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INTERGENERATIONAL SHIFT BETWEEN TRADITIONAL ROMANIPEN AND DIGITAL HYPERMODERNITY

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Abstract. *Global social changes – accelerated digitalization, socioeconomic insecurity, and individualization – are also affecting more closed communities. In the environment of marginalized Roma communities (MRK) in Slovakia, the traditional unwritten code of values (romanipen) is confronted with the norms and patterns of Western hypermodernity.*

The main objective of the study is to examine the transformation of the value orientations of the Roma minority in Slovakia under the influence of modernization and digital processes. The study focuses on intergenerational shifts, the transformation of family structures, the authority of elders, and the influence of social networks on the identity of Roma youth.

The research was designed as a qualitative ethnographic study using in-depth interviews (n = 18) and focus groups (n = 4; N = 24) with three groups of actors: traditional authorities and seniors in settlements, Roma youth (Generation Z) and field social workers in selected locations in eastern and central Slovakia (N_{totgl} = 42).

The findings show that while the older generation of Roma strictly adheres to the traditional values of family solidarity, respect for elders and the informal code of Romanipen, the youngest generation is subject to massive digital acculturation. Among Roma youth, there is a shift from collective norms to individual success, a consumer lifestyle and self-representation on social networks. However, this shift creates value uncertainty (anomie), as youth encounter a double barrier: rejection of traditional rules in the settlement and at the same time persistent ethnic discrimination in the majority society.

The transformation of values in Roma communities requires sensitive bridging of the intergenerational gap. Social policies and inclusive education must reflect the specifics of Roma identity in the digital age and support projects that combine respect for the positive elements of Romanipen with the development of critical thinking and digital literacy.

Key words: *values, hypermodernity, intergenerational shift, Romanipen, Roma minority, social exclusion.*

1. Introduction. The changing world of the 21st century, characterized by hypermodern fluidity, the ubiquity of digital technologies and economic insecurity, does not only affect the majority populations. It also penetrates the environment of marginalized Romani communities (MRK), which have historically been perceived as carriers of conservative, collective and relatively closed value systems to the outside world.

For traditional Romani culture, the basic normative and ethical framework is Romanipen – an unwritten code of informal rules, values, obligations and customs that defines "Romaness", establishes rules for interpersonal relationships, strengthens family solidarity and imposes conditional respect for the authority of elders (phure roma).

However, even segregated and separated Romani settlements are currently facing massive border permeability through smartphones, social networks (TikTok, Facebook, Instagram) and labor migration abroad. These influences bring the values of individualism, consumerism, personal security emancipation and digital self-representation to the environment of the settlements. Romani youth thus find themselves at the intersection of two normative worlds: the traditional Romani community and the global digital culture of the majority. This study focuses on the analysis of how the value orientations of Roma in Slovakia are transformed in a changing world, what tensions arise between generations and how socioeconomic exclusion modifies the acceptance of new value patterns.

Romanipen concept and traditional value system

In romological literature (Hrustič, 2010; Jakoubek & Budilová, 2008; Mann, 2000), Romanipen is defined as a set of informal principles that form the core of Romani cultural identity. Among the basic values of romanipen, i.e. the traditional system of values and rules of Romani culture, is primarily a strong orientation

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towards family and mutual solidarity. The family represents the highest value and at the same time the basic support of an individual throughout his life. It provides not only emotional support, but also material assistance, protection and a sense of identity. In the traditional Roma environment, a person's status is closely linked to his family ties, while an individual without a family or without the support of relatives may have a significantly weakened social status. Family cohesion is also manifested in mutual care between generations, joint problem solving and responsibility for loved ones.

Table 1

Value tension in the contemporary Roma community

TRADITIONAL CODE (ROMANIPEN)	HYPERMODERN INFLUENCES
Collective family solidarity	Individualism and consumerism
Authority of elders (Phure Roma)	Authority of influencers
Traditional roles of men and women	Emancipation and flexibility
Local community	Global digital network

INTERGENERATIONAL BREACH / ANOMIE

Questioning informal authorities in the settlement

Double frustration (Unfulfilled digital patterns vs. poverty)

Searching for a new hybrid Roma identity

A significant value of romanipen is also respect for older members of the community (Phure Roma). Elderly people are considered bearers of life experience, wisdom and traditional knowledge, which are passed down from generation to generation. They hold an important position in deciding family or community issues, often act as mediators in conflict resolution and contribute to the preservation of cultural traditions, customs and moral values. Their authority is based on age, life experience and the respect they have earned within the community.

Romanipen also includes a moral code and rules of ritual purity, denoted by the terms mordar or marime. This system includes a set of rules that determine what behavior is considered correct, honorable and socially acceptable in the community, and what behavior is inappropriate or prohibited. The rules concern interpersonal relations, respect for others, family life, hygiene principles or preserving the dignity of the individual. Their observance contributes to the maintenance of order, cohesion and identity of the community, while their violation can lead to loss of trust, social condemnation or temporary exclusion from the collective.

Acculturation, hypermodernity and digital space

To explain the value shift, we use Berry's model of acculturation (Berry, 1997) in combination with the theory of hypermodernity (Lipovetsky, 2005). The overlap of traditional culture and global digital culture leads to processes of assimilation or integration in the young generation, but in conditions of social exclusion it often results in marginalization and anomie.

A smartphone with an Internet connection has become the first mass-available window into the majority world in a segregated settlement. While physical integration (e.g. in the labor market or housing) is hampered by structural racism and poverty, digital integration takes place immediately. Roma youth adopt the values of consumerism, an emphasis on external image (image) and individual success, which leads to questioning traditional informal authorities in the settlement.

The digital era is not just causing the simple disappearance of Romani culture, but its transformation into a new, hybrid form of identity, in which elements of Romanipen are mixed with the desire for a commonly recognized status success in a consumer society.

2. Materials and methods. The research was designed as a qualitative-ethnographic study using triangulation of methods and data sources. Field research was carried out in the period September 2025 – February 2026 in four selected locations in eastern and central Slovakia (a combination of segregated settlements and settlements incorporated into municipalities).

The research set (N = 42) consists of three target groups, which made it possible to capture intergenerational differences and the perspective of practitioners:

Older generation and informal authorities (Phure Roma, 55+ years): n = 12 (in-depth interviews).

Roma youth / Generation Z (16–25 years): n = 24 (4 focus groups of 6 participants each).

Field social workers and educators (TSP / Assistants): n = 6 (expert interviews).

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Table 2

Characteristics of the research design

Respondent Group	Data collection method	Number (n)	Age range	Key research topics
Seniors / Authorities	In-depth interviews	12	55–78 years	Romanipen observance, community history, decline of authority
Roma Youth (Gen Z)	Focus groups (n = 4)	24	16–25 years	Social networks, life goals, relationships, leaving the settlement, fashion
Field Workers	In-depth expert interviews	6	28–52 years	Intergenerational conflicts, education, social change

Methods of data collection and analysis. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, which took place directly in the respondents' natural environment, mainly in their homes or community centers. This method of conducting the research allowed for a more confidential atmosphere and encouraged the participants to be more open in sharing their experiences, opinions and life stories. The interviews were conducted according to a pre-prepared thematic framework, while the researcher had the opportunity to respond flexibly to the respondents' answers and develop additional questions according to the course of the discussion. In the case of young people, the interviews focused mainly on their life values, use of social networks, ideas about future life, education and employment, as well as their relationship to Roma traditions, cultural identity and intergenerational relations.

The obtained interviews were subsequently transcribed into text form and analyzed through thematic analysis according to the methodological procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis was carried out in several stages, with open coding first used to identify meaningful units and recurring themes in the respondents' statements. Axial coding was then applied, which allowed for linking individual categories, identifying mutual connections and creating broader thematic units. This analytical procedure contributed to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study and enabled a systematic interpretation of the experiences and opinions of individual groups of respondents.

The research was carried out in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research. In the case of minor respondents aged 16 to 17, written informed consent was obtained from their legal representatives before data collection began, and the participants themselves were informed of the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation and the possibility of terminating their participation at any time without negative consequences. To ensure the protection of privacy and confidentiality of the data obtained, all personal data were consistently anonymized. The names of the respondents and the names of the researched locations were replaced with code names (e.g. R-SEN1, R-MLAD4, TSP-2), which preserved the anonymity of the participants and at the same time enabled the clear identification of individual statements during the analysis and interpretation of the results.

3. Results and discussion. The thematic analysis yielded four key findings about how global and technological changes are reshaping the value world of Roma in marginalized locations. The main themes of the results were:

The erosion of Phure Roma: Shift from age authority to digital status authority

The transformation of family structures and gender roles among Romani women

The "image competition": Digital consumerism as compensation for poverty

The double anomie of youth: Between rejection of the settlement and non-acceptance by the majority

Theme 1: The erosion of Phure Roma – Shift from age authority to digital status authority

The most striking finding is the radical decline in the informal authority of older community members. While in the past the Phure Roma were the main bearers of truth and conflict mediators, today the youth draw their role models from the online environment. The traditional advice of elders is perceived by the younger generation as "outdated" and "useless for modern life".

"In the past, when an older person entered the room, the young people would stand up and listen. Today? The young people sit with their phones in their hands, watching TikTok, and when you tell them something, they laugh at you for not understanding today's world. Their authorities are those with nice cars and lots of likes on the Internet."

Respondent R-SEN3 (male, 67 years old)

Theme 2: Transformation of family structures and gender roles

The intergenerational shift is most visible among young Romani women. Influenced by educational programs, fieldwork, and monitoring

Table 3

Traditional and modern concept of value areas – seniors versus Gen Z

Value area	Traditional concept (Romanipen / Seniors)	Modern concept (Youth / Gen Z)
Source of authority	Age, life wisdom, knowledge of traditions	Financial success, social media image
Partnership and family	Early marriages, family approval	Free choice, postponing parenthood, independence
Work and status	Cohesion, manual labor, family care	Quick profit, flexibility, prestige, visual consumption
Identity	Collective Roma affiliation	Individual identity, striving to transcend the boundaries of the settlement

trends on social media, their desire to postpone their motherhood and become economically independent is growing.

Young women express strong opposition to the traditional model in which a girl takes over the household after reaching adolescence.

"My mother had three children by the time she was eighteen. I don't want to end up like that. I want to finish school, find a job, and travel. Our elders say I'm turning into a 'gadžovka', but I just want to have my own life."

Participant FG2-MLAD (girl, 18 years old)

Theme 3: Digital consumerism as a compensation for poverty

In an environment of extreme socioeconomic deprivation, digital technologies and branded clothing fulfill a specific value function – they function as symbolic capital and compensation for feelings of inferiority.

For young Roma, visual presentation on social networks (expensive clothes, the latest smartphone model) is a way to demonstrate to the majority society and their peers that they are "not poor from the settlement".

"They don't have running water in their hut, but a child must have 150 euro sneakers and an iPhone. For them, that phone is everything – it is their only ticket to a world where they look just like rich people from the city."

Participant TSP-4 (field social worker, 6 years of experience)

Theme 4: Double anomie of Roma youth

However, the departure from traditional Romani values does not automatically ensure acceptance by the majority society for young Roma. This creates a state of double anomie and identity in a downward spiral:

1. Rejection by one's own community: If a young person abandons traditional patterns, they are accused by their elders of losing their "Roma heart".

2. Rejection by the majority society: When attempting to integrate (study, work, housing), young Roma continue to encounter prejudice and ethnic discrimination based on skin color or origin.

The phenomenon of the double anomie trap arises at the interface of two different environments that exert opposing social pressure on the individual.

On the one hand, he is influenced by the traditional settlement, which confronts him with the reproach when he tries to emancipate or move outside the community: "You are no longer a true Roma, you have forgotten your traditions!" On the other hand, he encounters systemic rejection and prejudice from the majority society, which, despite his efforts, labels him with the words: "You are just a Roma from the settlement!" This two-sided pressure results in a value vacuum and deep frustration. The individual thus loses his original social anchorage without gaining a new one, which is subsequently often manifested by escaping into virtual reality or a tendency to various forms of risky behavior.

The research findings confirm that the value world of marginalized Roma does not remain isolated from the global trends of hypermodernity (Lipovetsky, 2005). The processes of individualization and digital acculturation proceed extremely quickly, often without the community having time to develop adaptive mechanisms.

Unlike the majority population, where the transition to post-material values (Inglehart, 1997) is linked to economic security, among Roma in the MRC there is a paradoxical combination of post-material desires (freedom, image, self-expression) with extreme material poverty. This contradiction generates deep inner frustration.

Moreover, the departure from Romanipen weakens the traditional safety net – family solidarity –, while state mechanisms of social protection cannot adequately compensate for this loss.

4. Conclusions. The study has shown that the value world in segregated Roma localities is undergoing the most fundamental intergenerational transformation in recent decades. The influence of digital media, labor migration and consumer culture leads to a gradual weakening of the informal code of Romanipen and the authority of elders.

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The young generation of Roma is adopting the values of individualism, personal emancipation and digital representation. However, they find themselves trapped in a double anomie: they are losing support in traditional community culture, but at the same time they face systemic barriers to entry into the majority society.

Based on the findings, we formulate recommendations for the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic and non-governmental organizations:

1. Support for intergenerational dialogue in community centers
2. Inclusive education combining digital literacy and cultural pride
3. Support for young Roma leaders and role models (empowerment)

For the area of Intercultural Field Social Work and Education, we create the following recommendations:

• Culturally sensitive work with youth: Community centers must create space for discussions about the pitfalls of the digital environment, prevention of cyberbullying and pressure to consume, while respecting the positive elements of Roma identity.

• Development of critical thinking: Educational programs for Roma youth should focus on transforming passive consumption of digital content into active use of technologies for education and employment.

In the area of Supporting Intergenerational Dialogue:

• Generational Bridging Projects: Involve older members of the community (Phure Roma) in informal education and leisure activities in community centers as mentors, thus restoring their sense of usefulness and respect.

We must not forget the area of breaking down barriers in the majority:

• Anti-discrimination measures: Support employers and educational institutions in creating a safe environment for young Roma who are striving for integration, so that they are not exposed to ethnic rejection.

• **Research limitations.** The specificity of the locations represents one of the limitations of the research, as the data collection took place in selected Roma communities in eastern and central Slovakia. The findings therefore primarily reflect the conditions and experiences of families living in these regions, which may differ from the situation in other parts of Slovakia. Especially in fully integrated urban Roma families, family relationships, social conditions, access to education, healthcare or use of support services may be different. For this reason, when interpreting the results, it is necessary to take into account that their generalization to the entire Roma population in Slovakia is limited.

Another limitation of the research was the language barrier. Part of the interviews with seniors were conducted through translation from Romani to Slovak, because not all respondents were able to communicate fluently in Slovak. Although the translation was ensured with an emphasis on preserving the meaning of the statements, the transfer between languages may have resulted in a partial loss of cultural, emotional or meaningful nuances. Some specific expressions, metaphors or culturally conditioned meanings may not have a completely exact equivalent in the Slovak language, which may have influenced the interpretation of some responses. Despite this fact, measures were taken to minimize distortion and maintain the highest possible authenticity of the statements obtained.

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