboriental contains a link to almost all these sites, which in turn, link back to Weboriental. What is the reason for this? If we visit Weboriental, we will read the following on the homepage:

Weboriental therefore presents itself as a community portal that combines service providers in France in the oriental event sector.



62.6% of Weboriental's visitors live in France where it is the 27,648th most visited site (23,490th in Morocco).¹⁹³

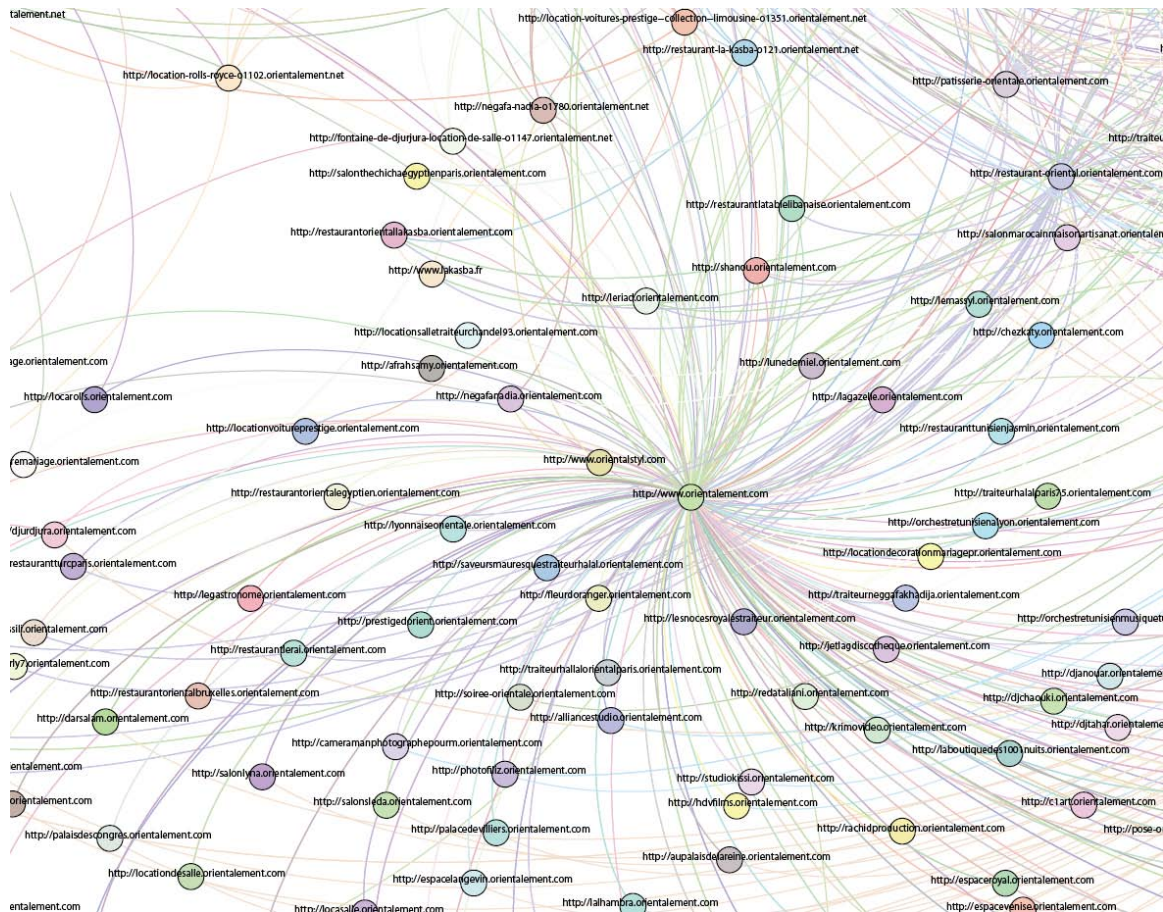
However, Weboriental, which is owned by a company called *Web sur Scène*, is much more than a directory of sites. We can also read on the homepage: "Service providers and retailers, our goal is to be your prestigious showcase on the internet. You are an oriental dancer, singer, DJ, cake maker, caterer, or a distributor of Moroccan crafts..." *Weboriental* is therefore also a web development agency. In effect, on all sites that are linked to it, we find the expression 'Design Weboriental,' with a link to it.

Let us now have a look at the area of the graph with the highest density, in terms of connectivity (the upper region of the graph).

Despite its very high density, this zone is fairly simple to analyze. In effect, the vast majority of the nodes/actors fit the '(title).orientalement.com' format. They are all therefore simply declensions of the <http://orientalement.com/> website.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Numbers taken from *Alexa.com* on 21 July 2008. These numbers are relatively reliable in comparison with www.yabiladi.com, which is a French language information portal devoted to Moroccan migrants (but 26.4% of traffic comes from Morocco) and includes a forum. It is the 968th most visited site in France (99th in Morocco).

¹⁹⁴ The high connectivity in the upper right-hand section of this graph represents the various categories of the *Orientalement* site.

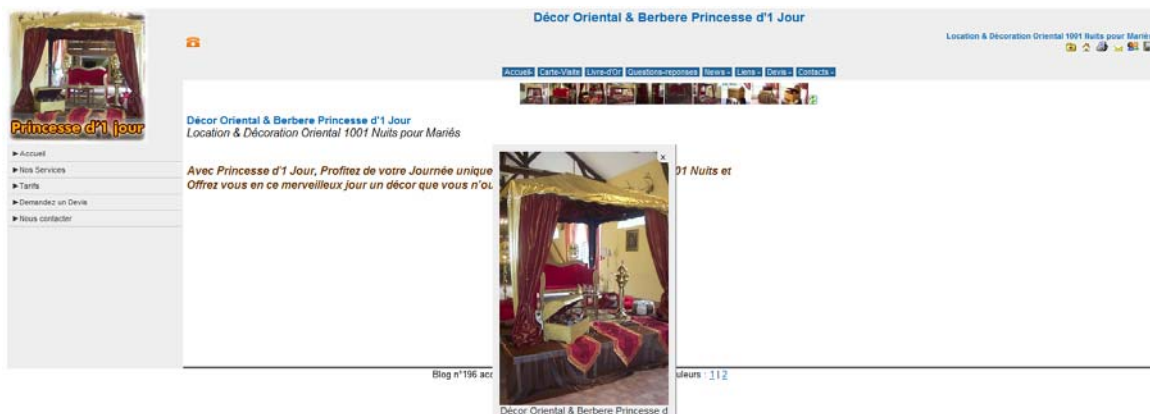


Orientement describes itself as providing a ‘dynamic and adaptable showcase’ on the Web. In this sense, it offers a space on the Web¹⁹⁵ for service providers involved in Maghrebian events planning, particularly in France. It is therefore situated in the same sector as *Weboriental* (their competition can easily be seen on the graph in the fact that no site linked to one is linked to the other) but they have very different strategies. In fact, for the former it is not a question of Web site creation strictly speaking, but of user-friendly interfaces which the service providers use to create Web pages themselves (similar to the creation of profiles on social networking sites).¹⁹⁶ This allows *Orientement* to have very low prices that vary according to the site’s activity: €150 for an oriental jewellers, €500 for a halal caterer, €700 for an oriental DJ, etc.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Weboriental calls these spaces *blogs* even though it does not share the rights.

¹⁹⁶ Let us note however that *Orientement* does offer the space to host full sites linked to the ‘showcase’ page.

¹⁹⁷ http://orientement.com/?mszi=cre_annuaire



A service provider on Orientalement

Hosting the pages of these service providers makes *Orientalement* an online directory of services in the Maghrebian events planning sector, especially for marriages. Its creators claim that it is the ‘best directory for the oriental world,’ one which crushes all competition: “The other sites do not even have 1/10 the number of visitors.”¹⁹⁸ *Orientalement* even provides its site statistics,¹⁹⁹ where one can see that the site receives on average 971,900 visits a month.²⁰⁰ *Orientalement* even provides a link to the *Alexa Website* where one can compare its traffic with that of its competitors, including *Weboriental*.²⁰¹⁻²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ http://orientalement.com/?mszi=cre_annuaire

¹⁹⁹ <http://orientalement.com/stats/>

²⁰⁰ Let us not forget, however, that this number is based on data collected by the indexing popular search engines. Furthermore, these statistics stop abruptly in November 2007 without explanation.

²⁰¹ The other competitor being <http://oumma.com>, which is surprising seeing as *Oumma* is purely an information site.

²⁰² The two sites in actual fact carry on a running battle with legal implications. See for example: <http://weboriental.wordpress.com/2008/05/02/assignation-en-justice/>; <http://www.01pro.com/referencement-google.php>

Traffic History Graph for orientalement.com



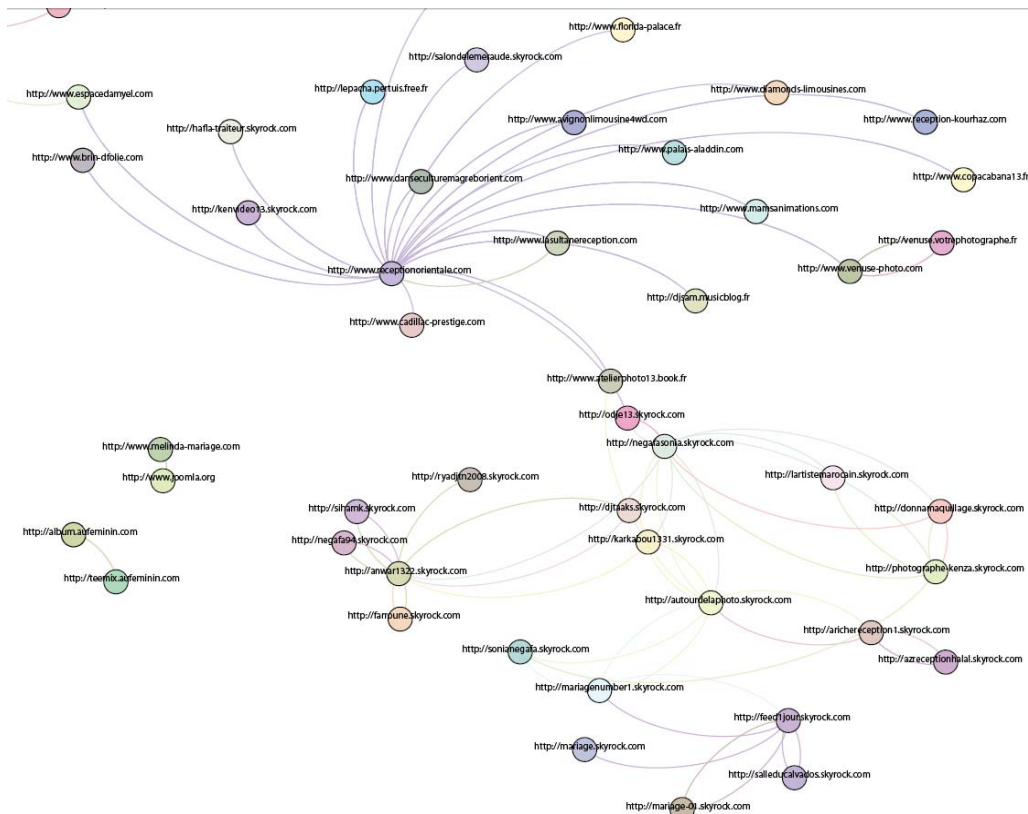
Comparison of *Orientalement* and *Web Oriental*'s site traffic on *Alexa* on 21 July 2008

Orientalement is the 2,041st most-visited site in France (the country which constitutes 46.6% of its hits) and the 1,366th in Morocco (6.1% of hits).²⁰³ Its apparent domination over *Weboriental* must be qualified, however, by the fact that visits to the pages of service providers on *Orientalement* are counted as visits to *Orientalement*, whereas this is not the case for *Weboriental*, as the sites created there are independent.

If one examines the actors who have spaces on *Orientalement*, it is easily apparent that they cover exactly the same spectrum of services as those on sites linked to *Weboriental*. At the same time, the web space on the former is firstly a “window display/showcase,” even though *Orientalement* has included the option of creating forms for requesting a cost estimate. From an aesthetic and functional point of view, its pages are much more rudimentary than those created by *Weboriental*, despite such options as adding videos, 360° virtual visits, etc. In fact, most of the service providers also have a separate Web site linked to their page.

²⁰³ The site is also the 763rd most-visited site in Algeria, with 27.1% of hits.

Finally, we must address the third and last high-density region of the graph:



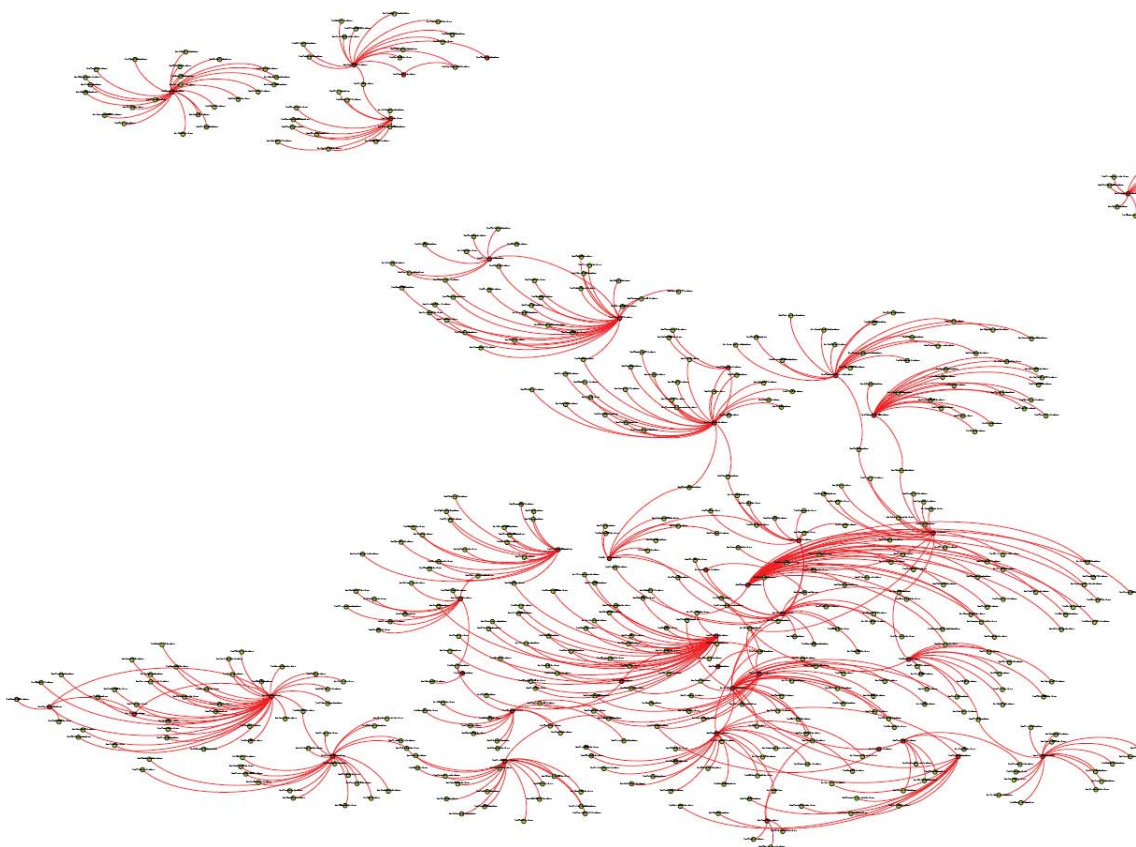
Immediately noticeable in the upper section of the graph is the highly connected site, <http://www.receptionorientale.com/>, which is the ‘#1 Oriental, 1001 Nights-themed directory devoted to Oriental weddings and receptions in Marseille and the South of France.’ It is therefore once again an actor in the same market, Oriental weddings, though much more geographically restricted. It allows those posting announcements to publish their advertisements on the site, but does not provide individual Web pages, only a listing (with photo, short description and contact details). *Receptionorientale* is the 63,367th most-visited site in France (the country providing 94.4% of hits).²⁰⁴

We have taken the time to address this site, however, because one of its members is a service provider with a ‘showcase’ page hosted on the blog platform *Skyblog*. This service provider, <http://odje13.skyrock.com>, is actually a DJ not solely devoted to Moroccan weddings, but who has a link to the space of a negafa (<http://negafasonia.skyrock.com/>), whose page in turn provides links to other service providers in the Moroccan wedding business such as photographers, decorators, or other DJs (the most widely-represented service on this site). By thus following the “friends” links, one can find a complete package of wedding services. Therefore, it would seem that the *Skyblog* platform, though not in any way specifically devoted to Maghrebian weddings nor even Maghrebian communities, could also constitute a third “organizer” in the Maghrebian wedding market, alongside *Weboriental* and *Orientelement*, and who, in belonging to what is called the Social Web, could demonstrate unique characteristics. This will require much further examination.

²⁰⁴ Source: www.alexa.com on 21 July 2008.

3.4.4 Matrimonial web as social web: Skyblog

Skyblog²⁰⁵ is a Web platform, developed by the Telefun company for the French radio station Skyrock, which allows users to create and manage blogs for free. Skyblog has been extremely successful in the Francophone world, particularly with adolescents and young adults, largely due to its very user-friendly blog management interface. It is accepted, or at least assumed, that the blogging practices on Skyblog are indissociable from daily off-line interactions, in the family setting or more often among friends, with these ‘clans’ mirrored on the web and continuing their interactions in another mode. One may nevertheless posit that our present research is likely to discover another use of Skyblog, as a showcase for service providers. Let us add that Skyblog is situated in a sense between a blog platform strictly speaking and a social networking site (like Facebook or Myspace); many users in fact use their blog as they would do with a profile page on a social networking site: text is rare and very short (often



mere comments on photos or other media), and links are nearly all internal to the platform (‘friend’ links with other platform members).

As mentioned above, we searched the key word ‘negafa’ using *Google* and limiting the search to Skyblog pages.²⁰⁶ With the help of *Navicrawler* we visited the first 30 blogs and followed the ‘friend’ links when these seemed pertinent to our topic (or at least the theme of Maghrebien weddings in general, rather than solely service providers). We did, however, note the non-pertinent pages, but did not explore them further. These pages can be found in the graph (http://ostap.bender.free.fr/TIC-Migrations/ICT_IEM/Negafa2.pdf) as green nodes,

²⁰⁵ <http://www.skyrock.com/>

²⁰⁶ That is to say by adding “site:skyrock.com” in our search.

with pages relative to Maghrebian wedding appearing in red.²⁰⁷ Finally, considering the enormous volume of data on the Skyblog site—10 million blogs in June 2007²⁰⁸—and its distribution (we will come to this point shortly), we cannot pretend to offer an exhaustive study of the connection to Maghrebian weddings on the platform.

Let us first examine a few of the nodes in the graph which represent service providers in the wedding industry:

<http://delicesdorient.skyrock.com/>: This is the blog of a halal caterer; it contains 13 pages of photos of dishes and food arrangements, around 65 photos total. In the blog's description on the home page, the caterer offers his services, lists the cities he covers, and provides his contact details. He also specifies that he works in collaboration with Negafa, DJ and music group, etc. When we consulted his friends list, one Negafa's blog was present.

<http://negafanadya.skyrock.com/>: This is the blog of a shop located on the outskirts of Strasbourg which also provides decoration services. On this blog there are 64 pages of photos, around 320 total photos. In the blog's description is the shop's location as well as a link to its 'real' website: www.reveoriental.net. In this respect, the blog is merely a 'window display' and Skyblog a place to be seen, or rather, an advertising space.

<http://alurdestar.skyrock.com/>: This is again the blog of a Negafa, this time specializing in bridal hairstyles as well as makeup. It is more a how-to site than an advertising space in that even though the author's address can be found in the blog, it isn't brought to the forefront. It must be specified that this is an individual's blog.

<http://negafa-31-new.skyrock.com/>: Once again the site of a Negafa in Toulouse which offers wedding decorations, traditional and modern dresses, finery, princess dresses, Hindu outfits for both men and women, Amaria and Mida, Takchitas, and caftans. Contact details are provided, but there are only two images on the page. This blog appears to be individual, though it is not certain.

<http://negafa69.skyrock.com/>: Yet again this is the site of a Negafa. It has 16 photos, provides contact details, etc. This is an individual blog.

<http://medimusik.skyrock.com/>: This is the blog of a team which takes care of the entire wedding planning: "artist, caterer, negafa, photographer, cameraman, musical group, DJ, oriental dancer, oriental decoration, etc." The first entry gives a link to the team's site: www.medimusik.fr and provides their contact details. In the friends list are several other service providers, including other Negafas.

<http://djismah.skyrock.com/>: This is the blog of a DJ who offers his services for weddings, birthdays and baptisms. In one entry it is mentioned that he works in collaboration with a

²⁰⁷ Given the quantity of data examined, we based our decision about the thematic pertinence of a page on the pseudo of its owner before verifying that the content did indeed correspond. We also visited other pages at random. Nevertheless, there remains a possibility that, of the sites displayed in green and thus as not pertinent, some could in fact be pertinent. In this respect, the green nodes represent the limits of our study as much as they represent non-pertinent pages.

²⁰⁸ <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skyblog>. It must be specified that a large number of these are 'dead' blogs, those which have been abandoned by their authors.

Negafa in Rouen who has a site external to *Skyblog*. He gives his contact details in another entry.

We can stop there. It is evident that there is a large number of Maghrebian wedding service providers on *Skyblog* covering the entire sector, with perhaps less of a presence of photographers and videographers, as well as car rentals. There are even professional teams for which *Skyblog* appears to be first and foremost an advertising space external to an 'official website.' Nevertheless, *Skyblog* seems to be mainly a showcase for individuals offering their services. This is why Negafas are predominant (and slightly less so musicians, DJs, etc., as was shown by the general graph of Maghrebian weddings in the previous sections), as they act on an individual basis.

The major advantage that *Skyblog* offers for individuals, as opposed to *Weboriental* and *Orientelement* is of course the fact that it is free. However, although *Skyblog* was the 42nd most-visited site in France,²⁰⁹ a page on its platform does not guarantee the same level of visibility for its members. The 10 million pages on the platform are difficult to find, whether using *Skyblog*'s internal search engine or *Google*. Effectively, navigation on social networking sites such as *Skyblog* relies less on searches than on friendship links. In this respect, the popularity or visibility of a blog depends largely on its belonging to a network of friends. Connectivity is thus an essential aspect (furthermore, it is this connectivity that determines the order of appearance in *Google*). And yet, in our research, we stumbled upon a variety of isolated blogs with empty friend lists. One might assume that these blogs had a very limited audience, but in actual fact they were made visible by mutual links in the blogs themselves of other service providers. Partnership is therefore also a key source of visibility; the link itself is publicity. But more in general, it is the friendship links and not necessarily those among service providers which prove useful. The graph below shows a group of blogs not devoted to services for Maghrebian weddings (for example <http://castel-lea.skyrock.com/>; <http://valkiss.skyrock.com/>) which have an indirect link among various service providers and thus includes them in the same network. This is why, if one wants to understand the structure of the Maghrebian wedding sphere on *Skyblog*, it is indispensable to take into account the totality of *actors*, most often individuals, who do not directly participate in the market but play the role of a sort of collective organizer. The organization of the market rests, in this respect, on 'friendship' links which are in actual fact relations based on social, geographic, or emotional proximity, which is a very different model than that of *Weboriental* and *Orientelement*.

In the course of this study, we were able to distinguish three major players on the Web in the sector of Maghrebian weddings: *Weboriental*, *Orientelement* and the 'anonymous actor' that is *Skyblog*. We have seen that *Weboriental* develops its clients' sites, while *Orientelement* offers them interfaces to create their own advertising space, and finally *Skyblog* provides a blog management tool. Thus we have service providers either turning over the entirety of their presence on the Web to a developer, or using interfaces to create and manage their own Web spaces. The latter is easy to use, but it must be said that the possibilities it offers are restricted: the web pages of the service providers are above all, as we have said multiple times, merely window displays.

²⁰⁹ Source: www.alexa.com, 22/07/08

3.5 ***Relevance of the matrimonial web sites in relationship to the Riga Goals and the issue of social capital***

Let us conclude this study by examining the pertinence of migrants' Matrimonial Web with regards to some of the objectives for e-inclusion outlined in the Riga goals. Of these we will address: a) economic participation, which was the principle issue at stake in this study, but also b) IT skill building and c) community regeneration. These reflections will allow us to outline a response to the question of d) the potential of the matrimonial web to develop the social capital of IEM.

3.5.1 **Matrimonial web and economic participation**

From the point of view of economic participation, the three communities studied presented noticeable differences which we will now summarize:

- ☒ **Indians:** in the case of *Shaadi*, we have a flourishing transnational business (let us recall the sales figure of 30 million dollars in 2007), a business built in a sense on the unbreakable link between symbolic capital and financial capital, more specifically on the conversion of the former into the latter, a conversion of tradition (family, etc.) and social structure (notably the caste system) into commodities. The logic of *Shaadi* is that of an ethnic and identity capitalism. *Shaadi* is in this respect a major economic actor in India, with its activity extending into the totality of host countries of the Indian diaspora, countries in which *Shaadi* employs Indian citizens, notably in the *Shaadi Points* meeting centres. Moreover, *Shaadi* promotes the circulation of Indian populations, though not in all social strata but exclusively among the elites. Finally, *Shaadi* integrates various actors in the marriage business (astrologists, retailers, immigration advisors, etc.)
- ☒ **Russians:** in Franco-Russian mixed marriages, we have a series of actors filling the whole range of the merchandizing of love, from simply selling Eastern women's electronic addresses to 'traditional' international matrimonial agencies offering a series of online services (profile viewing, matchmaking, etc). This market relies as much on the multiplicity of individual initiatives, in some cases started by migrants (working with matrimonial agencies in Russia), as on large structures such as *Eurochallenges*. Even though this major player is not led by a Russian team, it involves a range of economic actors, not only in the home countries of marriage candidates, but also in the host countries, namely through migration actors (travel agencies, etc.), though on a lesser scale.
- ☒ **Moroccans:** the Moroccan and more generally the Maghrebian wedding planning market found on the Web reveals two major players: *Weboriental* and *Orientelement*. These two actors give service providers in the sphere of Maghrebian weddings *visibility* on the Web by enabling their very presence online (either by developing a proper Web site in the case of the former, or by the creation of individual spaces on a common site in the case of the latter) and by compiling vast directories, divided into categories according to the service provided, devoted to wedding planning. The Web content presented by the service providers acts as a window display for business which takes place offline. In addition to these two actors is the social networking platform *Skyblog* which hosts various actors in the market, though predominately individual service providers whose visibility depends not on belonging to a widely-consulted directory but on their network of 'friends,' relations based on social, geographic or emotional proximity.

Based on these various cases, we may conclude that migrant matrimonial websites indeed exhibit a potential for contributing to the economic participation of IEM in the host countries, particularly France. As for the entities involved in the market, they cover the whole spectrum

from individuals (online matrimonial agencies for Russian migrants in France, service providers in the Maghrebian wedding business in France on Skyblog) to large structures such as *Shaadi*, *Eurochallenges*, *Web Oriental* and *Orientelement*. The very nature of the marriage business prevents it from being a strictly online economy; there is rather an interplay of the online and offline dimensions within the same economy: matchmaking and communication on the *Shaadi* site is complemented by a meeting at one of the *Shaadi Points*; viewing the profile of a Russian woman and exchanging emails with her soon gives way to a romantic voyage; the service providers' pages for Maghrebian weddings are above all shop windows/showcases of physical entities.

3.5.2 Skill building

One may ask to what extent the matrimonial web might contribute to IT skill building among migrants. Naturally this is not the objective of the actors involved (vendors or clients) in this market, but it could be an indirect effect insofar as a certain level of IT knowledge constitutes a necessary means to accomplish various activities: being put in touch with someone online, communication, setting up meetings, etc.

Let us first look at the example of *Shaadi*. The platform offers its users a variety of tools: an interface for creating profiles, email, messenger service (*Shaadi Messenger*), etc. It therefore assumes a certain level of familiarity with communication technologies on the Internet. And yet, marriage candidates on *Shaadi* are more often than not signed up by their parents, who are not necessarily used to using information and communication technologies, which leads one to the hypothesis that the entire process of finding a soul mate can also be an education in computer use for more than one party. One must note, however, as previously stated, that *Shaadi* is used almost exclusively by elites, and therefore by people who are already inclined to possess IT skills. Finally, the complexity of the technical infrastructure of a site like *Shaadi* requires a team of developers, and it is unknown whether or not *Shaadi* employs computer scientists, particularly Indians, in host countries.

The Russian matrimonial web, and more specifically the digital economy of Franco-Russian marriage, appears to be less interesting from the point of view of IT skill building. The matrimonial sites offer few communication tools, with most exchanges carried out external to the sites via electronic mail. In this sense it assumes a certain level of competency, however rudimentary. As for agencies such as *Eurochallenges*, we have seen that online activity quickly gave way to a physical meeting offline with agency employees. On the other hand, the individual initiatives by Russian migrants in France to create matrimonial agencies requires being able to develop a Web site. However, in addition to the fact that the actual developers of these sites remain unknown, we must once again stress the rudimentary nature of these sites.

Finally, in the case of Moroccans, we observed the presence of actors specialized in visibility and advertising, those enabling the presence of service providers on the Web. These service providers leave all the IT developing to specialists or use simple tools to create profiles on social networking platforms such as Skyblog. However, even though their activity never goes beyond simple manipulation of site management interfaces or user-friendly Web spaces, it can still constitute an introduction to the IT world for individuals or businesses that would not otherwise have the opportunity or feel the necessity to invest in these skills were it not for a professional purpose.

We can thus conclude by stating that though the matrimonial web may not contribute directly to IT skill building, it nevertheless indirectly encourages the acquisition of certain technological skills in the domain of communication and presentation.

3.5.3 Community regeneration

The question of community regeneration is an essential aspect of the migrant matrimonial Web sector. In effect, it touches on something which is plainly a key factor in this regeneration, that is to say enabling the family to become an agent of community reproduction and preservation.

For obvious reasons, we will not here be addressing the case of Franco-Russian mixed marriages. As for the Indian community, we have seen the primordial role played by the community and tradition, in other words by symbolic capital. The success of *Shaadi* is due notably to the completeness of its profiles (in terms of descriptive fields to be filled in) relative to Indian social and cultural realities. *Shaadi* offers in this respect the ability to pursue matrimonial strategies currently practiced in India, despite community dispersal. It recreates a wealth of choice by breaking down geographical barriers. Such community generation is, however, strictly contingent on subscribing to the capitalist system wherein symbolic capital and financial capital are inextricably linked. The profile on *Shaadi* becomes the place where social, cultural, etc. specificities are exhibited. Information and communication technology thus contribute to the amplification and rationalization of community reproduction strategies. But one may hypothesize that such an amplification could lead to a reinforcing of internal conflicts in Indian society (as searches are based on an almost mathematical equation of the perfect partner according to social, community and ethnic characteristics), as the main criteria of homophilia hardens social boundaries as well as the identities of Indian minorities in distinction to other social groups in host countries.

The methodology we used in studying the Moroccan matrimonial web allowed us to observe another facet of community regeneration, that is to say a celebration and renewal of collective life through festivities rather than reproduction via family ties. Of course it would be absurd to suggest that Maghrebians events in France did not take place prior to the Web, but access to wedding service providers online can contribute to the organization of the sector, while promoting the emergence of new actors and in a way extending the event temporally by constantly projecting it into the now in the virtual space of the Web. Such sites as *Weboriental* and *Orientelement* thus are much more than simple directories: they are a living witness of the Maghrebians presence in France.

3.5.4 Social capital

Finally, let us examine the potential of the matrimonial web to develop the social capital of IEM. We shall begin with a very basic observation: since the object of this study is marriage, social capital in this instance will rely on a 'dual relation', reflecting the relationship of a couple. If, then, the specific case is of intracommunity marriage, the link between the two is one of bonding; if on the other hand it is a mixed marriage, the link is one of bridging.

Let us begin with the Indian and Moroccan matrimonial webs. We saw in both of them an essential function of community regeneration. The element of bonding is here decisive: not only are ties internal to the physical community reinforced, but the community is extended virtually. It is in fact the very nature and purpose of a site like *Shaadi* to bring together individuals, who would not have met otherwise, in an online setting before eventually

pursuing a relationship offline; this also has the effect of bringing together the groups (and first of all the families) to which these individuals belong. This extension of the community demonstrates how matrimonial bonding branches out into a multiplicity of other bonding relations.

In the case of Franco-Russian mixed marriages, the fundamental issue is plainly the coming together of two individuals with two different nationalities, with this difference even being one of the reasons behind the match. It is thus a paradigmatic case of bridging. Marriage is also a source of institutional integration, allowing social insertion into the host country. As the bride has not lived in France before the marriage (with a few exceptions on sites such as Eurochallenges), she does not always have ties to compatriots in her new community; in addition, the requirements for her coming to France, plus a generally good level of scholarship, are favourable to social insertion in the host country and consequently the development of bridging. In this respect, the initial bridging of the couple relation can also branch out into a multiplicity of bridging relations. These remarks do however remain at the level of possibility, as numerous vicissitudes can obstruct insertion.

Lastly, we must note that in addition to marriage strictly speaking, the professional activity of the digital marriage market can constitute for actors a source for developing social capital. In the case of service providers for Maghrebien weddings, their exhibition on the Web and membership in directories provides them a visibility that can multiply their relations. As for the individuals on the social platform Skyblog, they exemplify the possibility of establishing professional relations via relations based on social, emotional or geographic proximity. Here, the development of social capital is first and foremost intra-community, through forms of bonding. The same can be said for the Indian case. And what about the case of Franco-Russian mixed marriage? We have seen that the individual initiatives of migrants in creating web-based matrimonial agencies did not necessarily involve individuals from the host country. On the other hand, we also observed that numerous ties were established with a range of actors in the native country. Thus, intra-community relations were developed, not among migrants, but between migrants and their native countries.

CONCLUSIONS

Overview of the research results

Government websites may provide information on procedures and formalities for migrants, but in general there is a distinct lack of explicit instructions or informational leaflets to help the migrant handle the formalities and understand French administrative language; and there is no dematerialized procedure, meaning that these procedures cannot be carried out online. Migrants do not consult the online information on these websites and do not use online administrative services. They remain suspicious of the Internet and prefer physical human interaction, afraid that their request will not be correctly transmitted or that they will not understand the instructions. The language issue—especially the vague and complicated nature of French administrative language—also remains a barrier to this use. The democratization of computer and multimedia use in the form of Public Internet Access Points (PIAP) is a mission that has been for the most part successful. However, certain populations, especially migrants, are not yet fully sensitized to these tools. Basic initiation into the use of ICT is no longer sufficient. PIAP organizers are increasingly finding themselves obliged to follow up with students, guiding them through their particular procedures step-by-step. These findings raise questions about the number of PIAP (insufficient), their popularity, and funding. All of them are forced to rely on volunteers due to insufficient funding for salaried positions. Government agencies and institutions have developed collaborative efforts, with the DUI, Ministries and cities participating in funding PIAP and therefore working together to close the digital gap. Associations (local and national) play a major role in this government support; however, few private companies are involved in the process.

Our research on the *Réseau Éducation Sans Frontières* (RESF—Education without Borders Network) has led us to the issue of ICT appropriation in the context of forms of bottom-up integration that is carried out through a multiplicity of person-to-person relations (especially affective) between migrants and individuals in the hosting countries. We have seen that ICT (especially Internet discussion lists) can play a decisive role in militant movements (notably by or in favour of *sans-papiers*) as an organization and mobilization instrument. However, we have also seen that the *sans-papiers* themselves rarely participate in the online activities of movements (although they come out in full force for offline activities such as gatherings and demonstrations, etc.), and relations between sponsors (members of the RESF) and those sponsored (*sans-papiers*) took place for the most part face-to-face or by mobile phone, rarely by Internet. The reasons given for this include the deficit of cultural and financial capital of *sans-papiers*, their difficulty using the French language, and their lack of experience using ICT. We hypothesized that these reasons do not fully explain this phenomenon and that the politics of representation in RESF are also involved inasmuch as the network acts for the *sans-papiers* rather than enabling them to act for themselves, especially through the use of ICT. Nevertheless, we have nuanced this judgment by underlining the fact that members of the RESF work *with* the *sans-papiers* (through sponsorship), with their online activity comparable to that of public writers. Our research on the IEM matrimonial web allowed us to examine specific examples of the potentiality of ICT in terms of migrants' economic participation, taking each of the three selected IEM separately. The Indian site www.shaadi.com represents a certain possibility of converting symbolic capital (connected to familial structures and the caste system) into financial capital according to a logic of ethnic and identity capitalism. We have highlighted the sales figures of the site, the fact that it creates jobs for Indian nationals abroad (especially in its meeting centres, and particularly in

Europe), and its ties to other actors (astrologists, immigration counsellors, etc.). As for Franco-Russian mixed marriages, our problematic was noticeably different. It is undeniable that the international marriage sector represents a significant source of economic opportunity, but who actually benefits from this lucrative business? In many cases, it is difficult to answer this question, especially for sites whose core business is selling Eastern women's e-mail addresses (raising the question of the trade of mail-order brides). We did observe that these matrimonial sites were often the result of individual initiatives, with some of them created by migrants themselves. As for the large-scale matrimonial agency we examined (Eurochallenges), we saw that it was managed by a French team, though it involved other actors in France (travel agencies, for example), sometimes run by migrants. Finally, in the case of Moroccans, our study of the Web presence of service providers in the wedding business revealed three major actors in this sphere: the website development agency *Weboriental*, a platform for creating and managing online advertising space with *Orientelement*, and a social networking platform *Skyblog*. We found that for these service providers the Web functioned primarily as a showcase for professional activities, most of which took place offline.

Breakdown of research results according to Riga areas

Areas	E-government	Education Without Borders Network	IEM and the Matrimonial Web
<i>Skill Building</i>	None of the Public Internet Access Points or public ICT training programs expressly target Migrants/IEM. They still play an important role, however, as their actions are tailored to the needs of marginalized groups like the unemployed.	Participates indirectly and marginally in ICT skill building by IEM	Participates indirectly and marginally in ICT skill building by IEM
<i>Community Re-generation</i>	Helps develop community ties	X	For intra-community marriages, reinforces identity/cultural choices in bringing together/making visible the scattered community
<i>Communicative and Local Mobility</i>	X	X	X
<i>Acculturation</i>	X	X	X
<i>Relational Integration</i>	ICT usage by migrants is above all recreational.	Participates by way of bottom-up integration (person-to-person relations)	X
<i>Civic Engagement</i>	Although e-government initiatives are being developed in France, migrants do not consult online information or use online administrative services.	X	X
<i>Economic Participation</i>	X	X	Provides numerous economic opportunities, of which, however, IEM are not the only beneficiaries

Comparative discussion

Unfortunately, our three case studies hardly lend themselves to comparison. Nonetheless, let us review each of the *Riga Areas*:

Skill Building: We have seen that while not specifically devoted to migrants, Public Internet Access Points and public ICT training programs do play an important role in developing competence and knowledge about ICT among migrant populations. Inversely, the bottom-up integration at work in RESF only plays a minor role in helping these populations actually appropriate ICT: we must, however, point out here that the object of study is much more specific than the one on E-government (electronic administration), and especially that ICT are used much more as a means than as an end or an objective. As for the matrimonial web, our problematic, as we have seen, was once again very different.

Community Re-generation: As we have seen, Internet use in Public Internet Access Points is for recreational/leisure purposes. However, in the word ‘recreational,’ we must include all activities migrants use to maintain links with their native community (chat, meeting sites) and to stay connected with it. Our research on the matrimonial web, in particular on intra-community marriage sites, confirms the importance of community/ethnic identity in the ICT practices of migrants.

Communicative and Local Mobility: Our research did not allow us to address this aspect of e-inclusion.

Acculturation: Our research did not allow us to address this aspect much in details. However we found some mixed evidence on it. Maghrebians look at websites in French and in Arabic, they use both languages, and communicate with people in both countries. In the case of the Tamils, ICT use reinforces links within the community and with the country of origin, and tends to cut them off from their current living place.

Relational Integration: In some communities (Maghrebians/Moroccans, for example), the use of ICT at Public Internet Access Points can help develop relationships (and insertion) in the host country. Such an extra-community communication was noted in other cases we studied, namely among those populations with poor knowledge of French (Indians/Tamils/Turks). It does appear, however, that ICT play a more decisive role among foreign students (who often have their own computer material and use Public Internet Access Points more rarely). In the case of activist movements in favour of *sans-papiers*, the role ICT play in integration is much more central despite the fact – as we have already stated – that ICT are used primarily by the activists, not the IEM.

Civic Engagement: Migrants do not – or only very little – carry out procedures online that are specifically linked to their migrant situation (police prefecture, for example). Their online administrative procedures are often limited to simply viewing the ANPE site (National Employment Agency), or CAF site (Family Allocations Fund), and these procedures are difficult to undertake (they often require getting advice in PIAP). The level of education has a very noticeable impact on these uses. Initiatives undertaken by public organizations (local or other), such as creating PIAP, only seem to partially help to reduce this digital gap. Funding remains too low, partnerships with the private sector are underdeveloped, and ICT education for this underprivileged group is far from being achieved.

Economic Participation: cf. Overview of the Research Results - Web matrimonial

Considerations on access, skills and online services policies

Our first case-study allows us to make some considerations and suggestions on policies in those areas.

- ☒ Many programs, action plans and institutions have been set-up to develop ICT in France. Only programs relevant for IEM have been discussed here, but other programs have been launched. They have especially addressed disabled people or the field of education (for instance, the creation of the Sub-Directorate of Information and Communication Technology in education for the 2004-2006 Action Plan, the Educnet program and others).
- ☒ ICT access and training programs for unemployed people or programs set up in socially disadvantaged areas have de facto often involved IEM, but no specific program combining ICT training or tools with actions for the integration of IEM living in France has been set up. The 'Migrations in Besançon' portal is one of the few exceptions. Associations and institutions working to promote Internet use or exchange of competence and knowledge on ICT do not target migrants (but they do target unemployed people, disadvantaged areas, elderly people or disabled people). On the other hand, associations and institutions working for IEM integration and equal opportunities such as the national agency for social cohesion and equal opportunities (Acsé) do not undertake actions that promote the use of ICT to reach their goals. Initiatives or organisation combining both goals might therefore represent an interesting innovation.
- ☒ In the case of migrants, as in the case of socially underprivileged populations in general, the level of education has a direct impact on how ICT are used (or not used). The linguistic aspect is an additional barrier, especially for non Francophone communities as we saw with the example of the Tamils. Initiatives that combine ICT with general literacy, working with language, learning about customs and established practices in the host country could address this. Besides creating more public internet access opportunities in migrant neighbourhoods, partnerships with local social centres and migrant associations (be they community associations or other) are essential to undertake such initiatives. The risk to avoid, also through these means, is that ICT is used exclusively to reinforce community ties, rebuilding a community space beyond borders and continents, as we found in some cases of Indians and Sri Lankans in France.
- ☒ Linguistic diversity of online services should be supported and promoted through adequate initiatives. Cross-referencing all local government websites to the central *service-public* portal (as is already partly occurring) would greatly facilitate the understanding of French administrative language and procedures.
- ☒ The relative absence of private companies in eInclusion initiatives (particularly those creating public internet access points) means that there is scope to raise their awareness about opportunities in this area. For instance, donating computers for training actions, besides creating new access points, has been found to have a market creation effect among the trainees, who often want to buy their own equipment after learning to use it.
- ☒ Considering the absence of data on ICT use by IEM, studies on this topic should be promoted and supported: quantitative and qualitative studies which take fully into account socio-demographic variables; and studies on different IEM communities.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACSE	Agence nationale pour la Cohésion sociale et l'Egalité des chances (National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities)
ANAEM	Agence Nationale de l'Accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations (French Agency in Charge of Migration and Welcoming Foreign People)
ANPE	Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi (National Employment Agency)
ARDESI	Agence Regionale pour le Developpement de la Societé de l'Information (Regional Agency for Information Society Development of the Midi-Pyrénées Region)
BPI	Bibliothèque Publique d'Information (Public Library)
CAF	Caisses d'Allocations Familiales (Agency for Family allowance Funds)
CERFA	Centre d'enregistrement et de révision des formulaires administratifs (Centre for checking and registering administration online forms)
CESEDA	Code de l'entrée et du séjour des étrangers et du droit d'asile (French law regulating entrance and stay of foreigners and asylum seekers in the French territory)
CISI	Comite Interministeriel pour la Societé de l'Information (Interministerial Committee for Information Society)
DUI	Délégation aux Usages d'Internet (Delegation on Internet Use)
ECM	Espace Culture Multimedia (Space on Multimedia Culture, a national label from the Ministry of Culture and Communication)
EPIC	Etablissement public à caractère industriel et commercial (State-owned industrial and commercial entity)
EPN	Espaces Publics Numériques (Public Internet Access Points)
GISTI	Groupe d'Information et de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés (Information and Support Group for Immigrant Workers)
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IEM	Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities
IMP	Internet and Multimedia Passport (Passeport Internet Multimédia)
OFPRA	Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (French Bureau for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons)
OMI	Office Migration International (International Migration Office)
OQTF	Ordre de Quitter le Territoire Français (Order to Leave French Territory)
PIAP	Public Internet Access Point
P@T	Point d'accès à la téléformation (Access Point for Distance Learning, a national label from the Ministry of Work and Social Cohesion)
PARVI project	Paris Ville Numérique (Paris Digital City, a project launched in 2001)
PSAE	Plan Strategique pour l'Administration Electronique (French E-Government Strategic Plan)
RESF	Réseau éducation sans frontières (Education without Borders Network)
SSAE	Service Social d'Assistance aux Etrangers (Service on Social Assistance for Migrants)

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Technical Note

Abstract

Following the Riga Ministerial Declaration on eInclusion (June 2006), the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) carried out, on the request of DG Information Society and Media, Unit H3 (eInclusion) of the European Commission, a study on 'The potential of ICT for the promotion of cultural diversity in the EU: the case of economic and social participation and integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities'. A broad overview of policies and ICT-related initiatives was initially conducted in all the EU27 Member States, followed by deeper research of ICT usage in four selected countries: France, Germany, Spain and the UK.

This report is one of the outcomes of the study and provides the in-depth analysis of three ICT usage experiences in France. The first two cases explore the role of ICT for the digital and social inclusion and/or the socio-cultural integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities, while the last case addresses aspects related to their economic participation.

The first case concerns addresses two aspects: the use of ICT to provide citizens, specifically immigrants, with more convenient access to government information and services (eGovernment); and the national and local government initiatives providing public access points and ICT training for disadvantaged people, particularly immigrants and ethnic minorities.

The second case explores the use of ICT by activist movements in favour of undocumented immigrants (*sans-papiers*). Specifically, it analyses the experience of *Réseau éducation sans frontières*, a network of groups and individuals fighting against the expulsion of school-age children of undocumented parents.

The third case investigates three different instances of what is called the digital economy of marriage: a major Indian website www.shaadi.com; websites for mixed marriages between French men and Russian women; and websites and new social media used for planning traditional Moroccan weddings in France.

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