

Evaluating the Perception of Roma in Europe through Social Network Analysis

Authors : Giulia I. Pinte

Abstract : The Roma people are a nomadic ethnic group native to India, and they are one of the most prevalent minorities in Europe. In the past, Roma were enslaved and they were imprisoned in concentration camps during the Holocaust; today, Roma are subject to hate crimes and are denied access to healthcare, education, and proper housing. The aim of this project is to analyze how the public perception of the Roma people may be influenced by antiziganist and pro-Roma institutions in Europe. In order to carry out this project, we used social network analysis to build two large social networks: The antiziganist network, which is composed of institutions that oppress and racialize Roma, and the pro-Roma network, which is composed of institutions that advocate for and protect Roma rights. Measures of centrality, density, and modularity were obtained to determine which of the two social networks is exerting the greatest influence on the public's perception of Roma in European societies. Furthermore, data on hate crimes on Roma were gathered from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We analyzed the trends in hate crimes on Roma for several European countries for 2009-2015 in order to see whether or not there have been changes in the public's perception of Roma, thus helping us evaluate which of the two social networks has been more influential. Overall, the results suggest that there is a greater and faster exchange of information in the pro-Roma network. However, when taking the hate crimes into account, the impact of the pro-Roma institutions is ambiguous, due to differing patterns among European countries, suggesting that the impact of the pro-Roma network is inconsistent. Despite antiziganist institutions having a slower flow of information, the hate crime patterns also suggest that the antiziganist network has a higher impact on certain countries, which may be due to institutions outside the political sphere boosting the spread of antiziganist ideas and information to the European public.

Keywords : applied mathematics, oppression, Roma people, social network analysis

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