

## Italy

# Framing racism and intolerance: public issues and denunciations in Italy. Chasing the Gypsy, immolating the Gypsy, securing the city

**Simona Pagano**

European University Viadrina (EUV)

### Summary

This report is concerned with an analysis of how Roma living in so-called nomad camps are represented and constructed in the Italian Media. For this purpose we created a database in which we collected 86 newspaper reports, trying to cover the ideological spectrum from right to left wing newspapers, both national and regional. “Il Tempo”, “Il Messaggero”, “La Stampa”, “Nuovo Paese Sera” and “La Repubblica” and a few local (online) newspapers and websites were our sources. The database contains news items collected in the period from September 2011 until December 2011, divided into sections around the two cases we researched. Our first case concerned Media coverage about the “Nomad Plan” established by Rome City Council in 2009, after former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi issued the “Emergency Decree” on Roma and Sinti populations in Italy by 2008. The kernel of the Nomad Plan consisted in dismantling so-called illegal camps, transferring the Roma into authorized camps (container villages), their surveillance by private security services and identification procedures during censuses. In November 2011 the emergency decree was declared to be unlawful by the Council of State following a judicial complaint by a Roma family and the ERRC (European Roma Rights Center). We wanted to know if the policy change had any impact on Media coverage. The second case concerned the setting on fire of a Roma camp in Turin after a girl claimed to have been raped by two Roma, which, as she later admitted, was a lie to cover up her first intercourse with her boyfriend.

To what extent did the newspapers report racism, and was racism a key feature in the representation of the Roma? How did newspapers contribute to shaping hostility towards the Roma and perpetuate racist discourses and practices?

Using discourse analysis we tried to answer these and other questions. The method of Media framing allowed us to depict three recurring major frames in the debates around the Roma, defined as “Roma as a problem”, “Roma as victims” and “Roma as agents”. All three frames appeared in each newspaper, with a slight imbalance in favour of left and centre-left newspapers, who framed Roma more as victims than as a problem, while the reverse applied to right and centre-right wing Media. Racism was hardly mentioned, and as our previous analysis within the TOLERACE project revealed, was depicted as an individual and exceptional phenomenon. We concluded that even though racism is ‘banned’, all the Media shape hostility towards the Roma, and perpetuate and practise racist discourse, contributing to the maintenance of a racist epistemology.

## **Introduction**

In the course of the TOLERACE Project various work packages have been devoted to discourses on (anti-)racism and tolerance. Within these work packages<sup>1</sup> we have looked at forms of institutional racism through interviews and in-depth analysis of key documents, as well as at forms of (anti-)racism, both institutional and societal, in the fields of occupation and education, key life spheres that can be seen as criteria for successful integration into mainstream society. The Italian team has worked on an analysis of (anti-)racism against the Roma population in the city of Rome, and has concluded that on an institutional level little success has been achieved towards including Roma living in so-called nomad camps in the occupational and educational sectors and hence laying foundations for their inclusion into the mainstream.

This work package consists of an analysis of the role of the Media in shaping racism towards the Roma minority or, instead, in signalling racism (of every form: institutional and individual) towards this marginalized community.

The marginalization of Roma in Rome is particularly blatant. As already accurately described in the previous reports on occupation and education, the Roma our team has focused on live in “nomad camps”, heavily degraded areas that resemble shantytowns

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<sup>1</sup> WP1 „The historicity of tolerance and (anti-)racism. Analysis of Integration and Anti-discrimination Policies of Public State-Endorsed Institutions in Italy”; WP2 “The Geography of (anti-)Racism and Tolerance: Local Policy Responses, Discrimination and Employment. Roma in Italy”; WP3 “The analysis of education policies, discourses and practices: opportunities for education within difference. Roma in Italy”.

and that are also called “favelas”, “ghettos” or in particular denigrating terms “sewers under open sky” (if “illegal”), or lager-like structures if “legal”/“authorized” structures. This population is regularly targeted in election campaigns as a “problem” or “emergency”, a danger to “public security” and urban order and decorum, or as unstoppable invasion characterized by misery and deterioration (Daniele 2011: 30).

In 2008 a decree concerning the Roma and Sinti population of the Italian Regions of Lombardy, Latium and Campania was issued by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. It referred to the “emergency status in relation to the presence of camps inhabited by nomads”<sup>2</sup> and was said to exist because of the imminent threat to public order and security caused by the presence of the “nomad camps”. The decree was extended every year until in November 2011 it was declared to be unlawful by the Council of State. The emergency status was declared within a greater legislative initiative, the so-called security package. While it is not uncommon to declare emergencies in relation to various phenomena, this was the first attempt to tackle the “Roma problem” with such extraordinary measures<sup>3</sup>, as a consequence ‘normalizing’ a social phenomenon.

The emergency decree designated special commissioners to overcome the emergency status who were given extraordinary powers to derogate from the current administrative, urban and environmental legislation that had hitherto governed the Roma settlements. The decree acquired concrete form in the city of Rome with the “Nomad Plan”<sup>4</sup>, which mainly consisted in forced evictions and dismantlement of the Roma settlements and the relocation of Rome’s Roma population to controlled and managed areas of the city, establishing upon them a “regime of exception”, while placing them “in a zone on the margins of the institutional and political architecture, a zone constructed on ethnically motivated separation”, and “experimenting with unprecedented arrangements and practices of control” (Daniele 2011: 31)

Even though the emergency decree was considered to be unlawful, the “Nomad Plan” is still being implemented, at least in the city of Rome. This means that the violent<sup>5</sup> evictions continue, that the camps are still watched by private police services and that therefore the Roma are still marginalized. An artistic event promoted by

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<sup>2</sup> “Stato di emergenza in relazione alla presenza di campi abitati da nomadi”.

<sup>3</sup> The Emergency Decree is founded on the law on civil protection that is proclaimed in cases of natural disasters and other exceptional events.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of the “Nomad Plan” please consult the report on work package 2 of the Italian team.

<sup>5</sup> The evictions are carried out by an excessive presence of police forces, who arbitrarily destroy the shacks of the Roma and all their belongings. Cases of physical and verbal abuses have been reported. Furthermore the evictions prevent children from continuing to attend school, also due to the fact that no alternative, secure accommodation is guaranteed after their evictions. <http://www.unita.it/sociale/stop-agli-sgomberi-dei-rom-br-appello-dalla-cultura-ad-alemanno-1.388201> [accessed: 7.3.2012]

Associazione 21 Luglio<sup>6</sup> and Popica Onlus<sup>7</sup> in March 2012 entitled “Porrajmos. Extermination and resistance of the Roma”<sup>8</sup> ended with the petition “The right to housing must not be evicted” to stop the forced evictions<sup>9</sup> and was signed by various Italian intellectuals. The petition was questioned by the alderman for security, who stated that:

[T]he city council has been legitimated by the people’s vote to continue with the evictions and the removal from the territory of nomads who camp illegally in the city. We invite those who question this aim to concede the luxuries of their own homes and their noble neighbourhoods, their untouched landscapes and celestial silence, to share with thousands of Romans what remains of their neighbourhoods that have fallen prey to the raids of the Roma and the way most of them typically live in degradation, dirt and illegality (Fabrizio Santori)<sup>10</sup>.

As we can see, in this derogatory statement, Roma are associated with dirt, disgust, pollution and crime. This imagery of the Roma as a sort of ‘plague’ that pollutes the territory is a frequent topos of anti-gypsyist<sup>11</sup> discourse and is perpetuated by such statements of influential political exponents. In sum, in recent years the Roma in Italy have witnessed a process of racialization and “ethnogenesis” within securitization discourses (D’Orsi, Torani 2009: 12), In other words, this is a process of *doing nomad/gypsy*, and as D’Orsi and Torani underline, a construction of a homogenous group characterized by its diversity and delinquency – in order to serve a certain electoral rhetoric (ibid.). These security discourses have not only set their stamp on the electoral period but have operated and still operate on a deeper level, influencing “our everyday way of perceiving and interpreting reality” (ibid.). Roma in Italy are mostly referred to as “nomads” or as “zingari” (“Gypsies”), seldom as “Rom”/“Roma” which is their own denomination. Furthermore, as this report will show, Media reports are to a great extent concerned, as already mentioned, with crime perpetrated or allegedly perpetrated by Roma and the destruction of their shacks in the camps, under the (new) policy plan “Piano Nomadi”. Media reports influence our perception of reality and may enhance racism.

Media discourse is the main source of people’s knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, both of other elites and of ordinary citizens. Of course, the Media do this in joint production with the other elites, primarily politicians, professionals and academics. (Van Dijk 2000: 36)

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<sup>6</sup> Associazione 21 Luglio is a small advocacy association constituted in April 2010 that works especially for respect of the international convention on children’s rights, signed in New York in 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Popica Onlus is a Roman antiracist organisation working for and with (Roma) children originating from the Balkans and Romania.

<sup>8</sup> “Il diritto all’alloggio non si sgombera”, see: <http://www.21luglio.com/> [accessed: 6.3.2012]

<sup>9</sup> 425 evictions in the last two years at a cost amounting to € 6.5 million according to “Associazione 21 Luglio”

<sup>10</sup> Fabrizio Santori on:

<http://www.fabriziosantori.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=13169>

[accessed: 6.3.2012]

<sup>11</sup> The term anti-gypsyism is largely discussed among scholars. See the report by our team on the occupational situation of the Roma for a detailed description of anti-gypsyism as a specific form of racism.

The Media opinion makers contribute on a large scale to perpetuating this imagery of the Roma, framing the Roma either as “a problem”, “criminals” or also as “victims”.

## **1. Overview case study**

This part of the report provides an overview of our case study and addresses the significance of the Media in shaping racism or opposing it through their coverage. As outlined above, the Roma are vigorously discussed in national and especially policy-making discourse due to the so-called Nomad Plan and the declaration of the state of emergency in 2008. The first case study, therefore, is concerned with the Media debate around the “Nomad Plan” in the period from September 2011 to December 2011. This case study was chosen because, due to the ‘normalization’ of the Roma emergency, it had a great impact on the Roma population in the city of Rome and on the perception of the Roma as a “problem”. However, the emergency status and therefore the local “Nomad Plan” were declared to be unlawful by the Council of State on 16 November 2011, when it upheld the appeal in the regional administrative court of law by the ERRC and two former Roman inhabitants of Casilino 900 against the emergency decree and the “Nomad Plan”. We chose the case to analyse the Media coverage *before* and *after* the ruling by the Council of State.

The overarching aspect of the “Nomad Plan” in Rome is the debate about the “emergency” the Roma population ‘causes’ and the ways the city administration tries to resolve it (the methods have been briefly listed above). Within this debate, aspects of security and danger, deviance and criminality are illustrated, especially in the conservative and right-wing newspapers, while issues about discrimination and “xenophobia” are illustrated foremost by left-wing national newspapers.

The second analysis concerns the alleged rape of a 16-year-old girl in a working-class quarter in Turin by two Roma in December 2011. After the girl reported the sexual abuse, a spontaneous demonstration tried to show solidarity with the girl. The demonstration degenerated into a pogrom in which the Roma camp where the two alleged rapists lived was burned down and completely destroyed, which in turn made the girl confess that she had invented the story of the rape, as she was not allowed to see her boyfriend and her parents made her take a “virginity test” once a month. This case study is interesting since it shows overt racism, hate crimes and hate speech towards the Roma, but also suggests discourses around security and deviance as well as the gender dimension of racism and violence. Furthermore, the debate then turns to

whether the decision of the Council of State to declare the Emergency Decree unlawful was justified.

We have collected in total 86 news items, both from right-wing, centre-right/left and left-wing newspapers that we have analysed with the discourse analytical approach. The Media items analysed within the first case study consist of one nationwide centre-left newspaper (“La Repubblica”), two local centre-right/ right-wing newspapers in Rome (“Il Messagero” and “Il Tempo”) and one local online left-wing daily magazine<sup>12</sup> (“Nuovo Paese Sera”). The Media items analysed in the second case study consist of three online news sites, the centre-left national newspaper “La Repubblica”, the centre-right national newspapers “La Stampa” and “Il Messagero”, and finally the national newspaper specialising in economic affairs, “Il Sole 24 Ore”.

## 2. Approaching racism

Even though the report is concerned with specific logics of racism – the anti-gypsyism that specifically targets Roma – we shall consider a general approach to racism and later specific forms of framing the Roma in Media coverage and performances of racism towards this minority group in the Media. First of all it has to be said that to provide a clear and concise definition of racism is a task hard to accomplish. The term racism is used today to describe a variety of discriminatory and marginalizing practices towards members of groups that are perceived to be different culturally and/or biologically (Kerner 2009: 44). Scholars of racism theories are divided on how to demarcate racism, how racism works, and who is the target of racism and why. Furthermore, various proposals compete to differentiate different forms of racism (ibid.).

Teun Van Dijk who has specialized in the analysis of racism in the Media proposes defining racism as a

[...] social system of ethnic or racial inequality, just like sexism, or inequality based on class. That system has two main components, namely a social and a cognitive one. The social component of racism consists of everyday discriminatory practices, on the micro-level of analysis, and organizations, institutions, legal arrangements and other societal structures at the macro-level. Since discourses are social practices, racist discourse belongs first of all to this social dimension of racism. (Van Dijk 2000: 35-36).

In a previous publication he had already defined racism as a ‘property of ethnic group dominance’ and identified it as “the historically rooted dominance of whites (Europeans) over Others” (Van Dijk 1993: 47 in Law 2002: 20) that remains one of the

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<sup>12</sup> Published periodically as monthly magazine.

“most pernicious problems of white society” (Van Dijk 1991). One of the characteristics of racism is to deny or to play down the prevalence of racism (ibid.) and to assign the responsibility to those who suffer from racism, or in other words to “blame the marginalized” (Goldberg 1993)/ the victims of racism for the persistent inequalities of racism (Van Dijk 1991). According to Philomena Essed racism is inherent in culture and social order, more structure than ideology, and most importantly reinforced through everyday practices (Essed 1991: 2). Being defined as ideology, structure and process, racism leads to the exclusion of certain groups (considered as culturally and/or biologically different and inferior) from material and non-material resources (Essed 1992: 375).

Another important approach to the understanding of racism is provided by Shoat and Stam (1994) who draw onto psychoanalytical theory and on the work of Frantz Fanon (1967) to explain their conception of “colonial-style racism” (Law 2002: 23). According to them, racism has a “double movement of aggression and narcissism”, in which the victim is abused and the abuser complemented, which in turn indicates the pleasure of racist expression, as Law stresses. Inherent to this form of racism is its ambivalence “in loathing and loving the object of racism [...] characterized by Stuart Hall (1992) as “fantasies of degradation and desire” (ibid.). Shoat and Stam describe six key mechanisms of racism that are neither necessary nor essential for the detection of racist discourse, but do assist in the elaboration of aspects and dimensions of negative attribution:

Projecting deficiency (in ability, civilization etc.), establishing hierarchies, blaming the victim, coolness to claims of oppression, seeing the life of those subject to racism of less or no worth, and the elaboration of a discourse of reverse discrimination (*apud* Law 2002: 23- 24).

Finally, it has to be underlined that today’s racism differs from earlier forms of biological/ scientific racism, insofar as it is not explicit, wants “to be democratic and respectable, and hence first off denies that it is racism” (Van Dijk 2000: 34). The difficulty in tackling racism is its “chameleon-like character” that makes racism change and vary across time and different contexts (Law 2002: 16). As already shown in the other reports in our project, today “real racism” (ibid.) is considered foremost a problem of the extreme right, or a problem of ‘ill’ people, but never a problem of society as whole.

For our analysis we want to sum up racism as a system of unequal power relations that permeates society in every aspect, and that has devastating effects on its targets. In this report we will focus on racism in the Media, that is, we will look at the

perpetuation of racism through Media coverage and therefore concentrate on racism as everyday performance.

### **3. Analysis of Media framing and agenda setting**

#### *3.1. Methodology: Media framing and discourse analysis*

The analysis of how racism against Roma is perpetuated through mass media should follow the scientific assumptions of reliability and validity (cf. Law 2002). For this purpose the method of Media framing and discourse analysis is suitable (ibid.). The assumption is that discourse is a social practice, and as such also a social practice of racism and at the same time the main source for people's racist beliefs (Van Dijk: 36). In other words, (anti-) racism is 'taught' through text or talk (cf. ibid.).

The analysis of news reports involves the detection of racism as speaking of/referring to a collectivity/ or a 'race' with negative attributes. It is important to stress that the presumed existence of 'races' has to be considered as the fundament of racism, but that they are "entirely mythical and imagined creations" (Law 2002: 24). The construction of human races (on the basis of phenotypical differences or other imagined differences) and the subsequent negative attribution of certain characteristics to those is a social process.

The detection of racism in Media coverage involves, to begin with, a detailed 'look' at the article and the pictorial representation.

Media discourse is the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, both of other elites and of ordinary citizens. Of course, the Media do this in joint production with the other elites, primarily politicians, professionals and academics. (Van Dijk 2000: 36)

For example do headline and photo already shape hostility, by showing as in the case of Roma a photo of some shacks surrounded by piles of rubbish? Or does the headline speak of 'nomads' and 'gypsies' instead of Roma? If the headline refers to the Roma as Roma, the content of the Media item may nonetheless shape hostility and perpetuate racism. In this case the task is then first to detect the signifier of the sign (cf. Law: 24) which would be the 'race' of the Roma.

Signifiers of race may include words (e.g. black, white, Caucasian, Negroid, ethnic, immigrant, Gypsy) or pictures (persons of common skin colour) and are open to complexity and variation in meaning and interpretation (ibid.).

This part includes what in a stricter sense may be called discourse analysis. The discourse analysis may focus on overall topics in a "semantic" analysis, while on the

“syntactic” level the overall organization of the news report may be examined in detail (Van Dijk 2000: 35). Furthermore, the analysis should focus on “style”, “rhetorical devices” (e.g. metaphors) and “speech acts” (e.g. promises or threats). Later the strategy of the news report has to be analysed in order to detect how it contributes to the promotion of racism. Van Dijk stresses that news about “immigrants” often focuses on a restricted set of topics, such as the arrival of new “illegal” immigrants, political responses to immigration, reception problems, social problems, response of the population, cultural characterization of the ‘others’ and negative characterization as well as a focus on perceived threats like prostitution, crime, violence (Van Dijk 2000: 38). He underlines that

[S]ince topics express the most important information of a text, and in news are further signaled by prominent headlines and leads, they are also best understood and memorized by the readers”, that means that “negative topics have negative consequences on the minds of the ‘recipients’(ibid.).

The discourse analysis, then, includes not only the content but relates to the social, economic and political context, as Van Dijk underlines.

Secondly, the negative attribution of race has to be measured. Negative attribution can include minorities acting against a white norm,

the assessment of racial and cultural representation in comparison to real life, the evaluation of the privileging and silencing of different cultural voices in relation to Eurocentric norms and the perception of negative attribution of racialized groups by themselves (Law 2002: 25).

The questions are then, for example, does the item shape hostility or is it neutral? Does the minority group have a voice in the item and how is this voice interpreted?

Thirdly, the task of analysing racism in the Media also involves analysing how Roma are framed in general. A frame can be considered as a concept or cognitive structure that is needed for the perception of reality (Tannen 1993). Gitlin defines a frame as a “principle of selection, emphasis and presentation” that is composed of “little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (Gitlin 1980: 6). A frame in this case provides the foundation on which an event is interpreted. Eventually a frame may be understood as a metaphor, which means that it “can be the organizing idea upon which a story is built” (Reese 2008: 98). Ultimately, as Entman points out:

[T]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993: 2)

That means that framing includes the construction of an agenda “with a restricted number of thematically related attributes in order to create a coherent picture of a particular object” (McCombs; Ghanem 2008: 70).

In Media, the concept of framing is used to describe how events are presented to their readers. In so doing,

framing adds the possibilities of additional, more complex emotional responses and also adds a cognitive dimension (beliefs about objects as attitudes). Second, framing recognizes the ability of a text – or a Media presentation – to define a situation, to define the issues, and to set the terms of a debate. [...] Convincing others to accept one’s framing means to a large extent winning the debate (Tankard Jr. 2008: 96).

As Tankard continues, it is crucial to understand that news framing may silence certain voices or weaken certain arguments and that the Media can frame an issue favouring a particular side but without showing explicit bias (ibid.: 95). Framing differs from bias in that it goes beyond notions of pro and con, positive or negative and so forth, but nonetheless framing may also include bias, as Tankard underlines. Since mass media is also a way of shaping public opinion, the analysis of frames may say something about Media hegemony, when a certain “frame is so dominant that people accept it without notice or question” (ibid.: 96). In our research and in accordance with the theory of Media framing we want to depict how the agenda<sup>13</sup> is set for the ‘Roma question’ and how Roma are then framed in Italian Media, both major newspapers and smaller online news portals.

We collected 56 news items in our first case and 30 news items for our second case from different newspapers. We decided to categorize these newspapers, according to their general categorizations as right/ centre right and left/ centre left, knowing that these categorizations are relative. We detected the following frames, understood as “interpretative schemata that simplif[y] and condense ‘the world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects and situations” (Snow; Bendford 1992: 135): Roma as ‘problem’, Roma as ‘victims’ and Roma as ‘agents’. Based on the exemplary description of one to three news items per frame we will show how the respective construction of the Roma is (re-)produced.

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<sup>13</sup> Agenda setting can be understood as the relation between the salience of a topic in Media and the importance people attribute to that topic. See: [http://www.mediatenor.de/smi\\_AS\\_approach.php](http://www.mediatenor.de/smi_AS_approach.php) [accessed 11.3.2012] Agenda setting is not a theory, it rather describes the function mass media have in people’s opinion.

## 4. Framing the Roma in the newspapers

This section is concerned with the analysis of the empirical data. Due to the limitations on the extent of our report, we can only provide a restricted overview of the two cases. We will begin with the news reports concerning the Nomad Plan. We chose to collect our data during the period from September 2011 to December 2011 (that includes not exclusively news about the Nomad Plan but also news concerning Roma in Rome in general) because of the ruling by the Council of State that declared the emergency status and therefore the Nomad Plan unlawful. We wanted to see if there were any changes in Media coverage after the ruling and if so, how far the Roma had been framed otherwise. Even though the emergency status and the Nomad Plan have been declared to be unlawful, the provisions taken within the plan will continue to be carried out, as stated by deputy mayor Sveva Belviso and also by the new Interior Minister Annamaria Cancellieri. However, due to the reduced budget, certain provisions within the Nomad Plan will not be carried out or will be carried out with other means<sup>14</sup>.

### 4.1. Roma as problem

Interviews have shown that the number of the Roma living in Italy and in Rome is mostly overestimated (Vitale 2009; D'Orsi 2009; see report WP2 of our team). This is also due to the negative coverage of the Roma in the Media. Furthermore Media reports tend to underline the citizenship of offenders whenever they are not "Italians" (D'Orsi 2009: 24). In this manner the country of origin and the originating "culture" become one explanation for deviant behaviour (ibid.). This rhetoric fuels the perception of the delinquent stranger and includes all migrants, but has focused especially on the Roma.

In this frame we have then included allusions to Roma as criminals, as deviant and dirty, their "custom" of nomadism, the security "problem" the camps and the Roma create and other similar aspects. A closer look reveals that both right- and left-wing newspapers rely on that frame. The issues concerning the Roma are presented in various sections. "La Repubblica" publishes the news both in the local section if explicitly concerning the city of Rome and in other sections related to the content. "Nuovo Paese Sera" publish their news about Roma mostly in the society news

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<sup>14</sup> The private surveillance service has been assigned to the communal operator "Risorse per Roma". The members of staff are known as "Gladiators". They are basically assumed to be "doormen" who will not (like the former surveillance services) be able to ask for documents or search the persons who enter the camps, nor will they carry any weapons. In cases of "security problems" they have to call the police. This change will reduce the costs by about 500 million euros. [http://www.iltempo.it/roma/2012/03/13/1328366-vigilantes\\_campi\\_nomadi\\_comune\\_manda\\_gladiatori.shtml?refresh\\_ce](http://www.iltempo.it/roma/2012/03/13/1328366-vigilantes_campi_nomadi_comune_manda_gladiatori.shtml?refresh_ce) [accessed: 15.3.2012]

section, “Il Tempo” mostly in the local Rome section, while we found two items in “Il Messagero” in the section “La denuncia”/ “The complaint”.

As to language, we observed that the ‘problematization’ of the Roma does not occur directly by calling the Roma a problem, but by reporting ‘problematic’ cases or constructing ‘problematic’ events.

The article in centre-right newspaper “Il Messagero” headed “At the La Barbuta nomad camp ‘illegal construction work, but the City Council continues” (19.12.2011) is concerned with the illegitimacy of the construction of La Barbuta camp. The construction there continues despite the State Council's verdict of 16th November that it had been unlawful to declare the nomad state of emergency in 2008 and all subsequent actions. The complaint also mentions the financial aspect: the entire “Nomad Plan” has cost the city 34 million euros, 10 of which went to La Barbuta for archaeological excavations, partial drainage, the construction of the camp, equipment and maintenance. The article quotes Mario Staderini, member of the (left) Radical Party, arguing that the money should have been used for social housing projects. Furthermore, he underlines the need for a public debate about the Roma in order to work for their “integration” while at the same time recognizing differences between diverse “nomad realities”.

At first sight the article appears to be neutral, but a closer look reveals that the headline already evokes the connection between Roma and “illegality”, even though it actually refers to the construction of the camp as illegal. Nonetheless, Roma and “illegality” are merged in the headline. Furthermore, the Roma are referred to as “nomads”. The term “nomad” has to be understood as derogatory, alluding to the presumed nomadism of the Roma and therefore their difficulties in achieving stability and integration. As Monica Rossi explains, calling them nomads is in certain ways a justification for the existence of the camps and includes the secret hope that the nomads may leave one day. The camp becomes a pretext, producing and maintaining the degraded living conditions which, as Rossi stresses, are one of the primary causes that generate exclusion and uneasiness (Rossi 2009: 65). The news report then specifies the high costs of the so-called Nomad Plan. As Staderini declares, millions have been spent on an “illegal” operation. Again the connection is drawn between the Roma and unlawfulness. The quote and the enumeration of the costs give the impression that the Roma cause immense costs, that their housing situation is somehow illegal, and last but not least that no improvement in their living conditions is ever achieved. The article closes with a call for their integration by distinguishing between different nomad realities – it is not stated which “nomad realities” have to be

distinguished from one another, but the reader may suppose that a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Roma should be made, between the Roma who try to work 'honestly' and the criminal ones, thus implicitly blaming them for their failed 'integration'. Other articles that frame the Roma as problematic are similar in structure and language. The left-wing online newspaper "Nuovo Paese Sera" is often concerned with the Roma question in Rome. The Roma are mainly framed as problems and victims, often in the same item. The news reporting from a camp in Viale degli Schiavonetti in the periphery of Rome is an example of shaping hostility in a subtle way. The item "Rom, Viale degli Schiavonetti 'A model of civilization'" (24.11.2011) offers a vivid description of the mutual distrust between residents of Viale degli Schiavonetti and the Roma. Use of the term "nomads" fits with the residents' impression that the camp is (presumably) temporary (also by comparing the camp with a motel by the author), associated with the hope described by Rossi above of the Roma leaving one day. The author underlines the "different lifestyles" of Roma and residents, refers first to the precarious living conditions in the camp and then quotes a resident of Viale degli Schiavonetti mentioning luxury cars parked in the camp – an idea that in the eyes of the author fuels the prejudice that Roma are thieves. This statement seems to hang in the air and is then countered by a quote from a Romni<sup>15</sup> residing in the camp, lamenting that their lifestyle is not accepted by anyone.

Then the author moves on to the planned transfer of the Roma to "La Barbuta" camp, provided for in the Nomad Plan. However, the author says, apparently there is no space for the Roma in the new camp. Furthermore the ruling by the Council of State declaring the Nomad Plan unlawful threatens to finish "La Barbuta" and "brings to nought" the hopes of the residents of Tor Vergata neighbourhood that the Roma will be transferred. As the author concludes, the residents have promised a "battle" to achieve the eviction of the Roma. In a subtle manner, the salience of the topic in headlines and reports also illustrates the consideration of Roma as a "problem".

"Il Tempo" offers far more explicit language in framing the Roma as problem. The article about the ruling from the Council of State is very explicit in framing the Roma as a problem ("The Council of State annuls the Nomad Plan", 22.11.2011). It speaks of the "elimination" of certain camps and dismantled camps like Casilino 900 (quoting mayor Alemanno) as "real fire bombs". It refers to the need to guarantee the integrity of the people residing near the camps and of the nomads themselves, as well as to guarantee "public decency" and "hygiene". Due to the invalidity of the state of

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<sup>15</sup> Romni means 'Roma woman' in romanés.

emergency, this will now only be possible through ordinary legislation. The articles about the Roma in “Il Tempo” are mostly in the local news section about Rome. When reporting crimes (allegedly) committed by Roma, the language is mostly negative and/or exaggerated and the news is reported in an anecdotal manner. The Roma are mostly referred to as “nomads”. It appears that “Il Tempo” wants a stricter policy towards the Roma, as it refers to the City Council as “mollycoddling” the Roma.

The four newspapers differ in their language and style of framing the Roma as a problematic population. As we have seen, the (centre) left newspapers use a moderate language and construction of news reports, for example by using disclaimers in a strategy of positive self-representation and negative other representation (Jiwani 2011: 245). We saw this in the article analysed in “Nuovo Paese Sera”, where the voice given to the Romni was countered by the author’s statement. The (centre) right newspapers use a more explicit language and in the case of “Il Tempo” an explicit anti-Roma attitude. Both “La Repubblica” and “Nuovo Paese Sera” try instead to frame the Roma in different ways.

#### *4.2. Roma as victims*

Here the news reports allude foremost to the living conditions of the Roma in the camps, also due to the effects of the Nomad Plan. Often the strategy of the news report is a victimization strategy, singling the Roma out for living in the precarious conditions the camp offers. The Roma are nonetheless often framed as problematic and as victims. In the items in our collection referring to the living situation of the Roma in Rome during and after the so-called Nomad Plan, the newspapers frame the Roma as victims especially when reporting about some camp eviction. However, in the majority of the cases no member of the Roma community is interviewed, while members of associations (catholic and secular) find a voice in those reports. The non-possibility of speaking for them is a major problem that is criticized by various Roma themselves.

In this regard we want to take a closer look at the camp raid in Turin in December 2011. The news reports do refer to the Roma as victims of the camp raid, but they are not targeted as subjects of the article. The news reports focus more on the perpetrators of the fire, on the girl that accused the two Roma, on the brother and on the circumstances, rather than on the victims of the false accusation and of the pogrom. The various newspapers try to explain and understand how such an outburst could have been possible. Explanations include the difficult relationship between the Roma and the poor neighbourhood. The Archbishop of Turin “feels offended” by this un-

Christian behaviour, while Mayor Fassino is outraged by such behaviour in a “civilized city” like Turin, and the online newspaper Corriere points at the fact that Turin is “still under shock”. It seems as if the pogrom has not primarily hit and offended the Roma, but the city’s own conception of itself, questioning its values as a ‘liberal’, ‘tolerant’ and ‘civilized’ city and showing it in a bad light.

Turin’s Archbishop Nosiglia feels “humiliated” (“Archbishop Nosiglia ‘I feel humiliated and hurt’”, La Repubblica 11.12.2011) by the events and laments that due to the ruling by the Council of State that the state of emergency is unlawful, EU funding for Roma “integration” programmes have been blocked (“Nosiglia visits the nomad camps ‘Aggression and refusal have to be overcome’”, La Repubblica, 26.12.2011). The president of AIZO (Associazione Italiana Zingari Oggi/ Italian association Gypsies today), an NGO based in Turin, who visited with Nosiglia the camps, criticizes the camps, but his alternative remains in the logic of distinction and difference when he proposes smaller structures for the Roma without specifying what and how a smaller structure could/would be. In the interview with “La Repubblica”, Archbishop Nosiglia underlined the need for “commitment” and “solidarity”, both from the Roma and from the “Italians”. Counterposing such a statement at the end of an article that was initially about a fire at the camp reiterates the assumption that the Roma in this case are responsible for what has happened to them.

The loose focus on the Roma as the offended party, the little space given to the Roma to let them describe the facts, and the focus on the voices of authorities to ‘explain’ those facts, reflect a certain narcissistic attitude accompanied by a weak acknowledgement, almost a denial, of what really happened. In this context it is interesting to have a closer look at the editorial in the daily centre-right newspaper “La Stampa”. In the opinion section of 11 December 2011 we read the headline “The wrong title”, where the author goes on to claim that “we” should be ashamed of “unconscious, irrational racism”, even though “rationality” and “culture” should help “us” to avert this racism. Referring to the title of the previous day (“Scares off the two Roma who rape his sister”, the opinion writer maintains that this title left no other possibility open as to the “ethnic origin” of the alleged rapists, which would not have been mentioned if it had been two “Finns” or two “Romans”. He continues that as it concerned two Roma the newspaper slipped into a racist headline, obviously unintentionally. Eventually he apologizes. He apologizes to the readers and to the newspaper itself. As we can see, the offended party in this pogrom and in the Media coverage are not the Roma, but the ‘Italians’, the civilized, the ‘cultured’ and ‘rational’ persons that need an apology for

having “slipped” into racism – ultimately, the conclusion to draw is that if the rape had actually happened, then the racism would have been justified.

The Roma are used and manipulated. Their status as victims of the camp raid is not acknowledged, neither in the denial, nor in their victimization. Both strategies are exclusive and marginalizing, confining them to an object-status. They appear to be a ‘minor point’ in the process of reflecting about ‘ourselves’, ‘our’ culture, ‘our’ civilization and especially ‘our’ *not* being racist. Besides, the victim/perpetrator model stabilizes the system of domination.

We should perhaps reflect on the background to the story. The girl who accused two Roma men of raping her was drawing on the imagery of the hypersexual, violent Gypsy (an image that is also valid for ‘the black man’), and she assumed that if she accused a ‘Gypsy’, no one would question her – as in fact happened.

The ‘Gypsy’ is again used as a scapegoat to justify security discourses and practices<sup>16</sup>. At the same time, the event illustrates the patriarchal system with its inherent sexism and control over women’s bodies, the patriarchal system as a “complex, differentiated, power-centred framework, that continually produces, marginalizes the ‘other’ and in doing so, creates normality” (Castro Varela; Dhawan 2003: 272).

The girl had to submit to a “virginity test” once a month and allow her family to control and ‘protect’ her body. The Media coverage illustrates the ‘subaltern’ status of the girl. In fact, while little is said about her in the first Media reports, the brother is stylized as a hero who not only saves his sister from the ‘violent brown/black/... man’, but – when the mob sets the Roma camp on fire – tries to save the same ‘brown/black/... man’ and stop the furious mob. This case illustrates the efficiency of the patriarchal androcentric and white-centred power system.

#### *4.3. Roma as agents*

The last frame we defined depicts Roma as agents. Only few articles in our database frame Roma as such, particularly newspapers of the (centre-) left.

The agency reported by the newspaper in the context of the camp raid refers to a delegation of “nomads” (from the “illegal” camp Continassa) who met the public prosecutor after the camp raid and to a small group of “nomads” protesting against

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<sup>16</sup> The murder and sexual violence against Giovanna Reggiani in 2007 by Romanian rom fuelled the debate about criminal immigrants and led to the adoption of the so-called security package that amongst other things led to the law to expel EU citizens from Italian territory if considered a “threat to society”.

xenophobia outside Turin's prefecture. This article was not especially concerned with the camp raid, but reported various demonstrations against xenophobia and racism.

In the context of the "Nomad Plan" we have few news reports, mostly from "Nuovo Paese Sera", which depict Roma as agents. In most cases this is connected to the dismantlement of Casilino 900 and the "first democratic elections" in the authorized camp of Salone, to which many Roma from Casilino 900 had been transferred. As in the above frame, the news reports often use disclaimers, in a way minimizing the agency of the Roma by counterposing positive news with quotes or statements that suggest the contrary. Several reports of Roma agency are merged with some sort of problematization, or else a politician or member of an association supports their claims and requests. The agency of the Roma alone is thereby minimized and only carries weight when supported by 'Italians'<sup>17</sup>.

## Conclusion

In this report we have analysed how Roma are framed in Media coverage, both from (centre-) left and (centre-) right national and local newspapers. We have chosen two cases, one relating to the so-called Nomad Plan established in the city of Rome after the issue of the Emergency Decree on the Roma and Sinti population in 2008, and another relating to the camp raid at Continassa, Turin in December 2011.

The findings showed that Roma<sup>18</sup> are framed either (mostly) as a problem or as victims, and only seldom as agents.

The framing of Roma as a problem includes the depiction of Roma as criminals, thieves, as dirty and infectious, as "nomads" that want 'to live this way'. We want to stress that this frame can be traced back nearly to the beginnings of the long relationship between Roma and the non-Roma as the image of the 'Gypsy'. Visual Media and literature have willingly picked up this image and reproduced it in various forms (cf. Dobрева 2007: 143).

The framing of Roma as victims, found in both (centre-) right and left newspapers, is a 'new' frame that has been added in the last 50 years (ibid.: 142). Our Media items have reported precarious and poor living conditions in the camps, as well as the

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<sup>17</sup> With the term 'Italians' we refer to their construction and draw back on the differentiation made in the analysed newspapers that set 'Roma' in opposition to 'Italians'. This is a (forced) differentiation based on the ethnic origins of people. Even though many Roma possess Italian citizenship they are not considered as such. Furthermore, 'Italians' in our cases here are white (mostly male) persons that speak and act on behalf of the Roma and that are in some (political/economic/...) power position.

<sup>18</sup> Our team has focused on the Roma that live in the "nomad camps". Little or nothing is said in the Media about Roma or Sinti with Italian citizenship who do not live in camps.

difficulties the constant forced evictions cause. At the same time the reports that depict the Roma as suffering slip into a victimization discourse that marginalizes the Roma and reproduces their 'otherness', which fits the logic of domination. The victimization discourse is accompanied by a paternalistic attitude.

Furthermore, the victim frame is often merged with the problem frame, linked then into an indiscernible logic of "they are victims, but..." that in the end blames the victim for being a victim, or in other words blames the marginalized for being marginalized (Goldberg 1993: 209).

Sometimes Roma are framed also as agents, which is a positive step. A closer look at our collected Media items, however, revealed that in most cases the connection is made with their 'being a problem', which then minimizes their agency and once again makes them victims or a problem.

These rhetorical strategies can be explained by the

assumption [...] that the marginalized 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 (ibid.).

Explicit references to racism were made in the case of the Continassa camp raid. However, the racist outburst was tackled as "madness", as uncivilized and uncultured action by a few individuals: individuals that live in a former working-class quarter and are now affected by poverty, individuals identified as hooligans.

The violence was thus externalized onto these people who were hardly identified with the "civilized" and "tolerant" community of Turin. The explanatory model refers to racism as an exception attributed to a specific group of people, also partly marginalized and living in precarious conditions. The paradigm of denying and repelling racism, assigning it to 'some others' was confirmed in the repentance of the opinion maker in "La Stampa", who apologized to the readers for having "slipped" into racism in the news before the revelation by the girl that she had invented the story of the two Roma raping her. Meanwhile the alderman for security in Rome has launched his inflammatory hate speech against 'Italian' intellectuals who supported a cultural initiative by some Roma and non-Roma artists in remembrance of the Porrajmos, the Holocaust of the Roma.

What is particularly remarkable is the object status of the Roma in every frame. Either as 'problem', or as 'victim', or as 'agents' the Roma are never allowed to speak for themselves, they are silenced and spoken for. In any case they are considered as an object of governance intervention and as a social and political problem, a problem

of “public order” (Rossi 2009). Acknowledging their subject status would mean to acknowledge their existence.

Our findings in this report confirm our previous analysis throughout the whole TOLERACE project that racism is considered as some kind of ‘illness’, attributed to the extreme right, but never a constituent part of any European society.

From our analytical work it has emerged that racism is something Europe has elaborated since the Holocaust. If problems with ‘immigrants’/‘Roma’/ ‘Muslims’/ ‘Blacks’... emerge, it is because *their* integration has failed, because *they* differ too much from *our* culture, have too different ‘values’, religions and cultures. It is precisely the ‘culture pattern’ that lies at the centre of racist discourses nowadays. As Amin has pointed out,

justifications of race rely on cultural, not biological arguments, playing on the claim that the beliefs, values and practices of different ethnic communities are both distinctive and irreconcilable (Amin 2010: 2).

Racism is thus depoliticized, externalized and as a consequence trivialized. Racism is considered to be a problem of individual attitudes, a problem of ideology that is a ‘private matter’. It is not part of daily practices, as Essed (1991) suggested, but considered an exception. Racism is fragmented, found here and there. The Eurocentric approach precludes the acknowledgement of racism as a foundation of the process of modern nation-making, linked to the imaginary of the preservation and creation of culturally and racially homogenous entity.

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