

Italy

Racist discrimination in the employment sector against the Roma: a study in 'nomad camps' in Rome

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Summary

This report sets out to analyse discourses and practices of racist discrimination in the employment sector against Roma living in so-called nomad camps in Rome, as well as local policy and anti-racist activist responses. The report is based on a case study conducted in Rome comprising interviews with exponents from institutional organisations, anti-racist movements, grassroots organisations, journalists and individual activists, both Roma and non-Roma, as well as with Roma living in various authorised camps of Rome, mainly originating from former Yugoslavia and Romania.

The situation the Roma experience in these camps is serious and characterised by very precarious living conditions, which include housing, education, and occupational and legal status. The national Nomad Emergency Decree issued in 2008, like the 'Nomad Plan' established in 2009 by the City Council of Rome, tightens control over the Roma population, segregating them even more and establishing an increasingly rigorous camp regime. The segregation policy, the confinement of the Roma into 'nomad camps', and the creation of surveillance services, 'socio-educational' services and nursery schools only for Roma children within the camps, constitute a historically rooted pattern of relating to the Roma. In the fascist era, Italy also set up concentration camps for the 'gypsies', who were considered racially and socially dangerous. Obviously one cannot draw simple lines of continuity from that period to today. However, it is important to stress that the will to re-educate the Roma seems to be a constant element in the relationship to Roma, as are images of the Roma as a dangerous, deviant and asocial population.

The Roma are in any case constructed as a 'problem', with a 'difficult culture' that prevents them fully 'integrating' into mainstream society. This way the concept of race is delinked from racism – regarded as an individual attitude based on lack of tolerance and great ignorance – although it still lives on in cultural arguments. While the City Council, on the one side, has instituted policies that segregate more heavily, it has, on the other side, launched an innovative job inclusion programme, which proved successful for the Roma who took part. Anti-racist and pro-Roma activists oppose the City Council, but have shown themselves unable to detach fully from the imaginary of Roma 'nomads' in their proposals for solutions. Furthermore, internal differences hinder the construction of effective solutions by the various pro-Roma and anti-racist groupings.

The efforts to establish inclusionary programmes to assist Roma into the labour market risk becoming futile if racism continues to be considered as a problem of 'wrong' attitudes and convictions, rather than a structural paradigm that permeates society, including institutions, civil society and anti-racist organisations.

Introduction

In Italy Roma¹ are considered to be 'nomads' and mostly confined to 'campi nomadi'/'nomad camps', consisting of camper vans, containers or shacks. The presence of Sinti² and Roma in Italy can be traced back to the 15th century. They came to the Italian peninsula presumably from the Balkans or directly from Greece across the Adriatic Sea, and settled in the Italian region of Abruzzi and Molise – those people are still called 'Rom abruzzesi' (Lapov 2004: 39). Among the Sinti, a distinction is made between Italian Sinti and 'Germanic' Sinti, the latter living in the far north of Italy. The Germanic Sinti came later, in the mid-19th century, and the Austrian Sinti in the first two decades of the 20th century. These are all 'historical communities' and are differentiated in mainstream society from the other Roma communities in Italy who immigrated more recently (ibid.).

¹ The term 'Roma' refers to persons describing themselves as Roma, Gypsies, Manouches, Kalderash, Machavaya, Lovari, Churari, Romanichal, Gitanoes, Kalo, Sinti, Rudari, Boyash, Ungaritz, Luri, Bashaldé, Romungro, Yenish, Xoraxai and other groups perceived as 'gypsies'. The term 'Traveller' refers specifically to Irish Travellers, who are not Roma and are native to Ireland. The terms 'Roma' and 'Travellers' are not intended to minimise the diversity within these communities or to promote stereotypes (FRA 2006b:16 in Law 2010:165). The enumeration of the various sub-groups of Roma can be contested as means to enforce specific identitarian definitions upon them. Many Roma here defined themselves as Serbs, Croats, Yugoslavian, Romanian, rather than as Roma belonging to certain groups. There is a sort of insistence with the specific definitions which strengthens the sense of non-belonging to a national entity. Simultaneously, the insistence on identity is important in the fight for fundamental rights.

² The Sinti distinguish themselves from the Roma and vice versa.

Major migration of Roma to Italy happened in stages, the first between the two World Wars in the 1920s and 1930s. This influx consisted especially of Rom Vlax originating from the Carpathian and Danubian regions, Rom Kalderash, Cergarjia and Lovarja. Other groups from Croatia and Slovenia came between the 1920s and 1940s and mainly live in central and north-eastern Italy (Lapov 2004: 40). At the end of the 1960s, a second major migration of Roma happened, consisting mainly of Khorakane Romà (Muslim Roma) and Dasikané Romà (Christian Roma) originating from Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro, and later from the 1970s onwards from Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia. These have mostly settled in the big urban centres (ibid.). Recent immigration consists of Romanian Roma and of war fugitives from ex-Yugoslavia.

The demographic presence of the Roma and Sinti in Italy can only be estimated. About 110 thousand to 180 thousand Roma and Sinti are said to live on Italian territory, of whom about 70 thousand are said to be Italian citizens and mostly belong to the so-called historical minorities, while the remaining Roma immigrated especially from ex-Yugoslavia (Lapov 2004: 41). Although the number of Roma in Italy is unclear, it is small in relation to the entire population on Italian territory, but it is perceived as being much greater, and above all as a problem. Although it would be misleading to link racism to the numeric presence of minority groups, we have chosen to reporting the numbers, as the uncertainty produced various censuses of Roma in the 'nomad camps' that were highly contested.

The WP2 case study focuses on the occupational status of Roma living in the 'nomad camps' in Rome, with a special emphasis on their inclusion in the local job market.

The situation of the majority of Roma people in Italy is characterised by very precarious living conditions, especially for those – about 12 thousand, according to the 2008 census in Rome, Milan and Naples – who live in the 'nomad camps'. The condition of housing is one key factor, and the racial discrimination to which Roma are subjected here affects other key fields such as occupation and education opportunities. This has made racism towards Roma a vicious circle difficult to break. There are multiple actors on Italian territory (civil society organisations, individual activists, trade unions and the institutions) with different agendas for the 'Roma problem'. In the case of Rome, the institutional policy makers on both left and right have attracted great opposition with their programmes for the Roma. Anti-racist activists claim(ed) that there was a lack of serious solutions on offer to tackle housing, education and employment. At the same time, the anti-racist activist scene (consisting of various 'big' associations, individual activists, centri sociali and more recently Roma associations) was and is

mostly active in the school service and training Roma as cultural mediators, and it has proposed a number of solutions to the institutions for dealing with the camps. However, it is important to note that the associations themselves are divided about the 'right' policy for Roma. Besides, many activists lament the absence of a serious commitment on the part of the Roma to change their own situation. Other Roma activists speak of racism and intolerance by Roma against the gadjos (non-Roma), which hampers their successful 'integration'. In the education sector, the major anti-racist associations are involved in projects that include picking the children up and bringing them to school and back. In the employment sector, the actors are more divided over a common strategy. Some underline the importance of promoting so-called traditional occupations for the Roma (craft markets, recycling waste and old metal), while others opt for a strategy that should enable young Roma to compete with 'Italian' youth.

Occupation and education are overlapping areas and mutually conditioned. Moreover, they are especially affected by housing conditions, which means the camp. It is crucial to note that the camp was initially conceived as an instrument for the preservation of 'gypsy culture', and that it has gradually become a mechanism for power and control over the 'gypsies'. The camp 'produces' the 'gypsies'. This in turn has negative effects on the job market and in schools.

This report tries to tackle the Roma 'problem' in Italy, especially in the city of Rome. The Roma suffer from racist discrimination, based on a deep-rooted form of racism, which is anti-gypsyism, and which is reflected in action for and against the Roma. This discrimination is an obstacle to their efforts towards empowerment and emancipation, making it difficult to understand where to start resolving their situation.

The report begins with a brief introduction to anti-gypsyism as a specific form of racism, which is important to understanding the particular situation the Roma experience in Italy, expressed in various measures aimed at this community. Crucial to this understanding is an explanation of the housing situation known as the 'nomad camp'. The examination of policy discourses will concentrate on an analysis of the recent political framework for dealing with the Roma, consisting of the national 'Emergency Decree' and the 'Nomad Plan' in Rome. Later, the report will analyse the specific difficulties of establishing adequate policy responses for inclusion into the labour market. This section will be based on 10 interviews conducted from October 2010 to March 2011 with exponents from institutions, anti-racist movements, grassroots organisations, journalists and individual activists, both Roma and non-Roma. Besides, interviews have been conducted with Roma living in various authorised camps in Rome, a procedure that is becoming more and more difficult due to the fact that municipal authorisations are needed to enter these statutory camps.

1. Anti-Gypsyism

'The formation of multiple racisms within Europe, such as anti-Semitism and long established anti gypsy hostility, whose targets were internal groups, also confirms the need to interrogate intra-national forms of governance and social control' (Law 2010: 7)

Anti-gypsyism, the antagonism against Roma and Sinti people, is diffused throughout Europe and increased significantly in Italy in the 1990s (Vitale 2009: 89) compared to other European nations. Studies on anti-gypsyism emphasise 'prejudice' as an essential element of this kind of racism. The most frequent prejudices include the image of the 'gypsy' as a thief (92%), as someone living in a closed community (87%) who has chosen to live in camps on the periphery (83%) and who exploits his/her own children (92%) (ibid.).³ It is, however, crucial not to consider anti-gypsyism, as well as any other form of racism, as an individual disposition towards a 'minority culture', but as a structural paradigm of European societies. 'Racial conception and racist practice are relational' (Goldberg 2009a: 1273). Racism is therefore defined here as a system of unequal power relations that produces subordination and segregation of populations marked as inferior and thus conditions their access to social, economic, political, legal, psychological and cultural resources (Goldberg 2009a, 2009b). Following contemporary racial studies, one assumption is that race has been delinked from racism (Goldberg 2009b). The concept of race is still alive, except that it does not rely on biological racism but on cultural arguments (Amin 2010). The claim is that different values, practices and beliefs form distinctive traits and are irreconcilable with the values, practices and beliefs of the majority. The consequence is a depoliticisation of racism, marking 'the other' as deficient and unable or unwilling 'to integrate' and simultaneously keeping the member of the majority unmarked.

This is particularly striking in the case of the Roma, where a recurrent pattern is to blame 'gypsy' culture, the 'gypsies' that refuse to integrate, their alleged patriarchal organisation, their reluctance to let their children attend school and so forth. The denial of race places anti-racist movements and policies in a great dilemma, as will be demonstrated later in the report.

The Roma were an accepted minority until the 15th century, but with the breakdown of the medieval order and the emergence of a capitalist society in the pre-modern era, 'gypsies' were outlawed. People were released from their traditional activities and began to travel as 'vagabonds' and 'beggars' (Scholz 2009: 25). This

³ The data was collected in 2007, 2171 persons were interviewed, the sample was assembled in proportion to the distribution of the Italian population over 17 according to sex, age, level of education, occupation, geographic situation, size and location of domicile.

population was gradually considered to be unproductive (in capitalist terms) and politically not controllable. As a consequence, the Roma became the object of various kinds of persecution (Hund 2000 in: *ibid.*).

With the beginning of the Enlightenment, gradual racialisation of the prejudices against Roma set in, and with the establishment of nation-states 'gypsies' were considered a racial threat to national stability. Campaigns of discipline and education were launched, Roma children were put into children's homes, and from the 20th century onwards registration with fingerprinting and photographing procedures were introduced (*ibid.*). Even though 'gypsies' had lived in Europe for centuries, they were never considered to be a part of European society, but only to be in Europe. Their alleged origin from India is always mentioned and reiterated, and underlines their non-belonging to Europe. Similar to 'the Jew', 'the gypsy' has been considered ever since to be the internal enemy, a 'Europe's other' (Goldberg 2009b: 155) that has to be controlled since it was and is conceived as being a racial threat to the national body. It is noteworthy that public debates, institutions and anti-racist associations seldom focus on the status of the Roma as immigrants (often living in a camp for three generations), which has to be addressed in terms of documents (working permit, residence permit and so forth), housing and education. Various associations have agendas for immigrants and 'nomads' or Roma, the 13th Municipality of Rome has a department solely for 'nomads', while the Department for Education has one project for migrants and one for schooling the Roma⁴.

Emblematic is the case of the Roma who fled the wars in former Yugoslavia, especially those from Kosovo. Even though Italy and other European countries participated in this conflict in defence of human rights, the majority of these Roma were denied political asylum and/or status as war refugees, and instead given only temporary residence permits (Daniele 2009: 128).

A neat distinction is made between Roma and migrants, which underlines the idea of the Roma being in Europe but not being of Europe, as mentioned above. They are not treated as belonging to any other society either, but as a people apart from others.

Anti-gypsyism has a religious, social and a racialising dimension. It is religiously motivated because of the notion that Roma were accused of being traitors to Christendom (Law 2010: 7)⁵. Its social dimension is grounded in the belief that Roma travel around by their own will and not because they were forced to by persecution, that they maintain their living not by honest work but by stealing and tricking, leading to the

⁴ http://www.comune.roma.it/wps/portal/pcr?jppagecode=progetti_integ_scol_dses.wp

⁵ It was believed that they were direct descendants of the brother-murderer Cain, that they fabricated the nails for the cross of Christ and stole the fourth, that they had formed a pact with the Devil, from whom they learned their magical skills.

conclusion that they are a plague or at least a 'social problem'. It is racially motivated if the characteristics mentioned above are considered as applying to all 'gypsies' and hereditary, hence a pattern of their 'race' (Wippermann 2005). Besides, due to their (dark) skin colour they were associated with sin, dirt and evil and accused of being spies and carriers of the plague (Law 2010: 7). Since they lacked territorial, economic and military strength, their treatment as vulnerable scapegoats was facilitated, including mass murder, enslavement and removal of children from their families (Hancock 1997 in: *ibid.*).

Particularly persistent (Bravi and Sigona go so far as to speak of an 'obsession', 2006) is the idea that the Roma have to be educated and 'socialised'. During the Nazi years, 'gypsies' were considered to be mentally deficient, 'asocial' and associated to the 'Lumpenproletariat', hence averse to work (Scholz 2009: 26).

In Italy, the physician, anthropologist and founder of the Italian School of Positivist Criminology Cesare Lombroso published his research 'L'uomo delinquente' ('The delinquent man') in 1876, in which he demonstrated that 'the gypsy' was inclined by nature to be delinquent:

[A]ccording to the anthropologist from Verona, the Roma committed crimes because they were naturally inclined to do so: they had no conscious will, but only evil tendencies dependent on their physical and psychological organisation, which differed from those of the normal man. A similar interpretation could have only one consequence: the 'gypsy plague' could by no means be resolved through educative interventions, but had to be prevented, and persecution and the death penalty would constitute the only ways to stop it before it began. The 'asocial gypsy' hence assumed a hereditary and genetic connotation' (Bravi, Sigona 2006: 859-860).⁶

Lombroso's thesis was adopted by the scholars of the Institute of Racial Hygiene in the Third Reich (Robert Ritter, Adolf Würth, Eva Justin), who relied on this thesis in trying to establish the 'Wandertrieb' gene, which allegedly determined the 'gypsy' inclination to nomadism and led to their demonstration that 'gypsies' were racially impure and fell into the category of life unworthy to live (Bravi, Sigona 2006: 860).

'Gypsy' concentration camps existed not only in Germany, but also in fascist Italy – however, their existence has undergone a national amnesia, as Sigona and Bravi point out – where the Roma were interned as socially and racially dangerous. In some of those camps, schools were set up for 'gypsy' children, where they were to receive an 'intellectual and religious education' to turn them into useful subjects for the fascist regime. It was only because of the armistice and the consequent chaos that the

⁶ 'Per l'antropologo veronese I rom delinquevano perché naturalmente incline a farlo: non esisteva una volontà cosciente, ma soltanto tendenze malvagie dipendenti dalla loro organizzazione fisica e psicologica differente da quella dell'uomo normale. Una simile interpretazione portava ad un'unica consequenziale soluzione: la 'piaga zingara' non poteva essere risolta con alcun intervento educativo, oteva soltanto essere prevenuta e la persecuzione o la pena di morte potevano essere I soli mezzi per arrestarla sul nascere. La 'asocialità zingara' aveva cioè assunto una connotazione genetica ed ereditaria.' Own translation.

objectives devised for the 'gypsy' detainees could be averted (ibid.: 862). While one obviously cannot draw any lines of simple continuity from that period to today, the will to re-educate the Roma seems a constant element in the relationship towards Roma. Those (re-)education efforts, with detention in camps, could offer a new way of deciphering the logic of today's camps⁷, with nursery schools for Roma children only, 'socio-educational' services, and surveillance services. These images of Roma as a dangerous, deviant and asocial population are still in some ways persistent and mirrored in discourses against them and measures designed to help them.

In the 1960s and 70s, when the Roma and Sinti were stopped from settling in major cities of Northern Italy, the association Opera Nomadi (founded in 1963) established the so-called 'Lacio Drom' classes, special classes for Roma children in the camps. These classes not only aimed at schooling Roma children, but were also intended as a kind of civilising process that would produce significant changes within the Roma community, since the Roma were considered to live in a state of marginality and inferiority and the education of their children was expected to lead to a maturation process within the whole community⁸ (Bravi, Sigona 2006: 863). A recent example, for what has been called the continuity of education and civilisation rhetoric and practice can be found in the terms of a bid in 2008 for the schooling service to be provided by the Rome municipality. The authors of the text speak in the introduction of collaboration between associations and institutions to develop the capacity of young Roma to orientate themselves in modern society and interact positively with the community. Furthermore, the text underlines the importance of pre-schools, which would help the Roma child to acquire the skills and basic abilities to put him/her on the same cognitive level as all the other children. The anti-racist associations and activists, and 'civilised' Roma themselves, also speak of projects and initiatives to teach the children basic civilised behaviour.

However, as Essed has pointed out,

'racism is [not] a natural... is a natural and permanent feature of European history; it is created and reproduced out of a complex set of conditions. Even when it draws on cultural and ideological remnants of previous historical processes, the specific forms racism takes are determined by the economic, political, social and organizational conditions of society' (Essed 1991: 12).

⁷ 'Dalle prime esperienze rieducative in Ungheria fino ai campi di concentramento fascisti con le loro scuole, l'ossessione rieducativa rivolta verso la minoranza rom sembra accompagnarne costantemente le vicende storiche ed il rapporto con i non-zingari. Tale idea appare talmente strutturata e sedimentata all'interno degli schemi mentali della cultura dominante da veder riproporre lo stesso binomio campo-rieducazione anche all'interno di luoghi sorti per la persecuzione o addirittura come meta intermedia verso il genocidio. Simili avvenimenti rimossi, negate e taciuti dalla memoria collettiva consegnano una nuova chiave di lettura di fronte ai campi di oggi' (Bravi, Sigona 2006: 862) (Paraphrased own translation).

⁸ These 'objectives' were noted by one of the volunteers in a 'Lacio Drom' class.

Racial categorisations are contingent and not fixed, they are products of certain historical events, like 'conflicts, mis/recognitions, belongings, boundary drawing, imagining and forms of regulation' (Law 2010: 45). Categorisation of people along the notions of race, ethnicity are commonly used to construct an understanding of descent. The Roma identity has been understood and re-conceptualised in recent scientific debates (Vermeersch 2006 in: *ibid.*). They were seen as a historical diaspora, with common origins and descent from a military caste in India, and with a common language, Romani, and now scattered around the world (*ibid.*). This approach by the 'classic 'gypsyologist', Nazi scientist and contemporary academics' has been contested by contemporary academics who criticise its 'homogenising exoticism' (Oakely 1983, Vermeersch 2006: 14 in: *ibid.*). The presumed itinerant lifestyle, a specific set of cultural practices and musical traditions, were also seen as peculiar to Roma identity, without considering that in Eastern Europe Roma lived in settled communities and in houses. Despite the fact that categorisations and attempts to perform them are homogenising, the political mobilisation and activism by Roma to combat discrimination can only succeed, however, by categorising and institutionalising Roma identity:

'Identity, category and names matter here and they are vitally important in the struggle for fundamental rights' (Law 2010: 47).

Racism is, as our interviews show, always intended as an individual attitude. Racism is also considered to be a 'problem' of ignorance and intolerance. It is difficult to talk about racism, since it is also considered as being 'too heavy' or even 'wrong' as a concept, as we have been told. Our interviewees preferred to talk about 'intolerance' or 'xenophobia' rather than racism. What is at stake, then, is the conceptualisation of anti-racist policies that consequently have to operate on a non-existing ground. The uneasiness with the concept of race is due the non-acceptance of racism as a historical legacy. Italian anti-racist discourse has never critically addressed the country's own economic migration or its own 'racism' towards the population of the south (Schneider 1998 in: Lentin 2004: 165) and the internal colonisation process. The problem of racism is completely externalised and construed as entirely new and affecting only non-Italians (*ibid.*). The non-consideration of internal racism and the non-consideration of a racialisation process within Italy's 'own' national body have led to the imagination of 'racism' as a new phenomenon that arrived in the country with the (significant) influx of the first immigrants in the 1980s (Balbo, Manconi 1990 in *ibid.*: 166). The anti-racist movement can be said to have been born in those years and to have been mainly concerned with the phenomenon of immigration. Since anti-racism was and still is connected to immigration, 'the force of anti-racism is often determined by the parallel

force of opposition to a government seen as proactively promoting anti-immigration policies' (Lentin 2004: 171).

Anti-racist organisations in Italy are for the most part made up of 'white' Italians, and there is a lack of major organisations composed of 'Italians' and 'immigrants' together, which undoubtedly demonstrates the importance of challenging the externalisation of racism (ibid.):

'There are migrants' organisations, acting in the interest of particular communities or intercultural groups [...], whose remit is clearly anti-racist. Trade unions, centri sociali, advocacy organisations and ARCI are committed to anti-racism. In the promotion of anti-racism, these types of organisation often call upon a representative of any one of the former groups to relate their experiences of racism, to discuss the role of their organisation or to assist in the planning of a demonstration. It is in this sense that racism is externalised, as a problem facing an 'other' – straniero, extracomunitario – who, when she leaves the anti-racist rally, takes racism away with her' (Lentin 2004: 169).

This can be exemplified in the case of the Roma in Rome. There are the 'gadjo' ('Italian') organisations that run a pro Roma agenda and the Roma associations that try to establish themselves with various agendas (some of the goals are: inclusion of Romni, art and culture, theatre, social promotion of the Roma and Sinti population). There are four Roma associations: Romni Onlus, Roma Onlus, Unirsi, Phrale Europa and Theatre Rom. One of these associations is run by a Romni and consists only and explicitly of Romni members. This association promotes women's rights and tries to involve the women from the camps. The other associations are a bit bigger, but far from being as big (in terms of importance and number of members) as the gadjo associations. Some also include gadjo members, while others explicitly exclude gadjos. However, there are no important mixed associations, and this has prompted several complaints by Roma activists. Their involvement in the big associations is mainly related to their training as 'cultural mediators' for the schooling service or as 'experts' serving the Roma in associations, political parties and the like. The role of these mediating agents will be illustrated later on in the report.

Closeness to the political left hampered, for example, a big mobilisation against the establishment of the 'villages of solidarity' (equipped 'nomad camps'⁹ in peripheral areas) and the beginning of evictions during the city's centre-left administration, leading instead to collaboration between the associations in the management of the camps, and the schooling service for children, which began in the mid-90s.

Another problem of the Italian anti-racist movement is that concerns with immigration issues were initially a big success, but led to a crisis once the laws on immigration were achieved in 1998 (Lentin 2004:174). Besides, the anti-racist movement has a highly theoretical and generalised approach (including a critique of

⁹ The chapter 'The Nomad Camp' offers an overview of the different labels and definitions of those camps.

globalisation and neo-imperialism) that produces difficulties in establishing innovative and coherent responses to the right-wing government on anti-racist policies (ibid.).

The splintered movement consisting of 'white Italian' associations on the one hand, immigrant associations on the other, and loose organisations, pushes anti-racists towards collaboration with supra-national associations like amnesty international or ENAR, instead of forming a 'cohesive national movement with adequate strategies for the campaign against the increasing institutionalisation of racism' (Lentin 2004: 174). This development is criticised by several Roma activists in Rome, who lament the way the different associations pursue their rivalries instead of organising a common demonstration, for example. The splintered anti-racist and pro Roma movement has created a competitive situation amongst the associations, which ultimately has not much helped the Roma cause (overcoming the camps, occupation, schooling and health care).

What is at stake is not a failure to denounce racism against the Roma – on the contrary, the EU and other supra-national institutions (OSCE, FRA) have shown great concern for the situation of the Roma, and established programmes and initiatives (e.g. the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020)¹⁰, and denounce the exclusion and marginalisation of Roma¹¹. However, when it comes to inclusion in the labour market, housing and schooling, only little seems to have changed. The circumstances the Roma live in can indeed be described as an emergency, as the Italian government did, but in our opinion as a humanitarian emergency, at least as far as the Roma in Rome are concerned. Basic needs are often not met (clean water, electricity, access to public services etc.), the legal status of many inhabitants is unclear, health conditions are serious, education and employment rates are very low, so that any attempt to solve the situation has to start with alleviating these.

As shown above, what is missing is a more comprehensive understanding of anti-racist policy that does not restrict racism to immigrants. It is the lack of such policies, the failure to consider racism as part of Italy's historical legacy and as a structural phenomenon that influences institutions, public bodies and civil society associations, that continues to make it difficult to tackle effectively the multiple injustices Roma face today.

¹⁰ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/122100.pdf

¹¹ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR); OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) (2008): Assessment of the Human Rights Situation of Roma and Sinti in Italy. Report of a fact-finding mission to Milan, Naples and Rome on 20-26 July 2008; European Parliament: Motion for a resolution on the census of the Roma on the basis of ethnicity in Italy <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B6-2008-0348&language=EN>; FRA: Violent attacks against Roma in the Ponticelli district of Naples http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Incid-Report-Italy-08_en.pdf

2. The nomad camp

'You know, Rome has never been a humble city. So, we too want to have our own favelas'¹²

Italy has been nominated 'Campland' (ERRC 2000), the land of the 'camps'. It has for Western Europe a unique way of 'managing' the Roma. The 'nomad camps' were created in the 1980s as a consequence of so-called pro Roma laws, which were issued in various Italian regions (Piasere 2006; Sigona 2005). Before those regional laws, back in 1973, a Home Office circular had already expressed its concerns about the ban on stopping Roma from entering cities (Daniele 2005: 128). Local administrations then slowly allowed the Roma to stop in their cities and recognised their right to do so (ibid.). In 1984 the Italian Region of Veneto was the first to approve legislation for the protection and defence of Roma culture (ibid.:130). Other regions followed. Initially and partially these laws were ('well') intended as a means of preserving 'gypsy culture', but simultaneously they forced the Roma to live the images and phantasies the Italian non-Rom had of them. For instance, the Roma originating from former Yugoslavia never lived in a *kampina*¹³ in a camp, but in houses. They were (mostly) fully integrated¹⁴ in urban life and worked in manufacturing industries in the Yugoslavian Federation. The objectives of these laws were to manage the 'right to stop' and offer these communities various socio-economic services, and ultimately to establish a system of control over the Roma communities.

The sites for the camps are usually located on the periphery, in industrial areas, with poor access to essential utilities. These places are particularly often the target for violent racist attacks and, as will be shown later, of vigorous eviction campaigns by the authorities. The camps are nicknamed 'fogne a cielo aperto'/'sewers under open sky', where a connection is constantly redrawn between the Roma and dirt, disgust and disease.

'[...] while in the places where the Roma had settled, obviously always near fountains or trees, because you need some fresh places and the possibility to peg up washing, an area to breathe fundamentally; there the evictions were justified by saying the public green spaces and natural reserves had to be preserved, so, if they had accidentally settled in an area considered to be of natural interest – and in Rome everything is of natural, monumental or archaeological interest, you can't make a mistake, it's the eternal city – so, and if some magistrate discovered this, an eviction began, because the settlement caused a third-, fourth-grade pollution since human excrements are not easily decomposable. The interesting thing is that in the last ten years there has been the dismantlement of the Muratella camp, it was a historical settlement of Khorakané Romà, and this camp has been

¹² Radio journalist and activist.

¹³ 'Kampina' is the term in Romanes used by the Roma in Rome for a camper van.

¹⁴ In the Eastern bloc, Roma were forced to be sedentary. They were given houses and worked mostly in factories. In former Yugoslavia they were better integrated than in other countries of the Eastern bloc and a Roma élite established itself.

dismantled, after a very long time it has been dismantled, and next to this camp they built a kennel, so, if the motivation for the eviction is a motivation in the context of human pollution, the kennel, exactly like the camp, provokes third-grade pollution, an impact which cannot be converted, consequently it is not intelligible why the agency who dismantled the camp did not evict the dogs. On the contrary, they gave the dogs adequate accommodation, in containers. Them too.' (Radio journalist and activist)

Bidonvilles, consisting of self-made shacks or under the arches of the Roman aqueducts, have been a hallmark ever since of the urban space of the city of Rome. Those shantytowns were the first refuge and housing option for people who were displaced from the city centre of Rome, after World War II, but also for people migrating from impoverished southern Italy to the capital, as well as for the Sinti and Roma (mainly the Rom abruzzesi and the Napulengre Rom).

However, the historical bidonvilles of the after-war period disappeared and have been replaced by shantytowns, or more accurately 'hyperghettoes' inhabited mostly by Roma and some immigrants (Rossi 2010: 2). Those dwellings were not built spontaneously but were and still are imposed by the authorities. Their existence can therefore be considered as a social construction of the ghetto (ibid.).

Italian anthropologist Leonardo Piasere (2006) offers a brief history of the emergence of the first 'nomad camps'. In the 1970s (but also in the previous decades), in some cities of northern Italy, gadje (non-Roma) activists reclaimed unconditional stay for the 'zingari', the 'gypsies', as a consequence of the municipalities forbidding them to stop in certain towns or evicting them as soon as they did stop, which made the creation of stable commercial activities, or regular school attendance, impossible for the Roma.

However, these requests were unequivocally linked to an imagination of the 'gypsies' as people passing by like migratory birds, being simply 'nomads'. The first camps were established mainly on the margins of the cities, in areas that were difficult or temporarily not suitable for use, or in areas, which were temporarily not available for recovery as building land, but still on land which was in some ways designated as 'public green space'. Those settlements were 'free' settlements without any fences and guards, and life inside them was completely self-governed. As Piasere continues, these camps were conceived by the authorities as some sort of 'ethnic camping sites'. These settlements soon became the site of encounters and conflicts with the public authorities and the local population, which were entirely based on persistent misunderstandings.

The imagination of the 'gypsy' as a 'nomad', who comes, stays for a few days or weeks, then continues on his journey, basically led to the establishment of the 'camping sites', highly artificial structures in the end, as Piasere stresses. The power structure did not allow any negotiations with people who were considered 'beyond

interpellation'. The story of the camps continues following these patterns, with a constant exotisation of the 'gypsies' that eventually led to the ghetto/shantytown situation Italy's major cities are now witnessing and maintaining¹⁵. The 'nomad camps' are perceived as dangerous sites, where criminality, prostitution, drug trafficking and other 'deviant' behaviours accumulate. The national concern with public security (Associazione 21 Luglio 2010) soon meant that 'gypsies' were talked about in the context of deviance, security, and 'emergency', which in turn provoked many more or less efficacious regulations for the 'management' of the camps.

In 1986 the region of Latium adopted its 'pro-Roma laws' for the preservation of Roma culture and identity and to facilitate access to social services and health care¹⁶. The law provided also that the camps should have sanitary facilities as well as running water, and that they should be installed in areas easily accessible to public services and avoid the marginalisation of 'nomad communities'. However, many of those camps lacked and still lack basic sanitary provision, running water, electricity and access to public services.

The first direct interventions in Rome's camps can be traced back to the late 1980s, when the Romani communities from the Italian region of Abruzzo and from Naples were relocated from their camps into social housing units (Aleotti et al. 2009). With regard to other Romani communities, the city council decided, due to alleged troubles in the 'campi sosta'/'parking areas', to intervene in the camps, restoring them and furnishing a minimum of basic services. When it was considered necessary, these communities were displaced, as happened in 1989, 1990 and 1991 (Aleotti et al. 2009). The situation in the camps back then was already defined as the 'emergenza Rom'/'Roma emergency'. In those years, before Francesco Rutelli was elected mayor (1993-2001), plans to dismantle the little shantytowns were communicated, even if informally, but they were communicated, so that the Roma had the opportunity to organise themselves, search for other accommodation and move to other places¹⁷.

The internal management of the camps was still entrusted to their inhabitants. But the constant influx of new arrivals from Romani groups from different countries caused tensions and conflicts. Therefore the city council decided to intervene, and the first census of Romani people was produced in 1995 in order to 'understand the dimension, distribution and typology of the Romani settlements on the city territory' (Aleotti et al. 2009). 5,467 Roma, distributed over 50 settlements and coming mainly (90%) from

¹⁵ Piasere underlines that the 'ethnic camping' solution was conceived as the place for local Romani people. Things were aggravated when Romani people from former Yugoslavia arrived, of whom 99% has never lived in a caravan.

¹⁶ Regione Lazio: Norme a favore dei Rom, 1986, Art. 1.

¹⁷ Radio journalist and activist

former Yugoslavia, were counted. The biggest camp back then was Casilino 700, which at the time of the census in 1995 numbered 960 inhabitants (at the time of its dismantling in 2000 it had about 1,600–1,800 inhabitants). After the census a new regulation provided that anyone who intended to stop ('legally') in a camp had to present a letter of confirmation from school for their children of school age (ibid.).

Regulation number 80 (Ordinanza n. 80) of January 1996 provided for the restoration and equipment of the camps according to the rules of hygiene: in the new authorised camps people were given containers with sanitary facilities, hot water and space for activities like playgrounds for the children¹⁸. This was considered to be an improvement, and it was still the inhabitants who ran their camps. Nonetheless, the municipality entrusted Opera Nomadi (founded , the biggest and the first NGO in Italy dealing with Roma people in camps, with the schooling service. Opera Nomadi was for many years the voice of the Roma and very active in trying to integrate Roma communities into the Italian mainstream society. The schooling service was considered to be a fundamental part of it (Rossi 2010: 228). However, the management of the camps until then consisted foremost in providing these schooling services.

A third phase of dealing with the Roma communities in the camps was initiated in 2001 after another 'emergency' when 500 Romanian Roma squatted in an abandoned factory in a neighbourhood now undergoing a strong gentrification process. After the eviction of the squatters, the city council decided to equip and 'authorise' another 22 camps, of which 7 became 'villages of solidarity', in which the management was entrusted to associations, surveillance services were installed and other 'social services' were provided.

'The 'solidarity villages' are an invention of the Veltroni administration, when the City Council decided that Rome had to be a welcoming city and the first thing they did then, was to change the names of the 'nomad camps' into 'villages of solidarity'. Besides, the solidarity consisted also in the displacement of people from their 'nomad camps' into these villages far away from the inner city. The centre-left administration of Mayor Veltroni decreed more evictions than his predecessor, also centre-left, Rutelli.' (Radio journalist and activist)

¹⁸ There are various typologies and definitions of the 'nomad camps'

1.) 'villaggio e/o insediamento abitativo attrezzato' / 'equipped village and/or settlement': which has prefabricated housing units and/or containers providing the inhabitants of these units with basic services inside the containers, such as electricity, sewerage system and drinking water

2.) 'villaggio e/o insediamento semi attrezzato' / 'semi-equipped village and/or settlement': in which the basic services are to be shared by all the inhabitants (lavatory blocs, access to public water and electricity)

3.) 'villaggio e/o insediamento non attrezzato' / 'unequipped village and/or settlement': with chemical toilets, drinking water from public fountains, centralised electricity.

4.) 'case' / 'houses': of bricks with basic services in the inside (electricity, bathrooms and water)

5.) 'baracche' / 'shacks': housing units not of masonry, but built spontaneously with various materials, without hygienic services and electricity.

(Comune di Roma, Dipartimento XI, Politiche Educative e Scolastiche: Capitolato special di appalto per l'affidamento del servizio di scolarizzazione dei bambini e adolescent rom per il triennio scolastico 2008/2011)

This has to be seen as a crucial change in the 'nomad camp' system, because until then the camps were altogether self-managed. It also illustrates the 'obsession' with educating and civilising the Roma.

The main idea of these newly equipped camps was to create transitory solutions and to facilitate leaving the camps and find proper housing solutions (Aleotti et al. 2009). This goal was partly achieved in the 'villages of solidarity', but failed in the older settlements (ibid.:48) and also in the 'spontaneous settlements', which were located nearer to the city centre, under bridges and on riverbanks of the Tiber and in other free spaces.

However, as an interviewee told us, the solidarity consisted in equipping those camps, keeping the Roma marginalised and transferring their management to various associations¹⁹. In the early years of the new millennium, other anti-racist NGOs (ARCI, Ermes Capodarco, CDS) entered the camps and replaced Opera Nomadi to a great extent in the schooling projects, winning all the municipality bids (Rossi 2010: 228). The tasks of the associations included an advice service ('Ufficio di orientamento') for employment, education and sanitary services. However, they were mainly concerned with schooling services: picking the children up and taking them to school and back, mediating between the school and the parents and finally organising the Summer Holiday Resort project funded by the municipality.

The four big associations held a monopoly over work in the camps, favoured by different factors²⁰, among others the fact that the existing bids were often designed to favour the existing associations, so that new ones could never compete (Rossi 2010: 220). This situation reflects a sad Italian habit where personal interests and favours prevail:

'Besides, as often happens in Italy, these divisions reflect political allotments and interests. The strong support given to the cooperative system from political parties and trade unions is motivated by direct, strong economic and lobbying interests. The prizes at stake cannot certainly be ignored because they include the administration of entire sectors of social welfare, the division of the funds disbursed through public bids and, of course, the management of clientele and patronage relations, a very important resource in Italy, especially in election times' (ibid.).

¹⁹ Rom, activist and cultural mediator 1

²⁰ Another important factor is, as Rossi explains, the policy of the associations to keep the costs for the projects low. This is possibly due to their particular organisational status. They are organised as non-profit social cooperatives, and enjoy economic benefits from the State; besides, if they take on 30% of persons falling into a 'vulnerable' category (disabled, offenders and the like), associations can set up a 'socially integrated cooperative', which brings more benefits. Finally, the associations tend to offer a certain form of contracts to their employees. The latter are associates, which means that normal workers entitlements to pensions, sick leave etc., do not apply to them. This is a form of heavy deregulation, which has turned the social cooperative project – intended as a social solidarity experiment – 'today into one of the largest laboratories of precariousness' (Rossi 2010: 219). The workers in the associations have to deal with 'the non-applicability of trade union rules on dismissal, reduced and differentiated pension contributions, depending on the Province where the NGO is active, high flexibility on wages and hours, a predominance of contract work and high territorial fragmentation' (Martinelli 2004: 2 in: ibid.). 'In this way the NGO's can keep costs down, thus increasing the chances of winning public agency bids.' (ibid.).

The fourth phase in the management of the Roma in the camps began in 2011 in the context of the so-called Nomad Plan (see below), when the city council decided to transfer the management of the authorised camps to the Italian Red Cross. Nonetheless, the Red Cross contracts members of the associations mentioned above or the associations themselves to run the schooling services, itself providing all the other services. The Red Cross also encourages Roma associations within the camps to propose their own projects, which would be laudable if not for the fact that most people have poor writing skills, that they lack Internet services and proper information policies, and finally that many of the inhabitants of the camps have criminal records, which rules out any official collaboration with the Red Cross. Anyhow, the Red Cross does tend to offer projects for integration into the job market and to help people to leave the camps. As was shown above, these objectives continue to be the goals for the integration of the Roma and Sinti communities in Italy and in Rome. However, the entrance of the Red Cross into the authorised camps constitutes a further step towards a more rigorous camp regime in dealing with the Roma, reflecting the management of the (external) 'illegal' immigrants and their detention in the so-called CIE ('Centro Identificazione e Espulsione'/'Centre for Identification and Expulsion').

Living in a camp stigmatises the inhabitants, as if they were defective or social misfits. His or her membership of society is wrong – the 'nomad camp' is (still) the most accessible site in the urban space where those who are non-belonging to society are exhibited (prison and detention centres follow, but are less, if at all, accessible).

'Nomad camps' [...] are areas par excellence where residents' rights are suspended, where the discretion of those in power becomes the rule, where the normality of abuses and injustices is so blatant, widespread and deep-rooted that they almost become invisible in the eyes of the victims. Although they are accepted as part of their daily lives, nevertheless, as the testimonies we have included show, feelings of intolerability towards these injustices continue to live on in many people' (Sigona; Monasta 2006: 40).

3. The 'nomad emergency'

3.1. Legal framework: 'Nomad Emergency Decree'

On 21 May 2008 the president of the Council of Ministers, Minister Silvio Berlusconi, proclaimed a one-year emergency decree regarding 'the nomad communities' in the Italian regions of Campania, Latium and Lombardy²¹ as a consequence of attacks on some Roma settlements in the Ponticelli quarter (Naples) (Associazione 21 Luglio 2010: 4). The decree has since then been extended automatically in 2009 (including

²¹ The 'decree of the President of the Council of Ministers' (= 'DPCM') is entitled: *Dichiarazione dello stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio delle regioni Campania, Lazio e Lombardia*.

the Regions of Piedmont and Veneto) and 2010, and should have been extended again in 2011, but was stopped after the visit of the European Commissioner for Human Rights in May 2011.

For some years now, Italy has become a favourite destination for immigrants. In the last decades, significant numbers came from South-Eastern Europe, especially from the Western Balkans and Romania. Amongst the migrants from the Western Balkans are many Roma, many of whom came to Italy as refugees or at least as fugitives of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia. Romanian Roma came in larger numbers after 2000 and in significant numbers after Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007 (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2008: 6). As already outlined, Roma and Sinti in general do not have a large presence in Italy. Nevertheless, they are perceived as being much more numerous, and continue to receive great public attention and highly negative Media coverage. According to the OSCE, this is due to their alleged 'high visibility', as they 'have come in larger groups', consisting of 'extended families' (ibid.). Furthermore, as the OSCE Report points out, as the Roma arrived they occupied lands or buildings 'illegally', settle(d) in informal/ 'illegal' camps, which are identified by the host society with Romanian Roma and which are highly sensationalised by Media and politicians. As shown above, these dwellings/ shantytowns have existed ever since and have been tolerated by the local authorities to some degree²², but as the OSCE points out, 'in the case of Romanian Roma, authorities often resorted to deportations prior to Romania's accession to the EU in 2007' (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2008: 6 – 7).

The OSCE Report mentions the 'high visibility' of the Roma due to their 'lifestyle', which is a problematic remark and reflects concern with the 'problematic' behaviour of 'the other'. The Roma are not more visible than other minority groups; on the contrary, under the new regulations they are pushed out of the cities in order not to be seen any more at all. Additionally, and as the report also says, the presumed high visibility is also a consequence of 'inflammatory' discourses highlighted by Media and politicians who

²² This is particularly striking in the case of the informal settlement of Tor De Cenci on Rome's south-western periphery. The camp has been tolerated and equipped with containers by former administrations, but has no camp management; some of the people evicted from Casilino 700, Macedonian Roma, were displaced into this camp. The current administration under Mayor Alemanno considers this camp to be an 'illegal' one which should be dismantled. An informant working in the schooling project of one of the major associations told me that representatives of some families in this camp talked with the city administration, which offered to transfer them to the 'authorised camp' of La Barbuta, near Ciampino airport – a camp which, my informant told me, would burst if those people were brought there. Another factor which, according to my informant, is encouraging the Rome administration to dismantle the camp are promises made to the electorate in the neighbourhood where the camp is located.

attribute crimes to Roma, in turn fuelling hate speech and crimes against the Roma, as well as reviving old prejudices about 'gypsies' (ibid.: 7)²³.

The proclamation of the state of emergency is based on Law No. 225 of February 1992 on civil protection. This law grants the government the power to declare a state of emergency in the event of 'natural calamities, catastrophes or other events that, due to their extent and intensity, are to be tackled with extraordinary powers and means'²⁴. Additionally, the proclamation of the state of emergency falls within the 'security package', also known as the 'Bossi-Fini' law, that seeks 'to curb violent immigrant crime' (Costi 2010: 105).

The proclamation of the emergency status was due to the 'highly critical situation' caused by the 'numerous presence of irregular non-EU citizens and nomads who have settled in urban areas, and due to the precariousness of these settlements a situation of severe social alarm with consequences for public order and the security of the local population has been created' – a situation of such gravity that the authorities maintained it could no longer be handled under ordinary legislation (Decree of the Council of Ministers 2008 in: Associazione 21 Luglio 2010: 5) ²⁵.

The decree was followed on May 30th 2008 by three further ordinances introducing special and exceptional measures for the 'nomad settlements'. Furthermore, the ordinances proclaimed the prefects of Rome, Naples and Milan to be 'delegated commissioners', empowered to overcome the 'nomad emergency' by means of any intervention necessary. The ordinances issued by the Prime Minister grant(-ed) the delegated commissioners 'extraordinary powers to identify persons, including minors' (Resolution European Parliament 2008: Point G). The identification procedures could and should include fingerprinting procedures. Furthermore, the commissioners are empowered to expel individuals by virtue of an administrative or judicial measure. Finally the extraordinary powers allow the commissioners

'to derogate (albeit without prejudice to the rule of law and EU law) from a series of laws concerning a wide spectrum of issues affecting constitutional prerogatives (for instance the right to be informed when subject to an administrative procedure such as fingerprinting and

²³ A recent example of inflammatory discourse was the remark of Umberto Bossi, leader of the fascist Lega Nord party, during the municipal elections in Milan, when he encouraged the fear that Milan could become a 'gypsy town'/'zingaropoli' if the left-wing candidate was elected.

²⁴ '[...] calamità naturali, catastrofi o altri eventi che, per intensità ed estensione, debbono essere fronteggiati con mezzi e poteri straordinari.'

http://www.protezionecivile.it/cms/attach/editor/225_1992.pdf, 09.05.2011, and

cf. European Parliament: Motion for a resolution on the census of the Roma on the basis of ethnicity in Italy, point F

²⁵ «L'estrema criticità determinatasi» a causa della «presenza di numerosi cittadini extracomunitari irregolari e nomadi che si sono stabilmente insediati nelle aree urbane [e] considerato che detti insediamenti, a causa della loro estrema precarietà, hanno determinato una situazione di grave allarme sociale, con possibili gravi ripercussioni in termini di ordine pubblico e sicurezza per le popolazioni locali [...] che mettono in serio pericolo l'ordine e la sicurezza pubblica [...]». Sempre secondo il testo della dichiarazione «[...] la predetta situazione, che coinvolge vari livelli di governo territoriale, per intensità ed estensione, non è fronteggiabile con gli strumenti previsti dalla normativa ordinaria»

the requirement that persons be dangerous or suspect or that they refuse to identify themselves before undergoing identity screening involving photographing, fingerprinting or the gathering of anthropometric data' (ibid.).

Since there had been protests about the fingerprinting procedures for Roma, especially under-18s, the Italian government felt bound to make an announcement on this point, claiming that the state of emergency and the censuses performed under the decree were not based on ethnic origins, but carried out only where the 'nomad emergency' was considered to be at its most severe (Governo Berlusconi 2010: *Le Grandi emergenze*)²⁶. Furthermore,

'the censuses are needed for the identification of the nomads living in more than 700 illegal settlements and especially in order to give an identity to the children and free them from slavery. They are victims of the adults who force them to be delinquents: and in order to free the children, the first step is to identify them with certainty' (ibid.)²⁷.

In order to protect the children, the government authorised censuses, photographing and fingerprinting. Another communication justifies the ordinances by referring to the 'increasingly frequent sight of Roma children begging in the streets and the presence of unaccompanied Roma minors' (ibid.)²⁸.

Additionally, the civil protection ordinance includes measures for the support of under aged children and projects to promote their education, as well as measures for their integration into the job market. The information policy about the census and the fingerprinting procedures is not transparent: an official document maintains that fingerprints of under-18s were not taken, or were taken only in cases in which the under aged children were unattended, and that the fingerprinting procedure complied with the framework of European laws (Governo Berlusconi 2010: *Le Grandi emergenze*). By contrast, anti-racist activists, the European Parliament and the OSCE denounced not the censuses per se, but in particular the fingerprinting procedures for under aged children.

3.2. Reactions to the emergency decree and the consequent censuses

The European Union

'On September 4th 2008, the European Union confirmed that the modalities of the censuses were not discriminatory and are hence within the legal framework of the EU. At the end of

²⁶ <http://www.governoberlusconi.it/page.php?idf=450&ids=480>, accessed on 09 May 2011

²⁷ 'Da qui la necessità di identificare chi vive negli oltre 700 campi nomadi abusivi. Dare una identità certa ai bambini, vuol dire liberarli dalla schiavitù. Essi sono vittime degli adulti che li costringono a delinquere: per liberare i bambini il primo passo è quello di riuscire a identificarli con certezza' (own translation).

²⁸ Nonetheless, fingerprinting procedures for minors should be considered as the last resort to ensure the identity of minors over 14 years of age. Minors between 6 and 14 years should only have fingerprints taken until the issue of a residence permit or with the approval of the juvenile court. The same rule should be applied to minors under 6 years of age, but only if they seem to be in a status of abandonment or if they have been crime victims.

October 2008 the results of the census carried out in Rome, Milan and Naples were presented: 12,346 persons were identified living in 167 camps, of which only 43 are authorised and 124 illegal. 5,436 are minors with very low schooling rates' (Governo Berlusconi 2010: Le Grandi emergenze).²⁹

Prior to September 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in July 2008 about censuses with ethnic foundations and expressed its concerns about the claims in the administrative decrees and ordinances that the presence of Roma people in Italy constituted a serious social emergency with repercussions for public order and security which led to the declaration of a state of emergency (Resolution European Parliament, Point 8). Furthermore, the European Parliament was concerned by the fact that the prefects to whom authority had been delegated could take extraordinary measures, in derogation from civil protection laws. This, as the resolution continues, is not appropriate in the specific case. Finally, the European Parliament urged the Italian authorities to

'refrain from collecting fingerprints from Roma, including minors, as this would clearly constitute an act of discrimination based on race and ethnic origin forbidden by Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and furthermore an act of discrimination between EU citizens of Roma origin or nomads and other citizens, who are not required to undergo such procedures' (Resolution European Parliament 2008: Point 9).

The OSCE

The OSCE also sent a delegation in July 2008 to assess the human rights situation of Roma and Sinti in Italy. The report was presented in April 2009 and stated that

'[T]he delegation recognizes the need for data collection and to monitor the situation as it develops regarding Roma and Sinti in the mentioned regions and municipalities. The delegation therefore welcomed the guidelines of 17 July 2008, which exclude the collection of some personal data, such as data concerning religion or ethnicity. A clear specification of all the conditions for fingerprinting, especially of minors, was also considered a positive step. However, on the whole, the delegation considers the measures adopted by the government, starting with the declaration of a state of emergency, disproportionate in relation to the actual scale of the security threat related to irregular immigration and the situation the Roma and Sinti settlements. Moreover, the delegation is concerned that the measures taken, by in effect targeting one particular community, namely the Roma or Sinti (or 'nomads'), along with often alarmist and inflammatory reporting in the Media and statements by well-known and influential political figures, fuelled anti-Roma bias in society at large and contributed to the stigmatization of the Roma and Sinti community in Italy' (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2008: 7).

In spite of the resolution of the European Parliament and the findings of the OSCE commission, which both considered the measures taken to be disproportionate, the first step after the declaration of the state of emergency was a census in 2008 in the formal and informal settlements of Naples, Rome and Milan, carried out by police with help of the Red Cross in Naples and Rome. Between January and April 2009 there was a

²⁹ 'Il 4 settembre 2008 l'Unione Europea ha confermato che il censimento e le modalità con cui è stato realizzato, non sono discriminatorie e quindi sono in linea con le normative europee. A fine ottobre 2008, sono stati comunicati i dati del censimento effettuato a Roma, Milano e Napoli: sono state identificate 12.346 persone in 167 campi, dei quali soltanto 43 autorizzati e 124 abusivi. 5.436 sono minori, con un tasso di scolarizzazione molto basso.' (Own translation)

second census in the formal and informal settlements in Rome, carried out by military and police forces (Associazione 21 Luglio (2010): 5). This census led to forced house searches and forced evictions, camouflaged as measures for the protection of minors and the preservation of public order and security.

The Roma

Roma people we interviewed told us they fear the censuses, since many of them lack valid documents or residence permits. Even Roma and Sinti who have been living in Italy for decades still do not have valid documents or any other defined legal status (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2008: 8). This is especially relevant in the case of Roma from former Yugoslavia, since they are non-EU citizens.

'Their status is complicated by the fact that many of them have no documents proving their identity or place of origin, rendering them de facto stateless. Existence in a legal void has particularly negative consequences for Roma children. Even if they were born in Italy and have no real connections to the place of origin of their parents, many of them have no identity documents other than a birth certificate' (ibid.).

The difficulty for Roma people to obtain valid documents can also be considered as a structural anti-gypsyist practice:

'The problem of lacking of any documents, the problem of the sans-papiers, is also anticipated in anti-gypsyist policy. 'The method of excluding the Roma into an illegal status of being without documents seems to be a structural feature of antigypsyism' states Gernot Haupt. Deportations are a constant element in the history of governmental dealings with 'gypsies" (Haupt 2006: 175 in Scholz 2009: 37-38)³⁰.

The actions and measures taken by the Italian government and the various regions and municipalities in the context of the emergency decree have been described as disproportionate and exaggerated. Nevertheless the 'nomad emergency decree' is still in force, the forced evictions continue and the Roma people still live in precarious conditions.

In Italy the rhetoric on emergency and public security has been stepped up in recent years. The emergency discourse affects prison detainees, immigrants and Roma people. In the case of the Roma, the authorities have gone further, issuing laws to deal with the 'gypsy emergency' in the form of the decree of 2008 (comparing them to a natural disaster).

³⁰ 'Auch das Problem der *Papierlosigkeit*, der sans papiers, ist in der antiziganistischen Politik vorweggenommen. 'Die Methode der Ausgrenzung der Roma in die papierlose Illegalität scheint ein Strukturmerkmal des Antiziganismus zu sein', konstatiert Gernot Haupt. Abschiebungen sind ein ständig wiederkehrendes Element in der Geschichte des staatlichen Umgangs mit 'Zigeunern'. (Own Translation)

3.3 The 'Nomad Plan'

*'Nice, but I tell you something, there is no plan...'*³¹

*'Nomad plan? There has never been and there is no plan at all!'*³²

In the light of the discourse on public security and order, one has to read the ordinances and decrees contained in the 'Nomad Plan' adopted for the 'solution' of the 'nomad emergency' by the Rome municipality under right-wing mayor Gianni Alemanno as a tool for territorial governance and disciplining a specific section of the population living on this territory.

The implementation of the measures in the 'Nomad Plan' has been financed by the Home Office under its Minister, Roberto Maroni, who gave 60 million, of which Rome received 30 million. Along with regional and municipal funds, the 'Nomad Plan' initially received 34 million euros ('Bimbi rom, il dolore di Napolitano 'Servono alloggi sicuri e dignitosi''. 2011, February 7. La Repubblica). There is a call for tender for the construction and the management of the camps, for which the funds are needed. As the emergency status grants extraordinary powers to the authorities, they profit from the absence of any duty to account for expenses. In February 2011, Mayor Alemanno asked for another³² million euros to guarantee the implementation of the 'Nomad Plan', after four children burned to death in a shack in a so-called illegal settlement.

The plan contains various regulations and solutions for the alleged improvement of Roma living conditions. These provisions should guide them out of illegality, the authorities say, and support them in their successful integration into the Italian mainstream society, thanks to this 'plan full of great humanity towards the nomads' ('Amnesty: 'Un fallimento il Piano Nomadi'. Alemanno replica: 'Un rapport parziale''. 2010, March 10. La Repubblica)

The 'Nomad Plan' presented by Alemanno on July 31st 2009 stated that there were 80 'illegal' settlements, 14 'tolerated camps' and 7 'equipped villages', with a population of in toto 7,177 persons (Municipality of Rome (2009): Presentation of the 'Nomad Plan'). The 'Nomad Plan' aimed to set up 13 authorised settlements in the periphery of Roma for up to six thousand people³³, with renovation of the existing settlements and the construction of new ones. Furthermore, transitory structures³⁴ for 600 persons (400 fixed and 200 in a rotation system) would shelter families waiting for a transfer into one of the equipped villages. The dismantled areas would then be

³¹ Researcher and activist,1

³² Rom, activist and cultural mediator 1

³³ According to unofficial information about 25 thousand Romani people live on the territory of Rome.

³⁴ The structures and housing opportunities for Roma have, ever since, appeared to be temporary, but are turning out to be permanent.

'recovered' and given back to the population, with Rome's prefect then choosing new locations for the camps.

The plan provides also for the transfer of the inhabitants into 'authorised camps', a census of all Roma people living in those camps, and the issue of a document ('DAST: Documento di stazionamento temporaneo'/ 'document of temporary address'). The DAST authorises its owner to remain in the camp for two years. This document is also known by some activists as the 'tesserino etnico' (ethnic ID card) because the document shows that the owner lives in a camp and must therefore be a 'gypsy'. Nonetheless, the DAST documents that the owner has a 'regular' residence, which is indispensable both to obtain a residence permit (on humanitarian grounds in the case of Roma from former Yugoslavia) and to apply for Italian citizenship.

Furthermore, surveillance and 'socialisation' services are to be implemented in the authorised camps. The camps that have been visited are enclosed within fences and monitored by video cameras and a so-called 'H24', a 24-hour surveillance service controlling the camp entrance/exit.

People without permission to stay in one of the authorised camps are not guaranteed any other accommodation. The municipality offers monetary assistance for their repatriation or for accommodation for women and children in the 'C.A.R.A./ Centro di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo politico' at Castelnuovo di Porto, a centre for political asylum seekers. However, after nearly three years the situation has not improved: dismantling the big camps and the lack of adequate housing alternatives has led to an increase in spontaneous ('illegal') 'micro-camps', as there has been no construction of new 'equipped villages'. None of the Roma that have been spoken to accept the offer to go into the C.A.R.A. and so most of them remain, build themselves new shacks and create new spontaneous 'illegal' camps, waiting for the next eviction to come (ai Italy (2010): 2).

The forced evictions and dismantling envisaged in the plan violate elementary human rights in the view of some activists and associations. Furthermore, rather than solving the 'Roma problem', it has exacerbated the problem, since – according to the association Associazione 21 Luglio – the informal settlements have tripled since July 2009, now numbering 279.

As for recovering land, Mayor Alemanno promised, for example, to create a public park on the site of Casilino 900. However, so far the area is anything but a park. It is more like a wasteland.

'I suppose, since the new Metro line C passes where the camp stood, that the municipality has sold building land to private investors. You know, with the new Metro line you can easily reach the city centre, the area there is huge and the Metro entrance is in front of the former camp entrance. They will never make a park out of it. It's a gentrification process and the Roma are perfect scapegoats when politicians talk about improving, recovering and security

for certain urban areas, saying that they are criminals and everything else. Now the area of Casilino 900 is 'decent' and the municipality can go on with its real plans.' (Researcher and activist 2)

The displacements cause suffering and do not bring any efficient solution for the housing and general living conditions of Rome's Roma population. Every eviction is very expensive, not only in monetary terms: an eviction costs about 50 thousand euros, a large number of human resources are required and finally a surveillance service has to be installed to avoid the creation of new settlements in the area of the dismantled camp.

The 'Nomad Plan' allegedly encourages the 'integration' of the Romani people into the mainstream society. It is not at all clear what the municipality means by 'integration', as it seems contradictory to speak of integration on the one hand and yet to transfer the Roma into camps far away from the Roman city centre. Often these camps are scarcely provided with water, lack adequate sanitary provisions, and are located far away from any kind of service (supermarkets, schools, hospitals, bars and pubs, bus services and the like – this is particularly striking in the case of the 'Castel Romano' camp, where the municipality only recently provided the inhabitants with running water, and there is still no bus stop).

The limited presence of six thousand Roma people on the city territory was established after the completion of the census. Official documents say that a census began in 2008 and was continued in 2009 by military and police forces. The censuses eventually led to house searches and once more to evictions. The collection of personal data, including passport photos and fingerprints, was applied not only to stateless persons, but also to persons with some sort of identification document, and to Italian citizens as well. It is important to note that the institution competent to produce censuses, ISTAT (Italian National Institute for Statistics), has never been involved in a census of the Roma in Rome.

'They conduct a census once a year. Sometimes it is Caritas or some other Church-based or Catholic institution; sometimes it is some association, sometimes the municipality and sometimes the police. Everyone does as he likes. Nonetheless, why shouldn't fingerprints be taken? Everyone has to give its fingerprints, for example when you apply for your ID card or passport you also have to give your fingerprints. The problem is that they took fingerprints of minors, or at least wanted to take them.' (Rom activist and cultural mediator)

'Yes, fingerprints were taken in every settlement, 'illegal' and not, of minors, adults, newborns... with help of the Red Cross. Simultaneously they gave the people a health card for access to the Red Cross clinics.' (Radio journalist and activist)

The most important provisions of this plan relate, as already mentioned, to closing the big 'illegal' settlements, like Casilino 900, La Martora and Tor de Cenci, by June 2010, with Casilino 900 closing in February and La Martora in December 2010. The people evicted were successively transferred to other camps, a solution which at the moment

is not practicable any more, since all the equipped villages are overcrowded. Those people who were evicted from Casilino 900 and who trusted the promises that they would be given apartments now mostly live divided in shared accommodation.

'I think it is fundamental to dissociate the Roma problem from their ethnicity. You know, the housing situation affects many Italians as well. See, here in Rome even Italians are forced to live in shantytowns, they sleep in their cars and then go to work. They cannot afford the high rents. About 20 thousand people are threatened with eviction from their homes. So, a decent housing policy is lacking for all the poor, and not only for the Roma.' (ARCI member)

'There is no housing policy in this city. Everyone would like to have an apartment in popular housing schemes. But neither do Italians get apartments there. It's a big problem in this city, the lack of adequate housing policies' (Coordinator of a local authority job inclusion programme)

'And who would give me an apartment in the popular housing schemes? Yeah, when I went to apply for the subsidies for my children, as I only have a small income and have four children, they didn't give me anything, told me there are others with bigger problems. I live in a caravan, have 400€/month and they tell me there are others with bigger problems? We are judged too much, there is racism everywhere.' (Romni 1)

The closing of one of the biggest Roma camps in Europe, Casilino 900, was said to be necessary because the situation had become 'untenable'. Unlike the authorities, the Roma people we have spoken to feel sorry to have lost their homes at Casilino 900. The camp was, they told us, well integrated in the neighbourhood of Centocelle, a working-class quarter on the edge of Rome. The children went to school on their own or were taken by their parents, the women could easily go out and search the dustbins for recyclable materials or take the bus to the city centre to beg for alms.

'It's 36 years I've lived in Italy now. For ten years we moved back and forth, and then for 25 years I lived in Casilino. I had everything there. I had my 'baracca', 8 metres x 9 metres, with four rooms. I had my comfort there. Here I have nothing, we are too cramped here. When three people come for lunch or dinner, where should I put them? You see for yourself, it's impossible in this container. We are four people in here. I'm waiting for a fight to happen, we are from Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, we are not one family here. This container is too cold in winter and too hot in summer. We can't go on this way.' (Romni 2)

After being transferred to one of the equipped camps in the remote periphery, with poor bus connections, these women are deprived of their incomes and depend all the more on their husbands, sons and nephews.

The historic camps of Rome, like Casilino 900, mainly grew out of the rural-to-urban migration and lasted for more than 40 years. In the post-war era and even into the 1960s, the inhabitants were migrants from southern Italy, who later on were transferred to social housing apartments. The camps remained, their inhabitants changed. Activists speak of the camp as a ghetto, some 'only' of a slum.

'Unable to afford city housing, they [the Roma deported from France in 2010, SP.] settled in slums, which are considered illegal. Conditions there are inadequate and unsafe; there is poor drainage and poor electricity. Such high, concentrated levels of poverty along with police indifference to the protection of those living in slums create vacuums in which criminal gangs flourish. Consequently, slum dwellers are viewed as criminals by state security forces. State responses worldwide overwhelmingly involve mass forced evictions without due process of law' (Radu 2011: 20).

As already briefly outlined before, from May 2011 the management of the camps was transferred to the Red Cross. Initially the Red Cross was to provide all services, but then the plan changed and the Red Cross was authorised to call for tender for the management of the camps. The procedure functions as follows: the municipal administration assigns for now the management of five (Castel Romano, Salone, Candoni, Lombroso, Gordiani) of the seven (plus Camping River and Cesarina) authorised camps to the Red Cross and the Red Cross in turn assigns some services to members of associations which formerly worked in the camps. This way, and by excluding all the associations, the whole management of the camps is under state control.

The Red Cross calls for tender for specific projects and itself proposes projects for inclusion in the job market. These calls are now annual, while formerly they were for three years, as in the case of the schooling service, which was assigned from 2008 to 2011 to different associations working in a camp. It is still not clear how the schooling services will be organised from September 2011 on, but it is clear that the Red Cross will issue the call.

'It's huge chaos with the schooling service and the Red Cross now. I'm so fed up. We now have the project until December 2011. I don't know what will happen then. But you know, nothing changes. Every year the same procedure, and I think it's the people themselves who don't want change. And that's what makes me sad.' (Operator in one of the schooling projects)

Additionally the Red Cross will provide a mobile medical service for the camps, since most of the authorised camps are located far away from inhabited centres. As an interviewee told us, when this proposal was contested on the grounds that it would establish 'gypsy ghettos', members of the Red Cross answered that it was absolutely not intended as a means to create and maintain ghettos, but to help the people in the camps given the current situation. The camp is considered as a stopover before obtaining proper housing and opportunities to afford the rent, as the Red Cross and the municipality constantly underline. However, the 'campo' has become a pars pro toto for the criminality, deviance and poverty of the 'zingari'. All the interviewees we have spoken to affirm that living in the camp rules out the chance of finding a job and a house, and labels them all the more as dirty, infectious and criminal.

The actions of the Italian government and the different municipalities, such as the forced dismantlement of the camps, are against international and European laws and violate human rights. Amnesty International laments that the Roma people were never effectively consulted about the emergency status, the dismantling of their camps or the 'Nomad Plan' (ai Italy 2010). The forced evictions and the dismantling of the camps are

designed to discourage people from settling 'illegally', but they have the opposite effects.

In a recent interview that Associazione 21 Luglio conducted with Rome's prefect (and commissioner for the 'nomad emergency'), the vice-prefect and the author of the plan said that he was embittered, that the plan could not be concluded and that the two new camps have not been constructed.

It can be concluded, as my interviewees stated in polemical terms, that Rome does not have a proper, sincere plan for the Roma community, including programmes for inclusion into the job market.

4. Working as a 'nomad'

'A closer look reveals that it is not the inherent, ethnically or culturally driven inability to integrate or the notion of nomadic lifestyle that explains the current Roma situation, but complex developments in history that have trapped most Roma in poverty. This entrapment takes a life of its own. As Khan states, 'acknowledging that some groups are being left behind highlights the current impact of historical experiences of racism'. The poverty that most Roma experience today is explained by the complex history of ethnic discrimination and global political developments. Critical junctures in their history include enslavement, Nazi extermination attempts, the Soviet era, and the post-communist transition' (Radu 2011: 4)

The discourse on 'integration' of 'foreigners', immigrants and nomads' centres around the notion of security and 'urban decorum'. The 'gypsies' fall within the category of forms of life that may 'endanger' public security and order, which 'pollute' it, making it dirty and unpleasant to see, reifying century-old prejudices against Sinti and Roma.

The ordinances appointing the prefects of Rome, Naples and Milan as delegated commissioners with extraordinary powers also refer to activities for inclusion in the job market.

However, the employment situation of the Roma people is to a great extent very precarious. Several factors have resulted in poor integration into the job market and employment sector. The employment rates of Roma across the whole European Union are below average, underlining how discrimination and persecution of the Roma are a European problem. As shown above, the situation for the Roma changed significantly in the 1990s, not only in Italy. This was also due to the decline of the communist bloc after the fall of the Berlin wall and the subsequent triumph of the neoliberal market economy that came with a new geopolitical assessment of the European Union and its satellites (Sigona 2009: 54). These processes led to marginalisation and impoverishment of those unable to find stable employment and/or a regular placement, amongst them millions of Roma for whom chronic inoccupation and social exclusion are the rule (ibid.).

A Romanian Rom who is now spokesman for one of the authorised camps and a cultural mediator explained the situation as follows:

'In Romania I had a good job. I was a chemist and worked in a factory. My father always wanted me to have a good job, to study and work. I had a good life. We were in some ways protected, persecution of the Roma was forbidden, but yeah, there were nonetheless persecutions. The Securitate often came by night... Then, when Ceaucescu fell, things changed. We went away, to Germany, France, then Italy. I live now in a camp, in a caravan. I've never wanted to live in a caravan. I can't work as a chemist anymore. But I've done something, I'm a cultural mediator now and I earn some money.' (Rom, activist and cultural mediator 2)

The breakdown of the communist regime in Romania significantly changed the situation of many Roma. If before they were in some ways protected, after the transition the Roma were again pushed to the margins, and into further poverty, which obliged many to leave the country and try to settle in countries of Western Europe. Some of the Roma in the camps became cultural mediators, whose task was to mediate between institutions or schools and Roma in the camps. It is often the spokesman of the camp who then becomes a cultural mediator. The institutionalisation of the cultural mediator is part of an integration campaign – but it also risks highlighting the inability of the camp inhabitants to 'integrate' into society. Emphasis on the need for more cultural mediators also suggests that the problems of 'integration are a product of pre-existing differences (those of the immigrants)' and not so much problems imposed or constructed by institutional politics (Nosotras 2001: 54 in Lentin 2004: 176).

After the eviction of Casilino 900, some of the Roma were transferred to another authorised camp in the remote periphery. This camp is very badly connected to public transportation services, which complicates the situation especially for the women living in the camps. Sara, an elderly woman who lived most of her life at Casilino 900, explains the difficulties she encounters now at the new camp:

'Before we, I went to the market, every week, I sold things at the market. I went for searches in the dustbins, and then I sold the things. Before, with the lira, it was way better, with the euro it's a bit hard. If I was better, I'd go to work, but I can't go, it's too far away and there is no market here! I went to the markets there near Casilino and this way we could live well. Sometimes 50, 100 or 160 and it went well. Now here I do nothing, neither 50, nor 100, nor 160... 7 to 8 million I have lost here. Esma, my daughter, also helped me, and another daughter helped me; I have earned nothing here, not a lira. 3-4 millions I earned in Casilino in a year. Here we can eat nothing decent. There I went to the market, took euros and got something to eat. Now, sometimes I go with some of these relatives, to buy something to eat.

Here, if you can't walk, if you don't have a car, you can't move. I can't always ask you to take me with your car and bring me where I want to go, can I? In Casilino no one asked me where I was going. I went outside, I went to buy things to eat, I went where I wanted to. Now here, I have to ask lots of things. And many people knew me there. They gave me second-hand things, lots of second-hand things, and I went to clean some basements, the people asked for me, they knew me and gave me things. Here, nothing.' (Romni 2)

The provision made by Rome City Council in the context of the 'Nomad Plan' to transfer the Roma to authorised camps risks marginalising this already marginalised

community all the more, especially those who depend on public transportation services, the disabled, children and also women.

Various campaigns and associations have been created in Rome to try to facilitate the integration of the Romani people into the employment sector, although most of the associations are involved with the schooling project (bringing the children to school and back, setting up workshops in schools and organising summer camps), legal support and other activities for children and young people. Some activists complain about this focus on the schooling of Roma children,

'Have you ever seen a Roma child with glasses? The associations use the children as an alibi. You know, children provoke pity, and the associations know that. It's true, there are other realities, other categories, there are women, there are disabled people, there are elderly people, but they are invisible ... the associations have mostly done harm and haven't helped the Roma much. So do you understand me? You have now begun to see and to be aware of how the system here works and how big the interest is in supporting the Roma question.' (Rom, activist and cultural mediator 1)

However, few programmes exist to facilitate integration into the job market. As the coordinator of the communal job programme 'Programma Integra' told me, the whole situation is complex, due to different competences within the City Council. The Department for Social Policies and Health administers the camps and the transfer of the camps to the remote periphery, and it simultaneously promotes programmes for integration into the job market, like 'Programma Integra', 'Programma Retis' and 'La Fabbrica dei Mestieri'/'Job factory' – a scheme restricted to Roma youth.

'This I think is normal for a city like Rome, which is huge in its dimensions, but also huge in its complexity, and therefore it is difficult to have a single strategy for the city. Maybe I am repeating myself. This can be done for a small territory, not for a city like Rome [...] let's say, there is nonetheless an identifiable macro-strategy, which is the strategy of the Nomad Plan. A plan which foresees a government commissioner for the issue (...) the strategy is to close the irregular camps and to open only regular and equipped camps, with various qualitative criteria for the housing situation; so there is a macro-strategy, which is about resettlement and sure, there is macro-visibility, that is, visibility that comes easiest into view and the easiest to narrate, and then there are experiences like the one we had collaborating with the Ministry of Labour and collaborating with the regional council and the 'Programma Integra', which is the philosophy behind interventions of this area, hence the socio-occupational integration of vulnerable subjects. But I tell you, there is not just a project for Roma, there are interventions for all vulnerable groups. But, say, there was the only experience we had, a project which was called the 'Job factory', a project entirely dedicated to Romanian Roma and that began in 2007, so in a period when there was a problem with new arrivals; and there we had a very interesting experience with 20 young men from Salone and Candoni camp, where in the end these boys became professional installers for solar and photovoltaic power plants, 20 Roma.' (Coordinator of a municipal job inclusion programme)

The approach of this municipal programme, which is called 'Retis', is to abandon sectorial programmes for different vulnerable categories, and instead to run programmes for all these categories together. The 'Programma Retis' seems to be the most reliable attempt at serious job training, offering possibilities to become an electrician, plumber, construction worker or similar. Social services, the local districts

(City municipalities) and the job advice centres pass on information about these job inclusion schemes offered by the Department for Social Policies and Health.

The experimental job integration scheme 'Programma Retis' is a structural programme to promote social inclusion for those who live and experience marginalisation. The programme facilitates the establishment of networks between those who need to find jobs and those who identify opportunities. Furthermore it provides help and information about the employment sector and tries to set up innovative projects for vocational training and insertion into the job market. Besides, it targets the 'construction of social capital' among the individuals involved and giving them instruments for their empowerment.

The initiative explicitly refuses to make support sectorial, but tries to involve all vulnerable categories:

'The 'Programma Retis' is an initiative that was created following the philosophy of... and following a *modus operandi* which is not sectorial, because I'm really against this thing about launching sectorial programs, so that if you are a woman you have to do certain jobs, if you had a disability you had to do another job, and the same if you were an immigrant, you had this programme 'Integra'; well, but now we try to launch integrated projects, where in one class we have everyone, also the Italians, which is not always easy.' (Coordinator of a municipal job inclusion programme)

The programme is addressed to 'all citizens in a state of vulnerability, especially: the disabled, jobless adults, mothers with children; over-50s without work, ex-detainees, ethnic minorities, migrant workers, people affected by addictions.'³⁵ Vulnerability is understood here in terms of access to the job market, which the programme sets out to improve. The definition of vulnerability is based on two parameters, a normative parameter that indicates categories and a parameter which defines vulnerability according to the EU directives.

'Then there a Roma with a VAT registration number and who earn 70thousand €/annum, and how do we define them as vulnerable? Everyone can evaluate as he/she likes, some saying they are vulnerable because they are Roma and belong to a minority culture. I see people that live very well, who are happy about belonging, they live their lives, sure, here we are talking about a few individuals, and we can't compare them to those who live in a, let's say, more critical situation, but it's always difficult to talk about categories; I have always fought for this, we cannot talk about the Roma. If you go into a camp, you find the good person as well as the delinquent, and often you won't identify him. So you don't have the parameters to define a person a priori, you know the family history, you have to understand, establish a 1:1 relationship, you have to do in-depth work. Services, projects can help, but they do it from prejudice, they use the category Roma, and this won't work. You really have to encounter the person and his/her needs. Before we made employment plans for organisations and associations, and not for the needs of individuals.' (Coordinator of a municipal job inclusion programme)

The priorities for the programme consist of providing orientation and working towards the social inclusion of people who fall under the scope of 'municipal ordinances', such

³⁵ <http://www.programmaretis.it/index.php/programma-retis>

as victims of trafficking and people covered by municipal schemes for social inclusion, such as the 'Nomad Plan'.

The 'Programma Retis' launched a trainee programme for waste disposal (collection, separation and recycling of bulky material) in collaboration with the municipal cleaning company AMA. The beneficiaries of this trainee programme were, amongst others, Roma from the authorised camps (Camping River, Gordiani, Candoni, Salone). The participants had lessons in the Italian language, workplace safety, repairing and maintaining materials, and after the course a six-month, grant-aided trainee programme at a recycling company.

For the participants, this project brought 'stable inclusion'. There were no 'Italian citizens' among them:

'It was difficult to involve Italians because it was a project targeted at waste disposal and recycling, so let's say that it was not really attractive for the Italian citizen, but there for example, there were under-18s, Afghans, Moroccans, Albanian and Roma taking part, and it was an interesting project because it took the participants into stable inclusion.' (Coordinator of a municipal job inclusion programme)

Even though the programme explicitly does not want to set up sectorial schemes, the waste disposal scheme aimed explicitly at inhabitants of the authorised camps and therefore (unwillingly) resorting to 'traditional' Roma occupations – occupations that many other associations urge to support.

However, the project's aim is to empower individuals, to help them create stable networks, learn how to act independently and 'teach' employers that 'one can work with people without thinking in categories and stereotypes'.

The Retis programme is an innovative municipal job inclusion scheme. Nonetheless, the associations criticise the job inclusion schemes launched in the context of the 'Nomad Plan', which are described as only vague, and not offering serious job opportunities but only courses and trainee programmes where participants can gain a few months of experience, but afterwards do not find stable employment³⁶. An adequate school qualification, which not every camp inhabitant possess (minimum eight years), is a requirement to participate in these job inclusion schemes. Another problem of these schemes is that there seems to be a communication gap, as many camp inhabitants do not receive information about these programmes.

Other activists lament that the Roma do not participate much in trying to overcome their situation, and that there is a kind of complicity about people working in the informal (and illegal) economy in the camps:

'You know what? I sometimes pass as fascist with my opinions. I am certainly not. I am a Rom, I've lived in a camp and I am sick of all this talk about employment. I ask myself why a 30-year-old male, strong and healthy, can't go to work on a construction site? Why does he

³⁶ Chairman Opera Nomadi.

have to beg? Ok, it's different for those who lack documents, but Romanians do have documents and now they are European citizens. And how is it possible for so many in the camps to have a Mercedes or BMW? Why do they work with cocaine or other drugs? Why do they sell their daughters? 70 thousand or 80 thousand euros if she's nice and an able pickpocket. Why? Because it's easy. It's easy to make money this way. I do know that there are people who get up early in the morning to go to work, but believe me, I know the camps of this city and I have long enough lived in one. You want to know why it is this way? It changed, after and during the war they should have treated the people who came as war refugees and not as 'zingari' and confined them to rubbish dumps.' (Rom, activist and cultural mediator 1)

In Romania and Bulgaria in 2000, nearly 80% of Roma had to live on less than 4 euros/day, in contrast to 37% of the rest of the population in Bulgaria and 30% of the population in Romania (Sigona 2005: 55). The Roma have lost the most from the transition out of communism. They were the first to lose their jobs and subsequently they were hindered from re-entering the job market due to their deficient qualifications and pervasive discrimination (Wolfensohn, Soros 2003).

To assess the employment situation of Roma from former Yugoslavia, it is important to bear in mind their legal status. Many of them are caught in a sort of legal void and are constantly threatened with detention or deportation. But since they lack documents they can neither leave nor be forced to leave (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights: 18). These people live with a dilemma, since their deportation is not possible but neither is their integration into the mainstream society: as they often lack valid documents they cannot take up legal employment, acquire regular housing or access public services. The procedure to obtain Italian citizenship is in many ways more complicated, since the applicant must first obtain a residence permit and demonstrate that he/she has been residing in Italy legally for 10 years (4 years for EU citizens). Residence permits are given only to those who can show a minimum level of income. In the case of the Roma, this procedure is a challenge, since they live in camps where they do not have legal residence (if the camps are 'illegal') (ibid.). Moreover, they do not have decent job opportunities in the camps and so they cannot apply for a residence permit and subsequently for Italian citizenship.

The associations have a role to play in the integration of Roma into the job market. They mainly mediate between the Roma and local/regional/national policymakers. Opera Nomadi in Rome focuses on the promotion of so-called traditional working professions:

'Our main objectives concern occupational integration, which is fundamental, since the Roma and Sinti have lost their economic self-sufficiency as a group, and this determines the collective group education of their children, and the lack of a common occupational basis ruins the unity of the group, slowly wiping out the endogamy that has been their major instrument and a force for their group cohesion; and the traditional professions have almost disappeared, and now what we're asking the government is to legalise as a second main activity the trade in handicrafts and second-hand goods and antiques, which is in fashion among the Italian middle-class, and these second-hand markets are only organised by the

Roma, not so much by the Sinti, and yes, this is what we'd like to do.' (Chairman of Opera Nomadi)

The insistence on 'traditional' professions can be seen as an essentialising policy promoted by Opera Nomadi, linked to a homogenising, folkloristic perception of the Roma. Other associations and organisations have also tried to establish a market where the Roma can sell their goods and have a place to store them. Many Roma recycle materials they find in dustbins and scrap metal, but this source of income is only possible in urban areas. These attempts, however, risk perpetuating the marginalisation of the Roma and their permanent poverty. Other organisations, such as the trade union UIL and the association 'Pandora's vase', challenge this suggestion and try to promote other activities and vocational training which may be more appropriate for post-industrial society.

'As for the occupational situation, we tried to guide the associations working with the Roma and Sinti not to repeat the blunder of patching up only the traditional occupations of these young people. We think that the parents should have the option of letting their children be trained in a way that enables them to compete with the Italians, in every kind of job.

Their tendency is to become musicians, to sort and recycle waste, to have or manage the merry-go-rounds or little handicrafts activities. These are all worthy and credible activities, also nice and characteristic, but difficult to continue as a business; this is also due to the high taxes, and the increasingly frequent confiscation of their equipment.

Furthermore these activities lead to, how to say, to a self-ghettoisation, in the sense that they carry with them negative labels which are difficult to remove. Also the high rate of deviance doesn't favour the process of removing those labels.

Our idea was to use the funds, also European funds, for specific job training. After these courses, people should be supported as they integrate into the job market. Therefore it would be really helpful to have preferential channels for practical integration.' (UIL member)

For women, a dressmakers' workshop was set up, where some women from a few camps found a job. This idea has been adopted by various other associations, which would like to establish some more. Other associations suggested projects to the Red Cross for girls to learn hairdressing or other gendered occupations.

Anyhow, the vast majority of the women in the camps go out on 'searches' (in the dustbins), and begging on the streets.

'When I came here, I directly went to the camp in western Rome, which doesn't exist anymore. I then sat on the big street nearby and begged. Then one day a woman asked me, if I'd like to come and clean at her house. I was afraid she wanted to steal my little daughter. But I began to clean there. Then my camp was closed and we had to go to this authorised camp. One day a woman came and told us that three places were available in the dressmaking workshop and I applied for it. Now it's three years I've been working there. So I clean and I work in the dressmaking workshop. I don't go to beg anymore.' (Romni 1)

'As a grown up I'd like to become pastry cook. But I have to go to school and it's so far away. We're isolated here. There's only the superhighway. Who will take me to the school?' (Romni 3)

Some activists harshly criticise the inhabitants of the camps, saying that they are too comfortable with 'excessive' state aid, that they lapse into self-pity but may need to 'stand up' and claim their rights. These people also claim that the Roma do not respect their duties and do not wish to integrate into the Italian mainstream society.

'I'm fed up, I have been an activist for the Roma cause for 20 years now. Nothing has changed, people don't want to change.' (Researcher and activist 1)

'Why should I continue to fight for their rights? Has anyone asked me how I pay my bills? I say, let's organise a demonstration, they ask me how much can you pay us? Can you take us to the centre and back? See? And then they complain and talk about discrimination and racism.' (Rom, activist and cultural mediator 1)

'I say, let's go, let's have a demonstration, and they answer, 'yeah, good, but if I go I will lose my day. Can you pay us something?' So, I ask myself, why should I continue to fight for them? What for?' (Romni, activist)

'We tried to organise some demonstration, but they told me 'well, we would come if you organise us a bus for getting there' or stuff like 'well, we'll come if you pay us the petrol for getting there'. So I ask myself, why should we organise something, if there is no interest?' (ARCI member)

But these activists also condemn the persistent segregation of the Roma, their confinement into the camps and the lack of interest from the authorities in providing 'real' solutions to stop the discrimination and segregation of the Roma people:

'The delegation notes with concern that the majority of adults living in the settlements do not hold legal employment. Some have short-term jobs, but most of the time without legal contracts. For those who hold residence permits, the difficulty in obtaining jobs is related also to the fact that their documents indicate they live in 'nomad camps', or are from areas that are notorious as centres for migrants. In contrast, however, the delegation also notes some positive examples, such as in the Via Candoni camp in Rome, 80 per cent of whose Romanian Roma are working legally. In the view of the delegation, the situation in this particular camp proves that Roma and Sinti can access legal employment and this should be facilitated by authorities and used as a positive practice.' (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights: 18).

It is important to note that all the interviewees refer to the individual responsibility of those who suffer from racism and their weak will to integrate into the majority. Hence, racism is considered to be a reaction to problematic behaviour by the minority group, where the members of these groups are blamed for their failure to integrate, for being the target of racism and any other discriminatory behaviour. 'Blaming the marginalised' is based on the assumption that 'the marginalised position of some racial group is tied to a set of damaging (or damaged) cultural values; to a culture of racially specified poverty; to a poverty of the racial culture in question; to cultural deprivation; or to an unrealistic, outmoded, and self-defeating ideology' (Goldberg 1993: 209). Blaming the marginalised also makes it possible to consider racism as a merely individual attitude, based on prejudices and stereotypes and the fruit of some right-wing extremist ideas or ignorance.

'The majority of the Roma immigrants from the 60s onwards until today live in houses. So, it's wrong to say that Italy is a xenophobic country. I don't like this word, racism. It's wrong to say that Italy is a xenophobic country. The majority of the Roma live in houses, we think that there have been at most 10 episodes of xenophobia and racism in the last few years.' (Chairman Opera Nomadi)

'No, I think talking about racism would be too hard. There is no racism here in Italy. The Rome Municipality has done very much for the Roma, also for example with the Programma Retis, where 250 young Roma had the chance to find an occupation.' (Rom, representative of the Roma at the City Council)

Conclusions

This report has analysed discrimination in the employment sector towards the Roma population living in so-called nomad camps in Rome, along with local policy responses and (anti-) racist activism.

Racism against Roma is present in today's European societies and it generates both measures intended for the benefit of Roma and numerous effects which have been criticised by various institutions as discriminatory. As the report has shown, the racist discrimination the Roma face not only hinders them, but also, in complex ways, influences their efforts to achieve empowerment and emancipation. The situation of the 'nomads' in Rome is characterised by overlapping discriminations in various key life spheres, such as employment and education, and it is aggravated and conditioned by the housing situation, i.e. the 'nomad camp'. The 'nomad camp' is today in many ways emblematic for the management of the Roma in Italy. Intentionally designed as a means of preserving 'gypsy culture', these camps evolved into mechanisms of tight control as soon as they were institutionalised. If initially the 'nomad camp' resembled a slum of shacks and camper vans on a self-organised site, it has now evolved into a lager-camp. These lager-camps are surrounded by fences, monitored by video cameras, the entrance is controlled by a 24-hour private police force, and non-residents have to leave their ID at the entrance or even request an authorisation at the Fifth Department of Rome City Council. Eventually, the latter decided to let the Italian Red Cross manage the camps, which are now completely under state control.

This 'Italian' way of treating, identifying and controlling the Roma in the 'nomad camp' is gradually resembling more and more the modalities of treating so-called illegal immigrants in the CIE, the Italian detention and expulsion centres. The modalities of managing this external 'nomadism' is mirrored in the modalities for managing the internal 'nomadism' associated with the Roma.

This can be exemplified in the provisions made by the Italian government and the City Council of Rome. These measures are all the more crucial to understanding the Roma 'problem', since they mirror the 'obsession' (Bravi, Sigona 2006) with civilisation, education and control of the Roma population.

The provisions taken by the Italian government and the Rome City Council reflect this transition, with the issue of the emergency decree (2008) and the 'Nomad Plan' in Rome (2009). The emergency decree was issued after racist attacks on Roma in the Ponticelli district of Naples and due to the 'highly critical situation' the 'numerous presence of nomads' was causing. In this context, the prefects of Rome, Milan and Naples were named delegated commissioners to overcome the 'Nomad emergency' and were granted 'extraordinary powers', including identification measures,

fingerprinting procedures (also for minors), the production of censuses, derogation from certain laws (such as the right to be informed in the event of administrative measures such as fingerprinting procedures), and taking decisions about the expulsion of individuals.

The 'Nomad Plan' was established one year after the proclamation of the state of emergency and consisted mainly of dismantling so-called illegal settlements, such as the big Camp of Casilino 900 in 2010. The plan provided for measures such as the establishment of authorised camps only and the dismantling of all illegal ones. Contrary to the announcements of the City Council, no new camps have been built so far, but the displaced persons have been transferred in other existing 'authorised camps' that are mainly overcrowded. These camps are characterised by 24-hour surveillance by private police services, surrounded by fences which checks on entrance and exit and the duty to identify oneself when entering. Furthermore, 'socialisation services' are provided.

Our case study on the employment situation for Roma in the authorised 'nomad camps' – based on interviews with Roma, Roma associations, non-Roma anti-racist associations, activists and institutional representatives – has shown that the institutional responses are contradictory. The City Council, on the one hand, provides for the establishment of 'authorised camps' in the remote periphery, which leads to difficulties over access to various public services, school and the workplace, and which segregates the Roma even more. On the other side, innovative job inclusion schemes are launched. However, the inclusionary responses from the City Council weigh less than the segregating ones. The anti-racist activist scene tries to oppose the institutional measures, but has shown itself unable to fully disentangle itself, in its proposed solutions, from the fundamental categories underlying the imaginary of Roma 'nomads' in Italy. Effective solutions are also hindered by internal differences between the various pro Roma and anti-racist groupings.

We have seen how the Roma are constructed as 'deviant', 'criminal', poorly educated, and reluctant to work or to integrate into the mainstream society. This construction of the Roma constitutes another barrier to their access to the employment sector and reflects the conviction that their low level of integration is a result of their own shortcomings and failures. In our interviews, racism was firstly denied by many interviewees and/or described as an individual problem fuelled by a lack of tolerance towards 'other cultures' and due to great ignorance. 'Blaming the marginalised' (Goldberg 1993) then emerged as a usual practice. This meant that the habits and culture of the 'gypsies' could be highlighted as 'problematic', and hence provided explanations for their failed integration.

The institutions, the activists, and the mediation agents are, however, sensitive to Roma experience, but in our opinion, effective empowering and emancipatory projects are futile and soon reach limits if racism is not acknowledged as a structural phenomenon that permeates society, as a kind of 'cultural' setting for European societies that is far from being a problem of 'wrong' attitudes and convictions.

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