Dana Diminescu 1, Matthieu Renault 1, Mathieu Jacomy 1-3

1 Research Program on ICT Uses in Migrations (Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, Paris)
2 Telecom ParisTech Engineering School
3 WebAtlas Association

The Matrimonial Web of Migrants
Doing ethnic business otherwise

ICT-Migrations Research Program’s Panel
Migrant Networks at the Digital Age – Case Studies

ICT and Migrations: Mobility and Cohesion in the Digital Age
24 & 25 September 2009 - Vienna
A research initially conducted in the framework of an European Commission (IPTS)’s project:
Diminescu, Dana; Renault Mathieu; Gangloff, Sylvie; Picard, Marie Amélie; d'Iribarne, Christophe; and Hassane Souley (2009): *ICT for Integration, Social Inclusion and Economic Participation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities: Case Studies from France*, (JRC 51834 EN). Sevilla: IPTS. 

... Continued in a paper to be published in *Revue d’anthropologie des connaissances* – issue on ICT, mobility and development (2009)
Introduction

The intimate world of the connected migrant

Dating websites and the matrimonial web of migrants (MWM)

The dual origin of social web:

*Ethnic websites*

* Dating websites

Source: http://www.blackplanet.com

Source: http://www.match.com
Diminescu, Renault, Jacomy, d’Iribarne
The Matrimonial Web of Migrants

Case Studies

Cupid Media: Ethnicizing the matrimonial web

Eurochallenges: Russian email-order brides

Shaadi: Discretizing profiles – Reproducing communities
Mining the Web

- Semi-automatic websites crawling
- Automatic profiles storing
- « Success stories » extraction
- Services inventory

Visualization of websites networks
Excerpts of Shaadi profiles (Indian women in the United States)
User ethnic profiling

At the crossroad of an economy of participation and an economy of services

Relational technologies and user profiling

Is MWM an economy of ethnic profiling?

Source: http://www.webgui.org/
Cupid Media

“a digital media and internet information services company that operates innovative, database driven interactive dating sites focused on niche markets based on ethnicity, religion, physical appearance, sexual preference or special interests. Cupid Media is a market leader in many of its chosen markets and has over eight million customers in the USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Australia and the Pacific.”
Source: http://www.cupidmedia.com/

Some Cupid Media’s websites/markets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITE</th>
<th>MARKET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AfricanAmericanCupid.com</td>
<td>African American, African and UK Afro-Caribbean dating and personals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AllPenpals.com</td>
<td>International Penpals and friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AsiaEuro.com</td>
<td>Asian and Western friendship, dating or language practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBWCupid.com</td>
<td>BBW, BHM and plus sized singles personals, singles, dating and friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BlackCupid.com</td>
<td>Black singles and dating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BrazilCupid.com</td>
<td>Brazilian personals, friendship and dating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChineseLoveLinks.com</td>
<td>Chinese dating, friendship, language exchange and pen pals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChristianCupid.com</td>
<td>Christian singles, dating and personals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ColombianCupid.com</td>
<td>Colombian dating, friendship and language exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DominicanCupid.com</td>
<td>Dominican personals, singles, dating and friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FilipinaHeart.com</td>
<td>Filipino personals, singles, friendship and dating.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dividing communities – Standardizing differences

Identity of the means (categories) of self-disclosure
Identity of the functionalities of matching and communication

Find the differences! Profiles on Muslima and MexicanCupid
Shaadi.com

Profiles discretization working for the reproduction of Indian communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious &amp; Social Background</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste / Sect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub caste / sect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother Tongue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gotra / Gothram</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Values</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Religious and caste matching

Have you ever seen a more detailed profile? 40 fields of self-description, 20 fields of (ideal) partner description

Diminescu, Renault, Jacomy, d'Iribarne
The Matrimonial Web of Migrants
Diminescu, Renault, Jacomy, d'Iribarne
The Matrimonial Web of Migrants

Professional matching

Cultural matching

Geographical matching

etc.
The online **replication** of Indian society characteristics

The perpetuation of the institution of **arranged marriage**

The diffusion of an **Indo-centric culture** among Indian diasporas

The **absorption** of the traditional business of wedding services

*Profile picture on Shaadi*
(e-)Mail Order Brides

Buying women addresses

*Eastern woman* as an ethnic category

Eurochallenge’s international network of matrimonial agencies

Eurochallenge’s women database ("women file")
The international distribution of gender (1/3) - Muslima
The international distribution of gender (2/3) - Filipinaheart

Filipinaheart: “You’re not Filipino, welcome on the website”
Diminescu, Renault, Jacomy, d'Iribarne

The Matrimonial Web of Migrants

The international distribution of gender (3/3) - Mexicancupid

A « fake » profile

Some « candidates » :

70% are Mexican
20% are American
63% live in Mexico
33% live in the United States

The discourse of displacement (1/2)

« I want to come to meet you… if you are interested. I can relocate to Mexico or sponsor you to come to the United States once we know each other better »

“I know that you could answer that distance is a problem (…) but there is no limit for love”
Desire for migrations (1/3) – Muslima

Désir de Migration des Femmes selon le Pays de résidence

Désir de Migration des Hommes selon le Pays de Résidence
Some « candidates »:

16.4% are American  
13.6% are French  
9.6% are Italian  
...  
0% are Russian

The Discourse of displacement (2/2)

“I saw your profile; but can you come to Italy on holiday in order to get acquainted with each other?”

“I am a professor at Bari university in Italy, but I often travel around the world for scientific reasons. So maybe we will be able to meet”
Desire for migrations (3/3) – Shaadi

A chosen migration

The choice of locality

Looking for a woman in India

The choice of United States
MWM and Ethnic Business

Is migrant matrimonial web an ethnic business?

*Ethnic business* relies on pre-existing networks (of ethnic solidarity)
It activates these networks

Ethnic targets
Source: http://www.publiethnik.com
“Traditional” ethnic business on the web: North-African wedding services providers

A network of potential clients: issues of visibility

A professional ethnic network: services providers directories (Weboriental, Orientalement) as ethnic enclaves

Orientalement: http://www.orientalement.com/
Conclusion: a New Form of Ethnic Business

*MWM* wants **non-linked** people to “get in touch”. It aims at **creating** networks

Doing business = Doing network = ethnicising = moving, migrating

“Miracles do happen” (Shaadi): Some pictures of success stories