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## Patterns of Social Networks of Bulgarian Migrants in Catalonia: Two study cases (Barcelona and Roses)

Projecte finançat per:  
Generalitat de Catalunya, Secretaria per a la Immigració



## Main Objectives:

- 1) *To determine the Bulgarian migrant profile of two Catalan towns (Roses and Barcelona)*
- 2) *To identify the different patterns of social networks of Bulgarian migrants in these two villages (Roses and Barcelona) in order to:*
  - *Observe how the social networks can help to mitigate the difficulties the migrant may have for establishing in Catalonia*

- To know the mechanisms the migrants use to solve their problems (associations, orthodox churches or other, etc.).
  - To assess the different adaptive strategies developed in each town by the Bulgarian population.
  - To observe their identity or/and identification patterns in both communities
- 3) *To observe how the image of Bulgarians in the destination countries changes and how they identify themselves in the migration process*

# Hypothesis

The different local contexts can influence the patterns of social networks of (Bulgarian) migrants and therefore their type of adaptation.

## Final goals of our research

- To contribute to a better knowledge of Bulgarian migrant community in our society
- To identify how the Bulgarian migrants are introduced to the host society and the cultural changes and the processes of acculturation they suffer.
- To detect their needs and social demands as migrants

## Actions

- To carry out two dissemination sessions (one in Roses and another in Barcelona) in order to disseminate the results among the Bulgarians who took part in the research and among people that could be interested (social workers, local politicians, etc...).
- To elaborate a book of "good practices" that would give recommendations to manage the Bulgarian migrant communities (accompanied of a DVD).

## Methodology

The study is based on a sample of 50 persons which have been interviewed using the "*snow sampling*".

- 1) Structured interview supported with an open-source program (Egonet) for collecting personal network data (study cases)
- 2) Semi-structured interviews
- 3) Participant observation

## Brief history of Bulgarian migrations

### The statistical context

- From 1988 and during the post socialism period Bulgarian's population went into a rapid decline (Gächter 2002).
- In 1988 the migrants were the Turkish-speaking Bulgarians moving to Turkey (Gächter 2002).
- After 1989 this process was stopped.



- In 1988 there were 9 millions of inhabitants in Bulgaria, 7,322,858 in 2005 (Gächter: 2002). At present over 800.000 Bulgarians are living and working abroad ([www.infoeuropa.org](http://www.infoeuropa.org)).
- As a result of the incorporation of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU, the number of migrants from Romania and Bulgarian in Spain has raised
- 8,809 Bulgarians live in Catalonia (2007): In Barcelona city they are 1,400 (722 men and 678 women). In Roses 50 (19 men and 31 women) ([www.idescat.cat](http://www.idescat.cat)).
- There are some other bulgarian people which are not registered. During 2008 we met new Bulgarian migrants and it is expected that this process will continue during the next years !!!

## Profile of Bulgarian migrants in Roses and Barcelona

It is specially important to consider that the methodology followed in this study is based on the "*snow sapling*" (contacts of contacts with high degree of homophilia) which has generated that we deal with certain type of migrant population

- The mean age the Bulgarian people interviewed in Roses is 31,375 (women 31,8 and men 30) whereas in Barcelona the mean is 33,68 (women 35,17 and men 30,5).

-The mean years of residence in Barcelona is 4,92. In Roses the mean is 3,5.

-There are more women Bulgarian migrant in Roses than men. Concerning Barcelona we can say that there is a great rate of divorces (9/25) having into account the mean of age 33,68...

-Bulgarians in Roses have middle and low education but also there are some few with higher education. In Barcelona there are more Bulgarians with higher education than in Roses and well educated (artists, writers, engineers) but also some other with low education.

# Procedència dels Búlgars de Roses



# Procedència dels Búlgars de Barcelona



# Procedència dels Búlgars de Roses i Barcelona





## Features of the migration chain

Bulgarians interviewed in Catalonia came for the following reasons:

1. Contracted by “contingent” (a group of people of other country contracted for a period of time after a demand to the Spanish authorities by Spanish employers)
2. Job obtained in Catalonia through personal contacts
3. Individuals contracted in Bulgaria for working in Spain (at the first moment for a period of time)
4. Persons with some contact in Spain which come to try one’s luck
5. Individuals that come to Barcelona for continuing their studies (undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD levels)
6. Only after some period of time staying in Catalonia they can open *a business*.

## Re-constructing social networks

- Bulgarian people who have other Bulgarian migrants in their networks are migrants that re-construct their social networks knowing Bulgarian people informally or by chance (walking on the street, in the bus and train stations, central squares). The chances to meet Bulgarian people informally is higher in Roses because of the size of the village but it is also possible in Barcelona.



- There are also some “Bulgarian places” to contact with other compatriots:

Roses: Three Bars (one of them ruled by a Bulgarian woman with her Catalan husband), a Restaurant belonging to a Serbian family and a housing firm where there is a Bulgarian woman working in it

Barcelona: orthodox Bulgarian church, a popular place of Barcelona, some bars and restaurants, and a shop that sell Bulgarian products where is frequent to find advertisings looking for Bulgarian people to work or share a flat.

These places becomes centres of the main contacts of a lot of Bulgarians



Fotos: Sarah Hoeksma





*The serbian's family restaurant.*

*Foto: S. Gómez*



*"El bar de la Búlgara"*

*Foto: S. Gómez*



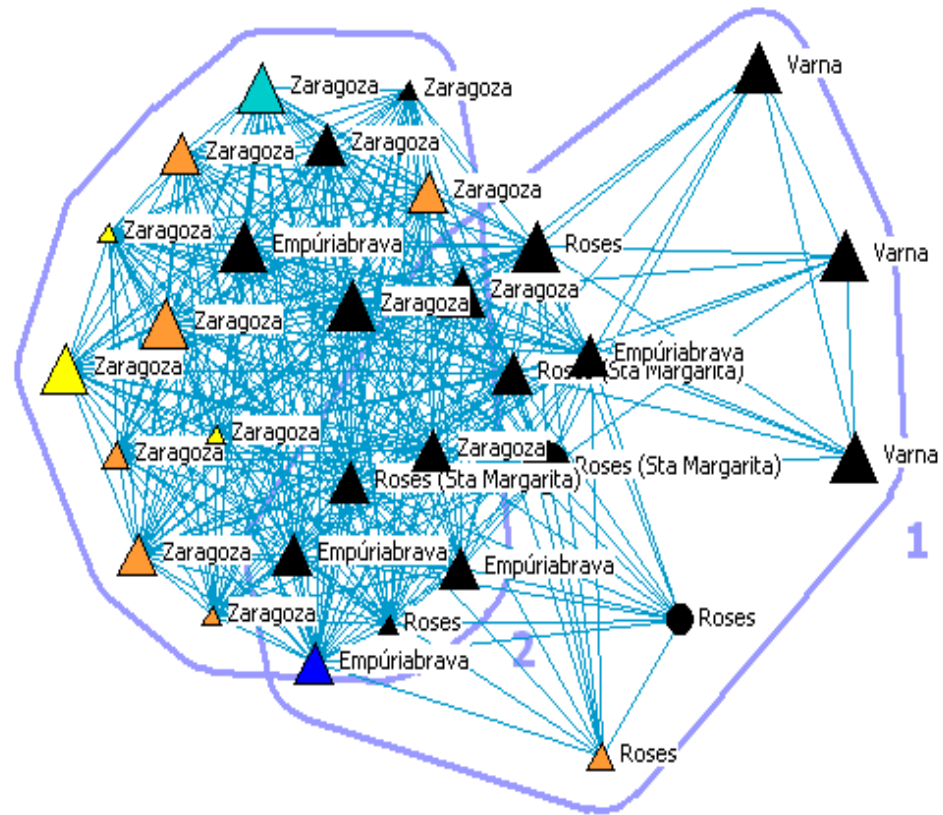
*Roses' Beach*

## Social networks in Roses

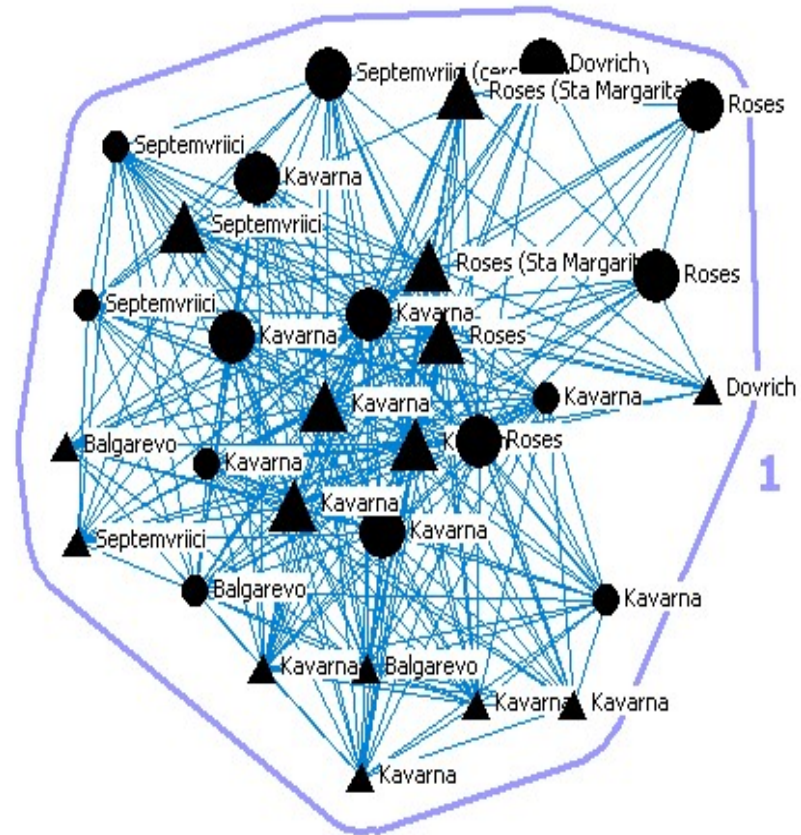
- *Contract in origin (collective)*

There is a group of drivers (27) that work for a company (INGATRANS) that serves the Zara stores all over the Europe. Most of them arrived to Roses last year. Their personal networks are limited to the persons that work with them. They have few time for socializing. They come with the family. Their wives living in Catalonia remain at home and don't have opportunities for meeting people from other origins: They meet another driver's wives. In some cases they contact with other Bulgarian people out of the network of their husbands, but usually from Bulgaria.

# 1. Yordan Angelov



## 2. Petranka

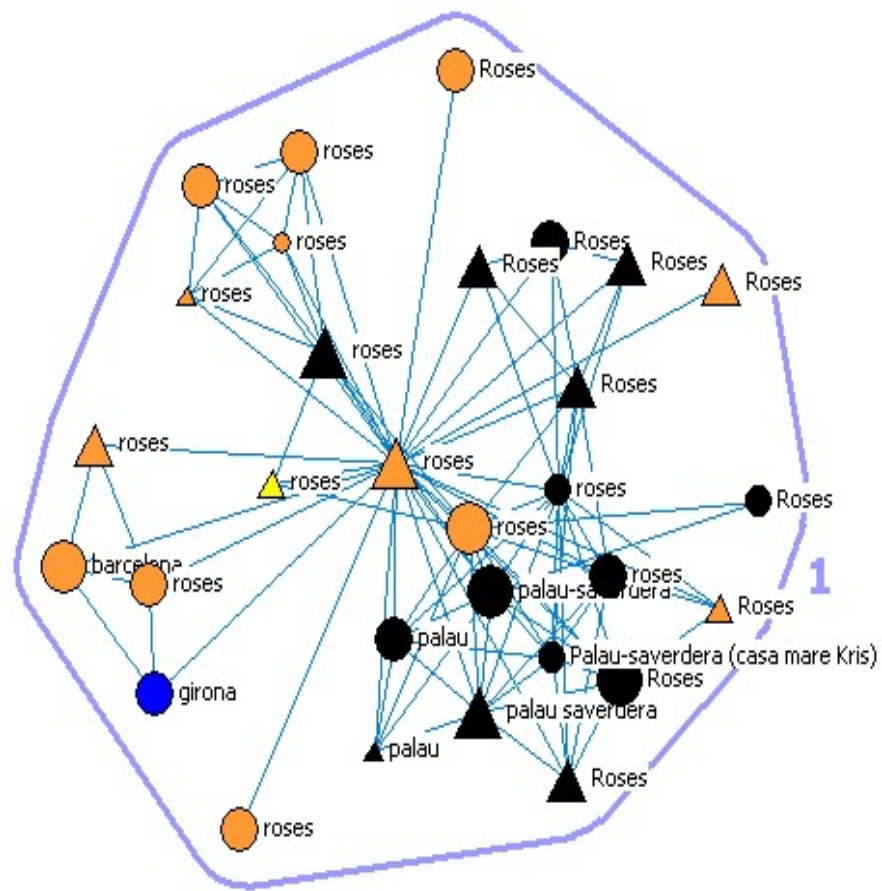




- *First wave or getting job in Catalonia through personal contacts*

Bulgarians that came without previous job contract, alone or having few contacts (e.g. a relative) are incorporated easily to the local society with a remarkable proportion of Catalan contacts in their networks. This social capital allows to better access to jobs and also a gateway for meeting Catalan people considered “important” in Roses society and in a good position for providing useful information and resources.

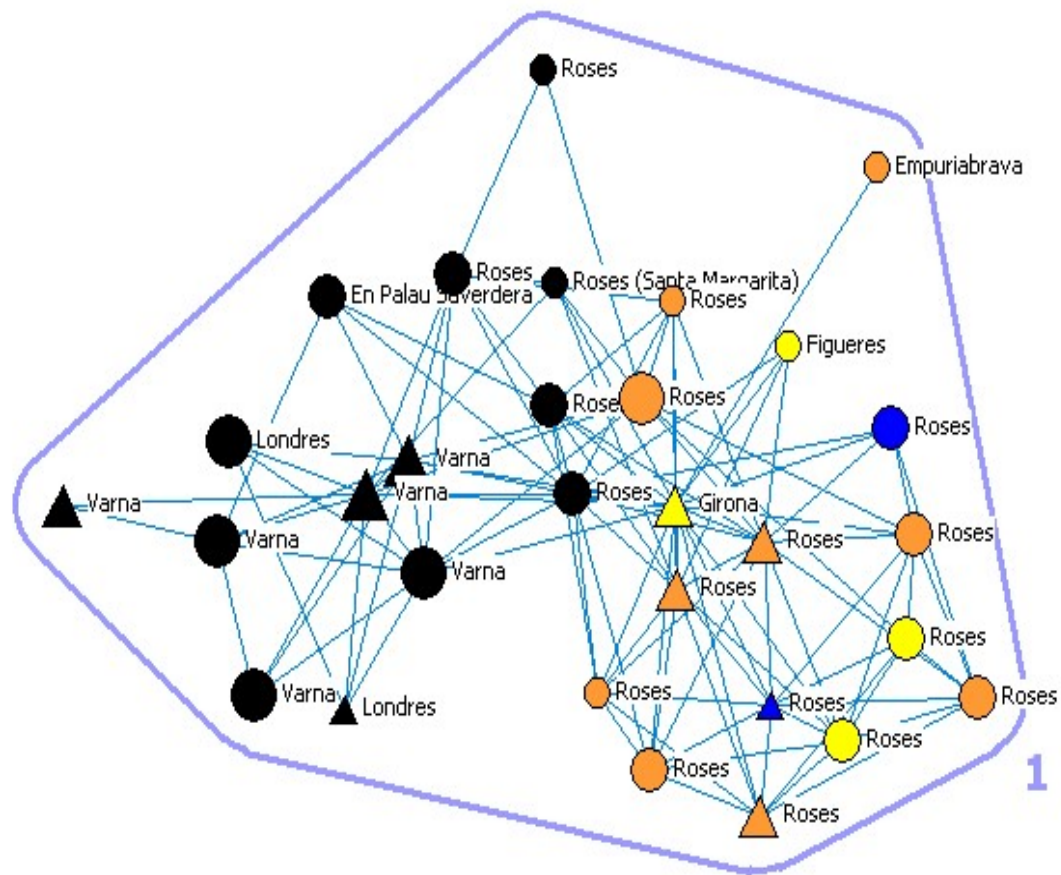
### 3. Kris Dimitrova



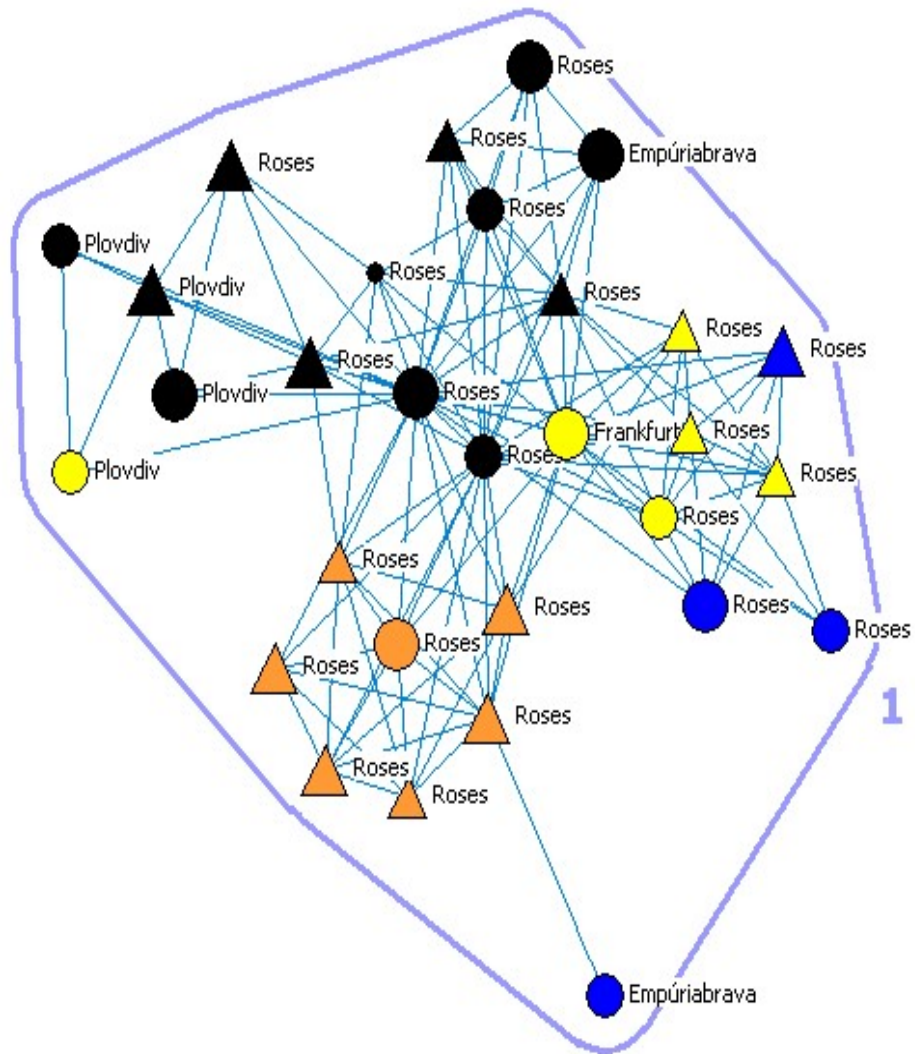
- Catalan people
- Bulgarian people



## 4. Preslava



## 5. Elena Gushtrova



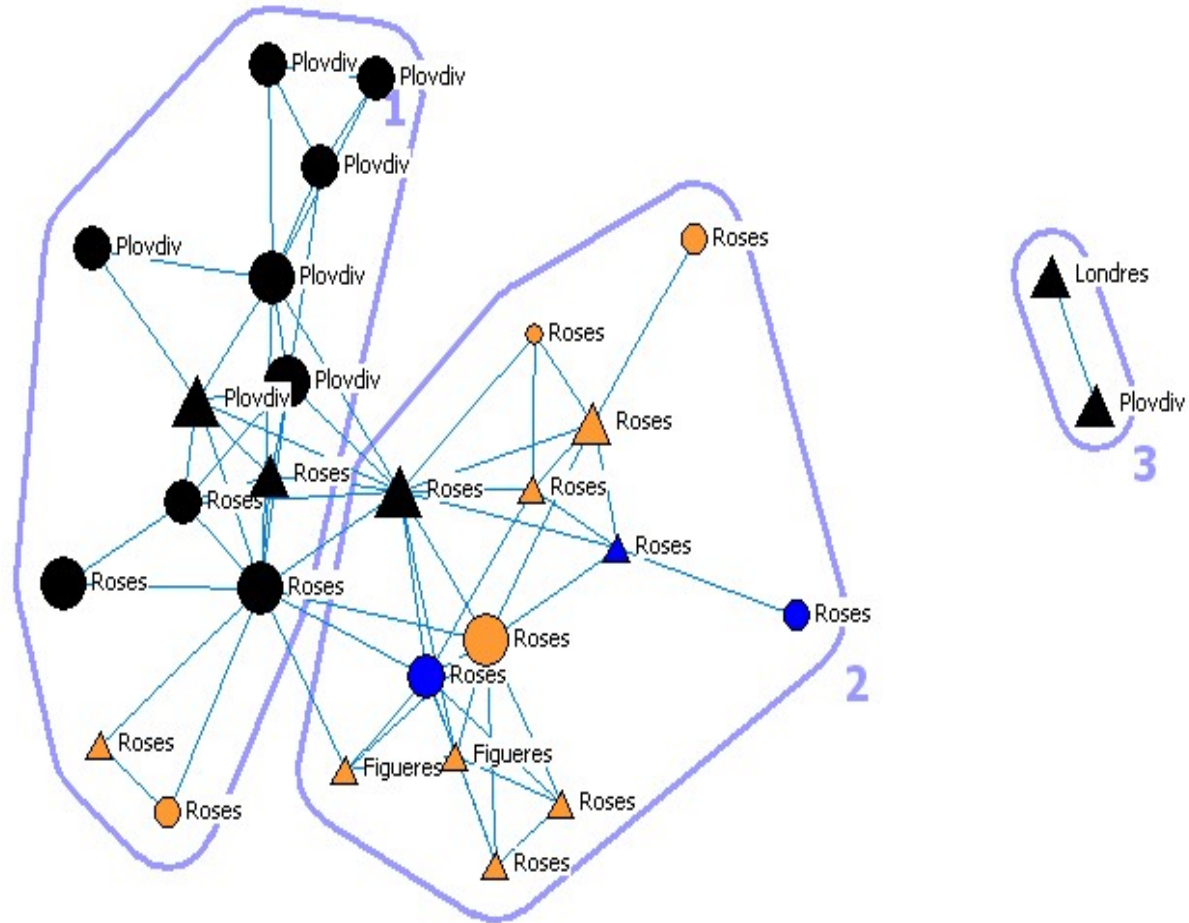
Other Bulgarians recently arrived (at the end of 2007) are familiars of those Bulgarians already living in Roses:

- a) The sons of Bulgarian mothers and other familiars. We find the same contacts and in case of the sons some other news (friends of the school or people known in places of sociability for young people);
- b) some driver's wives

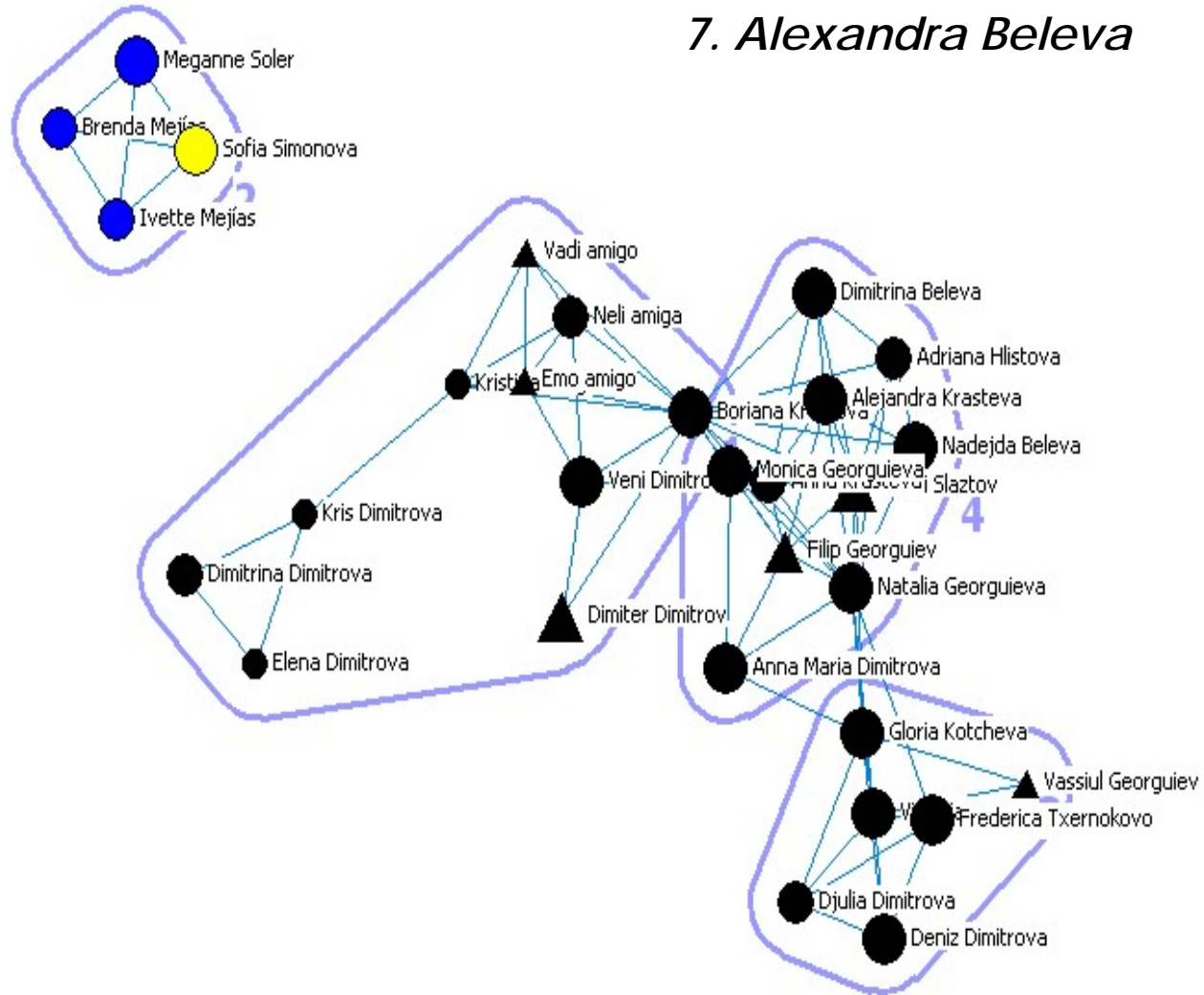
Both types of social networks can change.

All Bulgarians interviewed in Roses known each other and some of them are interconnected through strong ties.

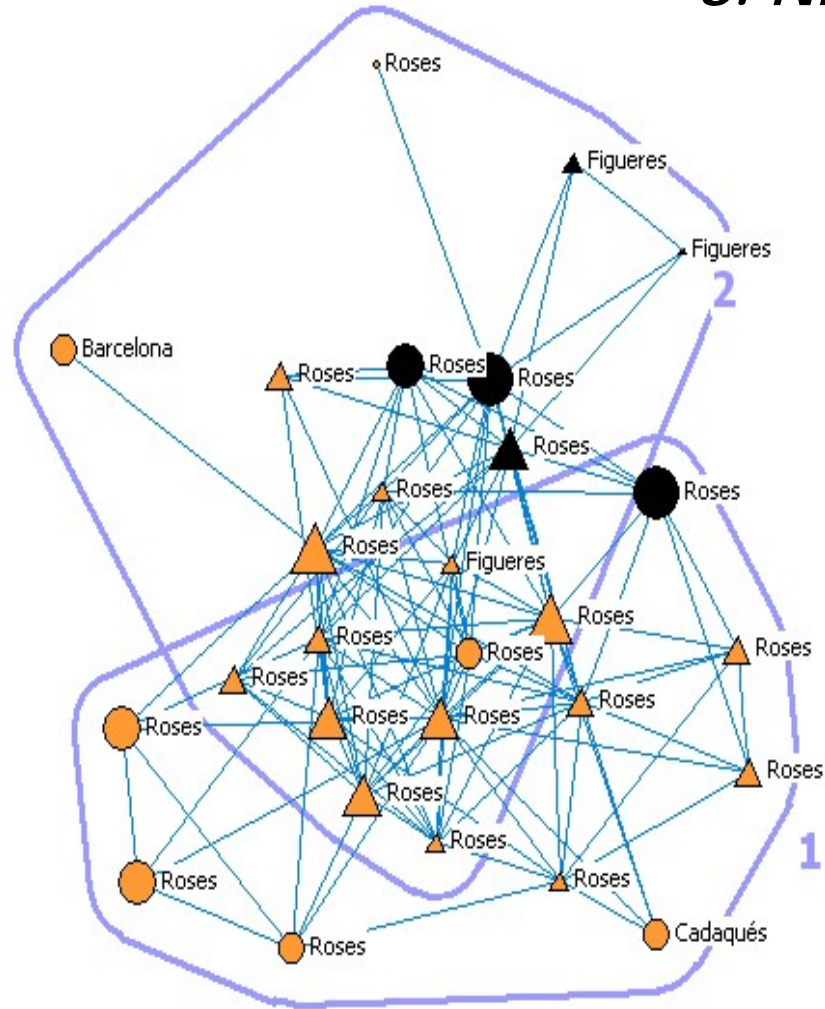
# 6. Vanya

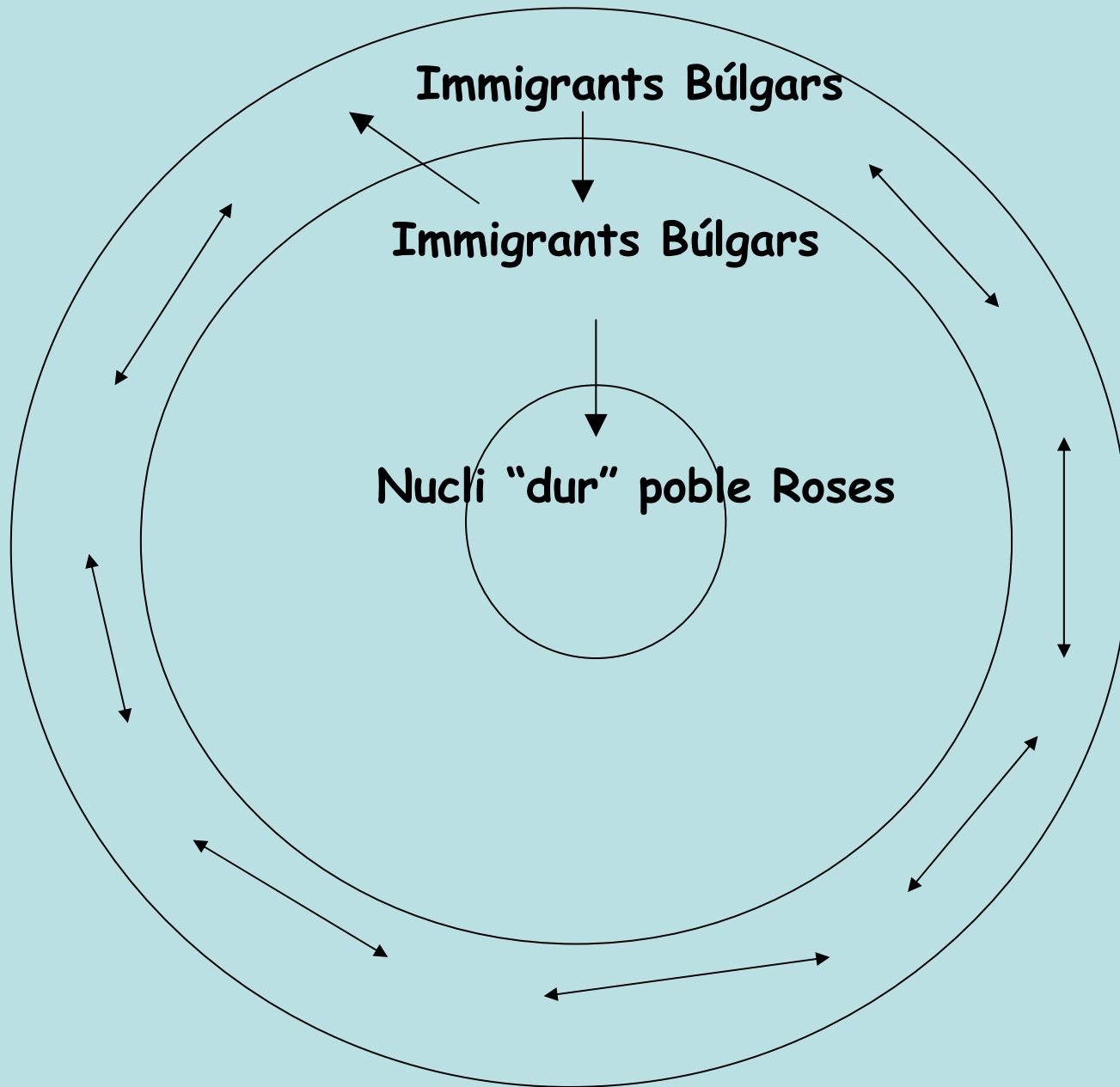


## 7. Alexandra Beleva



# 8. Niko





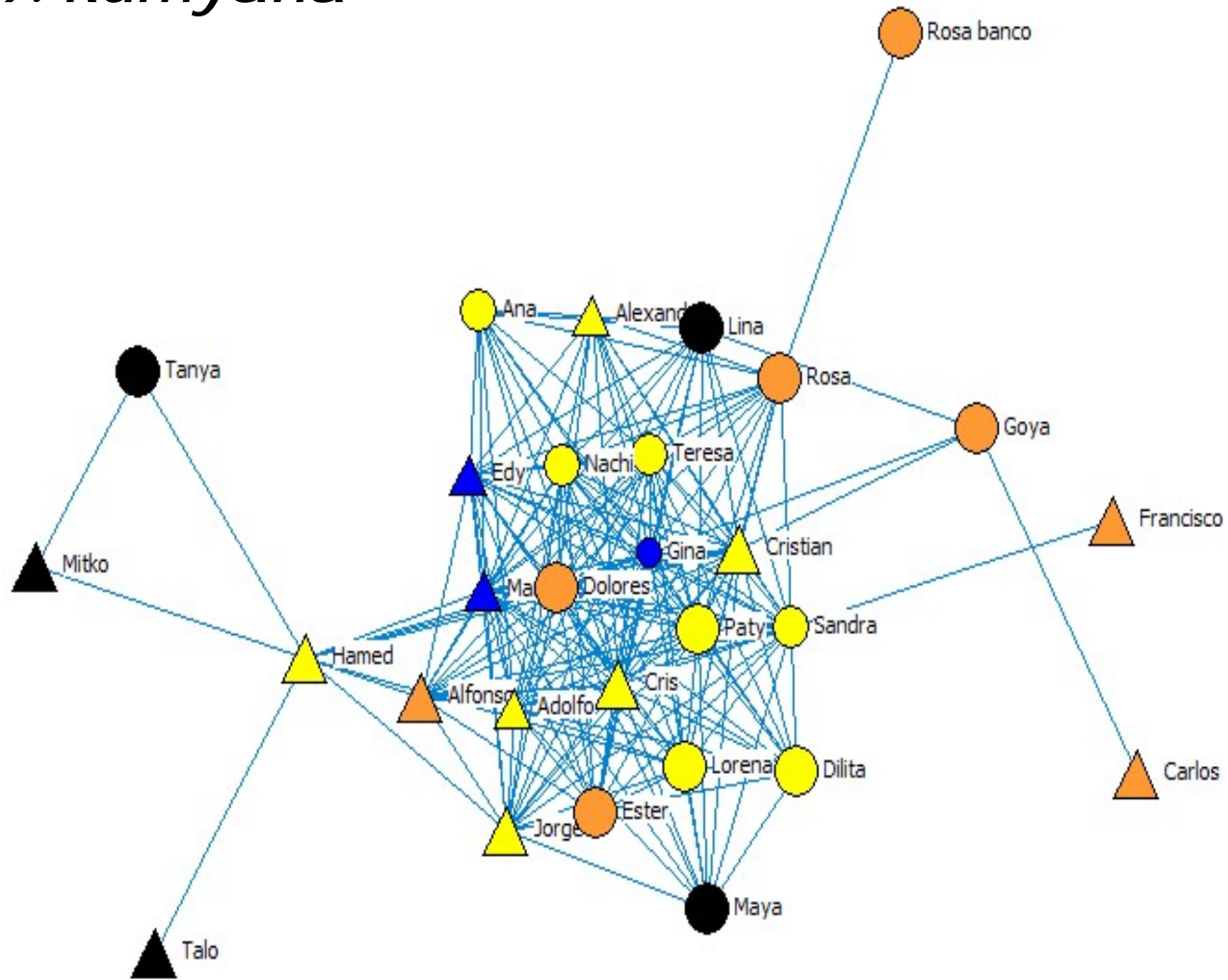


## **Social networks in Barcelona**

Bulgarians living in Barcelona are dispersed across the different neighbourhoods of the city, although in some cases we can find Bulgarians who share a flat with other Bulgarians. Because the expensive cost of accommodation, it is very frequent to find them sharing their house with persons of multiple nationalities in the immigrant neighbourhoods (as in the Raval, a centric neighbourhood). Because this they have other immigrants in their personal networks.



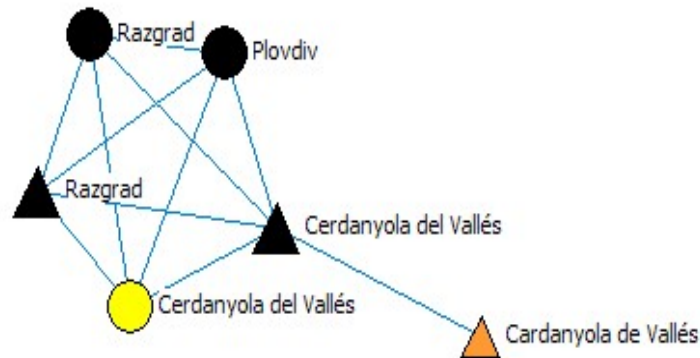
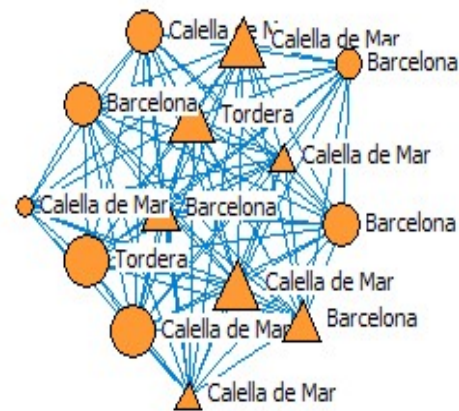
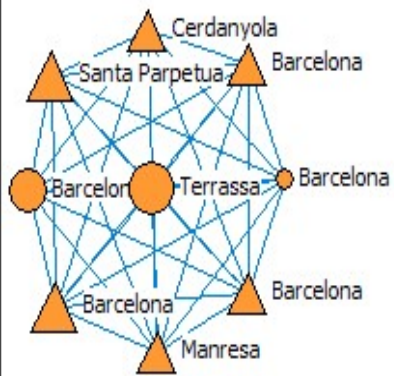
# 9. Rummyana



- *Graduate students*

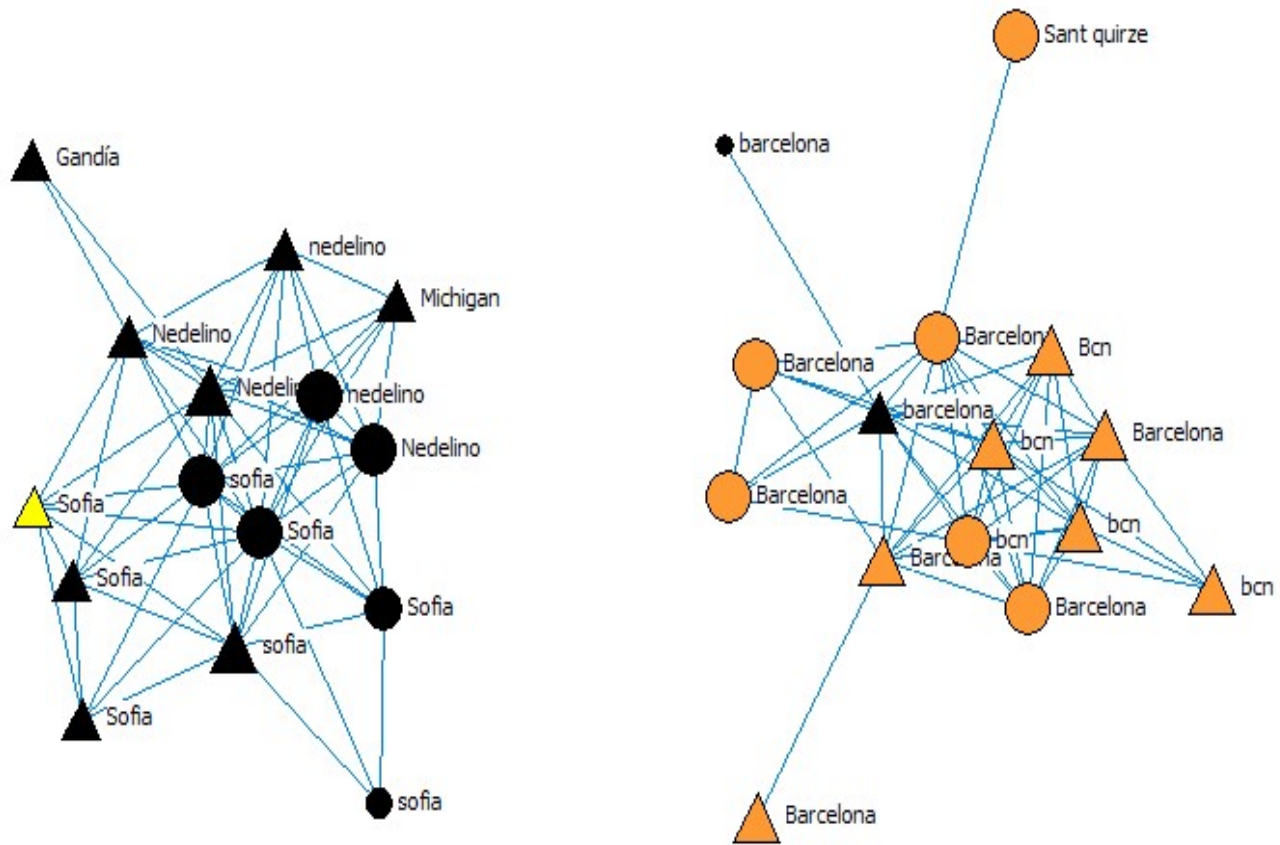
In Barcelona we can find Bulgarians who came to continue their studies. They usually incorporate new contacts from the destine country

# 10. Vesela

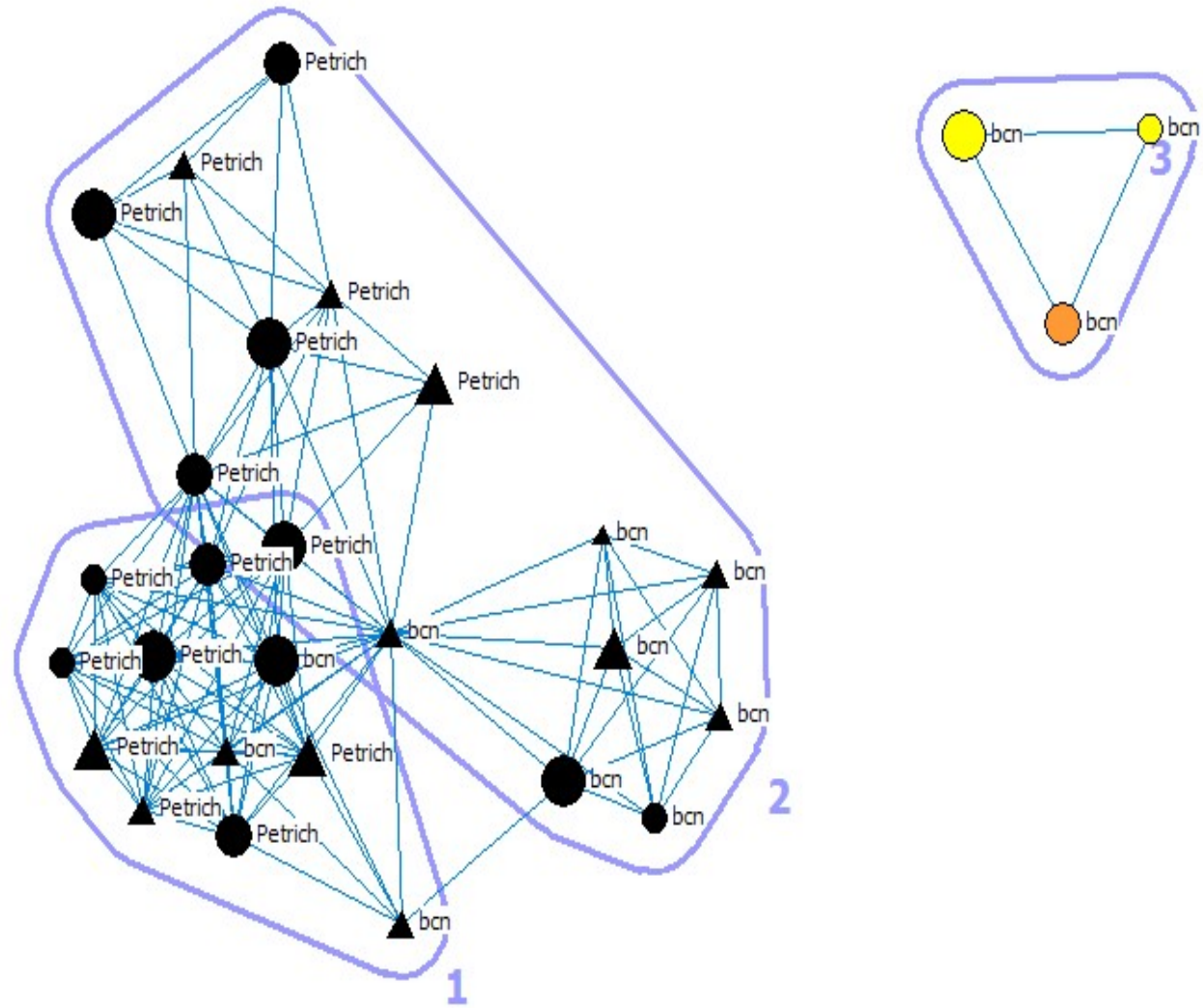


- *Others.....*

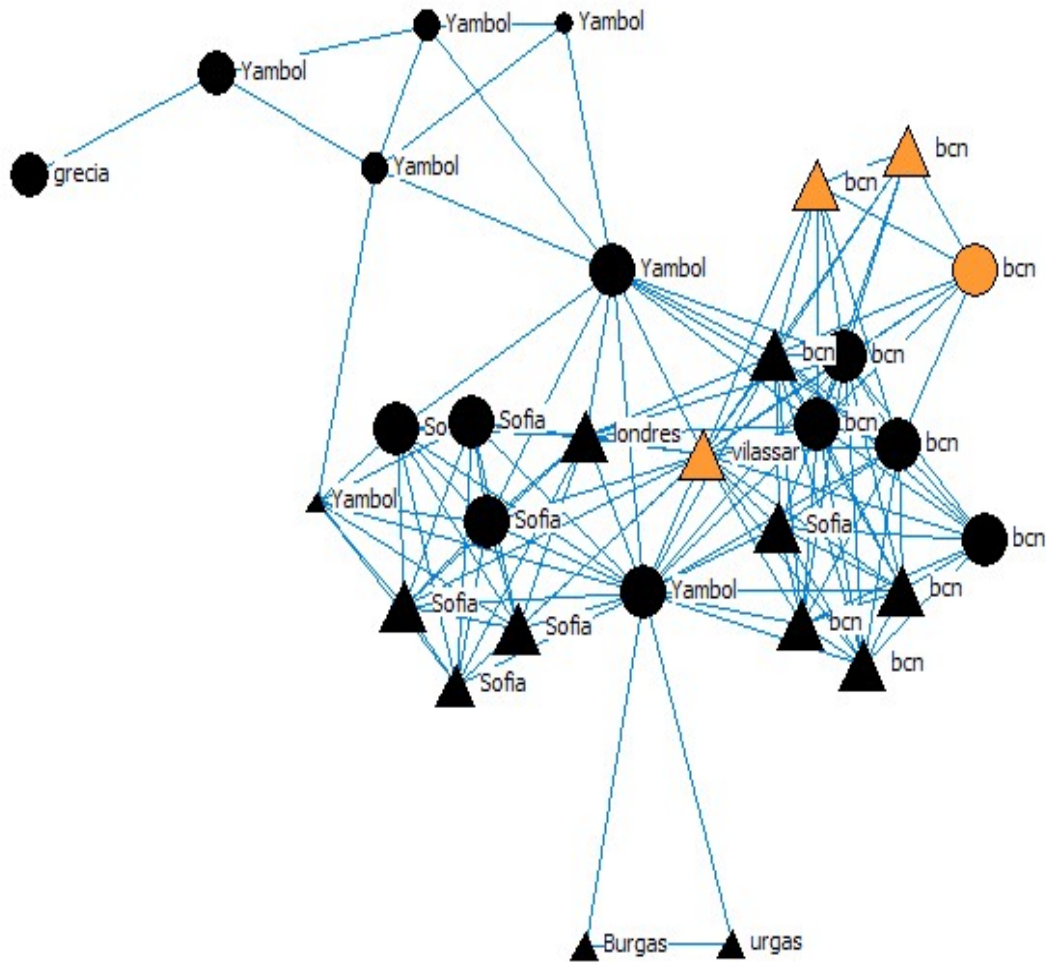
# 11. Boyan



# 12. Geri



# 13. Nadia



## ***Bulgarian migrant identity: identification and cultural displays***

- Bulgaria has large ethnic diversity. People interviewed identified themselves as Bulgarians and also Armenians, Gypsies or Turkish.
- Bulgarian identity is so ambiguous due to the different ideological discourses. They are:

European because of their ancient European roots. There is a political interest to take part of Europe.



Balkan because Bulgaria is in the Balkan area. The Balkan identity adopted above all by young people is associated to a neo-traditional movement (that mixes tradition and modernity). The Balkan culture is conceived as a counter-movement against globalization and Western Europe hegemony.

Bulgarian national identity related to Bulgarian national orthodox celebrations and traditions

***How all these identities are felt and conceived by the Bulgarian migrants in a transnational context?***

## **Identity and identification in Roses**

- In Roses Bulgarian normally distinguish between the political and legal (national) identity and the cultural identity.
- Most of them identified themselves as “Bulgarians”. However, some of them would prefer to become Spanish or Catalan rather than “Bulgarians”.
- All of them rely on Orthodox traditions and national celebrations which demonstrate to be a strong Bulgarian cultural identity

- Bulgarians in Roses associate Europe with the freedom of circulation in Europe. In spite of these advantages some of them are not sure if Bulgaria should belong to Europe because of the corruption that exists in Bulgaria
- Sometimes they express they agreement to become European as a mean to be considered as equals and not like “delinquents”
- Bulgarians in Roses are not identified with the Balkan identity. They are Bulgarian more than Balkan. The Balkan identity is associated with the folklore and a closed attitude.

## Identity in Barcelona

- The Bulgarian in Barcelona have a more deep identification with Balkan identity. They explain this because they have another history, culture and character different from Europe and European. Balkan identity is an identification “without frontiers”. It can identify different countries that share the traditions, the music, the character and the culture. So they are not so far whereas they are separated by the politics.
- They assure that they are European above all because Bulgaria is inside Europe, but the majority do not identify themselves with what means to be European inside the European Union. They don't feel as taking part of UE.

- Most of them agree that the EU will benefit the economic development of Bulgaria but it will be difficult. They recognize economic problems in the short time.
- Some one recognize that Bulgarian shouldn't be in the EU because of the corruption
- Usually they identify themselves as “ciudadano del mundo”, “ciudadano del universo”,...
- Sometimes they express they agreement to become European as a mean to be considered as equals and not like “delinquents”

## Identity, associations and community feelings

- Only 8 persons of 25 takes part of an association in Barcelona and are not Bulgarian associations. In Roses nobody takes part of any association.
- There is a contradictory feeling concerning the Bulgarian association: a) an association it may be seen as an expression of not integration; b) an association may become a platform of encounter of migrants with a vulnerability situation. Through the associations they can find the necessary help to be integrated into the society of reception. Furthermore an association allows to maintain the Bulgarian identity;
- Otherwise, there is any Bulgarian association in Catalonia (only in Madrid).

- Some of the Bulgarian migrants from Roses (those that come alone, individually or having few contacts) establish dyadic encounters (a friend of a friend, a parent of a friend, etc.) and joint with other Bulgarian families in order to celebrate the Bulgarian orthodox traditions (e.g. Bulgarian eastern.). Bulgarian that came by collective contract meet together with their families. This extend group develops a new identity; they are like a “family”.
- In Barcelona these encounters are more organized in the frame of “civic centres” but there are not a lot of participation. Young people participate in other encounters: Festival Can Toni Gros.
- **To meet other Bulgarian people in Catalonia, to celebrate the Bulgarian traditions make feel Bulgarians identified as Bulgarians.** To listen to Balkan music make feel Bulgarians identified as Balkans. They are identified with the Balkan character and with Bulgaria national identity because they are born there.



Bulgarian eastern



Fotos: Veneta Pavlova (Museo etnográfico nacional, Madrid)

Cyrilio and Metodio Party (24 may)

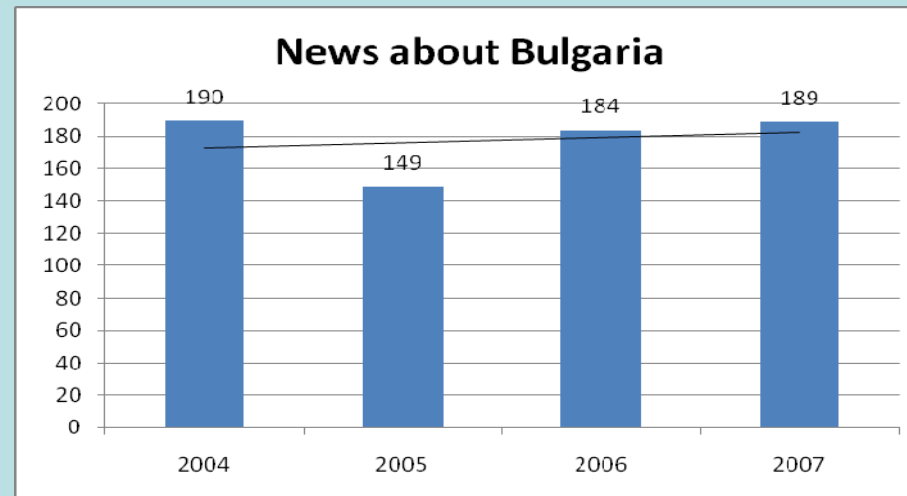


Fotos: Sarah Hoeksma



## Catalan perceptions of bulgarian people

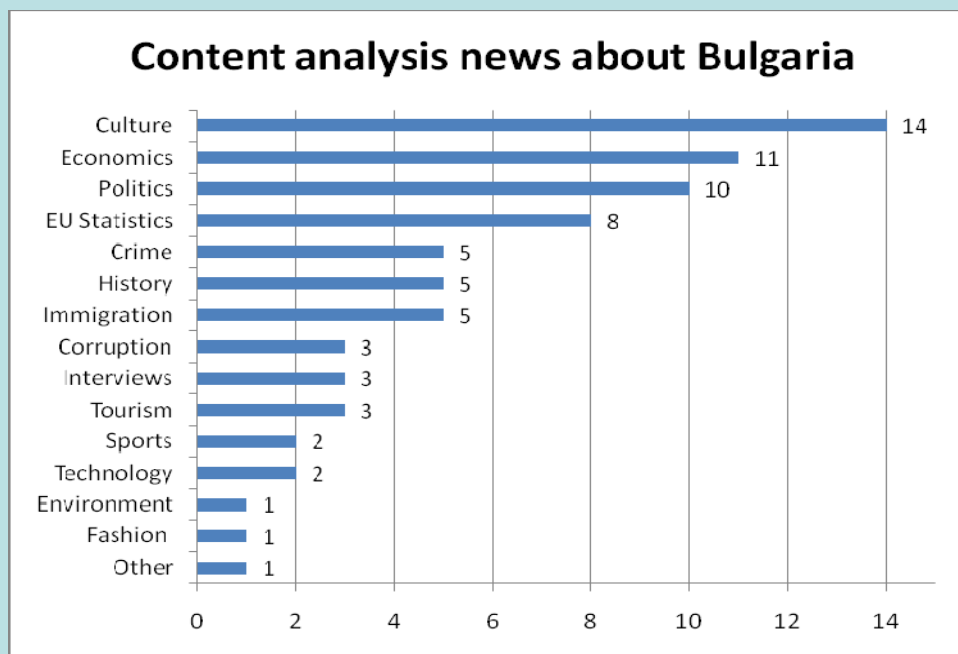
In a preliminary analysis of the written press in Catalonia, we can see that the number of entries in the news did not change in the last years, even when Bulgaria became a new EU member.



News appeared in the Newspaper *La Vanguardia* about Bulgaria.

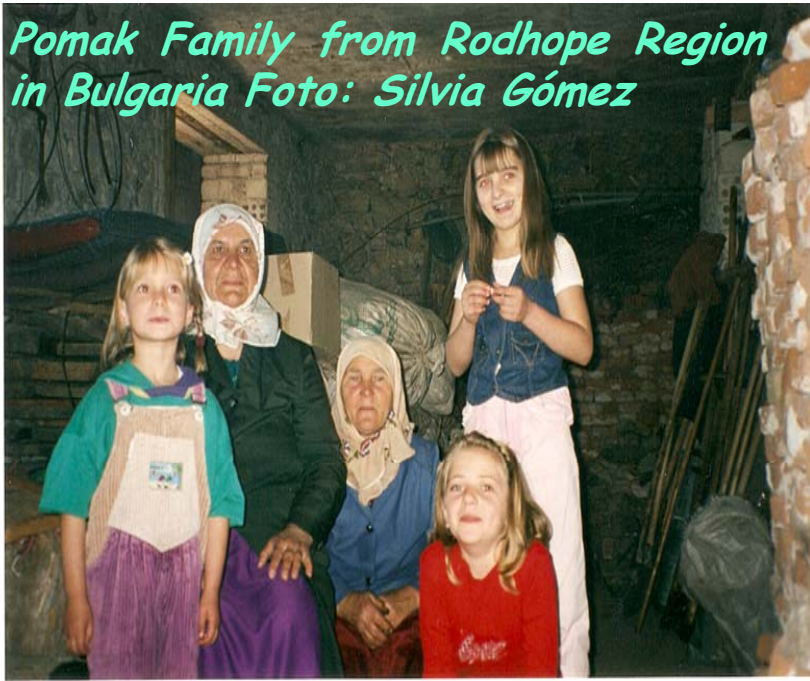
In *La Vanguardia* we found a great variety of topics: sports, cultural news and EU studies etc. The high number of news related to cultural activities explains that about 60% of news were classified as positive.

The news which refers to the great number of Bulgarian immigrants (more than 30.000) that came to Spain in only 12 months, but “with papers”, is treated positively in the media.



Content analysis of the 74 news appeared in the Newspaper *La Vanguardia* about Bulgaria during 2008 (until 1th August)

*Pomak Family from Rodhope Region  
in Bulgaria Foto: Silvia Gómez*



*Immigrants fent cua davant la Seguretat Social  
de Via Laietana (Barcelona)*

**Mnogo blagodaria, Gràcies per la vostra  
atenció, Thank you, Gracias!!!!**



*Bulgarian family in Spain. El  
País 31.12.2006*



*"Una noche en vela por ser  
europeos". El País, 09.01.2007*

# *Do Bulgarian migrant speak catalan?*

## *Barcelona*

They don't understand catalan	3 (12%)
They understand catalan but don't speack it or they can speack it a little	17 (68%)
They can speack it and write it	5 (20%)
Total	25 (100%)

## *Roses*

They don't understand catalan	1 (0%)
They understand catalan but don't speack it or they can speack it a little	18 (68%)
They can speack it and write it	4 (20%)
Total	21 (100%)