

Sedentarisation and "the right to nomadism". The urban and regional fabric of nomad camps in Italy (1967–1995)*

I. Introduction

In the twentieth century, for the first time since the birth of the nation-state, the benchmarks for the inclusion or exclusion of strangers were decided by national migration policies.¹ Following the oil crisis in the early 1970s, which definitely marked the unfeasibility for state economies to refuse labour migration, the authority behind the implementation of immigration policies progressively moved from the national to the urban level.² This shift brought about two major phenomena:

1. Discontent among the local population, mainly due to welfare problems, in facing what media and conservative politicians started framing as "immigration threat".³
2. The rescaling of power and governance from state to local institutions, in particular to the police, which was the main institution in charge of social control of that potential "threat". This became evident in that police actions were conducted differently in different urban contexts.⁴

These two phenomena were particularly evident in the Italian context, in which no organic and comprehensive immigration law was introduced until 1998. Thus, analysing Italian local policies addressing generally dispossessed migrants between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s may shed light on the changing trajectories of the governance of urban marginality in the renewed global order. It is precisely during those twenty years of national indecisiveness vis-à-vis immigration that a considerable number of foreign Romani families arrived in Italy.⁵ During that time, regional and urban authorities inaugurated what could be called a "policy tradition", meaning that the first policy strategies, idioms and conventional knowledge regarding this largely "iconic population"⁶ were then established. As some scholars have pointed out, the legacy of those first policies is still in place, significantly delimiting the available material and discursive resources for alternative public action,⁷ leading to the enforcement of segregation.⁸ In this article I shift the analytical focus from the legacy of those policies to their genesis and functions.

However, camp policies' segregating effects are not my only concern here. I also draw on reflections about the links between racism and urban formations. In the literature on nomad camps I detect a certain tendency to view camp policies as merely the institutional incarnation of Italian racism, i.e. Romanophobia/anti-Gypsyism; this tendency has arguably prevented enquiry into the specific path-dependency processes involving social dynamics at the local level, and their relations to national socio-political contexts within which those policies and practices first appeared. In this regard, Leonardo Piasere discusses the local uses of meanings and categories for identifying Roma in Verona, arguing that camp policies were primarily influenced by a local "anti-gypsy cosmology".⁹ At the same time, the interstices within which the social uses of that particular cosmology hide are overlooked. In a later work, the author proposes a speculative

hypothesis according to which camps were initially planned as "camping sites",¹⁰ though clear historical evidence for this seems only briefly sketched. Similarly, Tommaso Vitale, although historically contextualizing the first practices of confinement of Roma and the kind of camps that they produced, fails to explain the specific agencies and rationales behind those practices.¹¹ Historian Luca Bravi, on the other hand, although explicitly focusing on national rather than urban policies, outlines a picture of the origins of the camps; however, the author does not concentrate on the camps themselves, instead investigating the contemporary national education policies, which, he explains, needed "halting sites" to be implemented. As such camps have always been constructed locally, in this regard his study seems to be partial.¹²

Due to a lack of detailed historical analyses on the origins of nomad camps, in this article I raise the question of the ways in which, and the social conditions under which, nomad camps came into being as both spatial and representational urban formations. I will systematically examine the social and political contexts within which the first "halting areas" for Roma appeared in the cities of Turin and Florence, which I chose as case studies. My argument is that sedentarisation, in the form of an initial solidarity and a later response to public disorder, and the "right to nomadism", i.e. an enigmatic device allowing the juxtaposition of Italian and foreign migrants, were the two main apparatuses, practical and discursive respectively, whereby the urban encapsulation of variously defined people of Romani descent was initially enacted. My aim is to provide scholars and practitioners with a solid historical and ethnographic account in view of a critical (self-)examination of the rationales, scopes, instruments and strategies behind the (urban) governance of largely economically disadvantaged subjects, whether newcomers or locals.

From spring 2008 to summer 2012 I intermittently conducted research in the Regional and Municipal Council archives in Tuscany and Piedmont, as well as in the archives of local associations and NGOs in Florence and Turin. Furthermore, since a large part of the material regarding the first measures taken towards the construction of nomad camps is not included as written documentation, I carried out oral history interviews with Roma who lived in a camp in Florence, as well as with activists and volunteers in both cities. I chose to focus on Turin because the first camp policies in that city addressed both Italian and foreign Romani families. Moreover, Turin is one of the first Italian cities in which the two most prominent Italian charities working for Roma appeared, namely Opera Nomadi and Centro Studi Zingari. On the basis of their experience in facilitating the construction of camps in Turin, these charities played a pivotal role in advising Regional councils on Roma-related issues. In Florence, on the other hand, camp policies addressed exclusively foreign Roma. These two types of policies – one addressing both foreigners and locals, the other only foreigners – are the two main "Roma policy models" to be found in Italy.¹³ Therefore, although in each region and city there have been peculiar idioms and practices in the construction of nomad camps, the two case studies I will discuss can be seen as representative of local camp policies addressing Roma throughout Italy. At the same time, I will delve more deeply into the specific case of Turin than into Florence, largely referring to my previous work on Florence.¹⁴

II. Sedentarisation. Turin from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s

Following the already mentioned global socio-economic processes occurring in all European countries, from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, the phenomenon of migration progressively shifted from being internal to being international. Unlike most other European countries, how-

ever, in Italy internal migration did not only characterize rural-urban mobility, but included a more outstanding and visible social phenomenon in the form of a marked movement from deprived Southern regions to industrialized urban areas in the North, primarily Milan and Turin.¹⁵ In national public discourses on migration, the South-North axis largely overshadowed the rural-urban one. One of the consequences was that in mid-1960s Turin, civil society actors working for the sedentarisation of Piedmont Sinti,¹⁶ gradually moving from the countryside to cities in North-West Italy, never categorized them as internal, i.e. rural-urban, migrants, but only as either "sedentary" or "nomad" people. That categorisation had an important impact on the subsequent practices addressing Sinti and later foreign Roma in Piedmont.

Until the 1960s, Sinti had travelled throughout the Piedmont region, following a pattern of mobility strictly related to their own occupations, which were primarily those of craftsman and merry-go-around operator. Due to changing job requirements and a decrease in demand for those services, by the end of the 1960s their halting periods in the outskirts of big towns had become longer. They preferred areas close to springs or rivers so that their horses could drink. In Turin, one of such locations was an area close to Via Lega (Lega street), in the Northern urban periphery. In the mid-late 1960s a group of so-called lay nuns [*suore laiche*], who were regularly providing Sinti with material support along with evangelisation, installed a post in the Via Lega settlement with a sign reading "Via Lega 50". In the nuns' view, that was a very important action because it provided the Sinti with a registered address, and therefore with access to basic services such as medical care and schooling.

It was at that time that the Turin section of the national charity Opera Nomadi started working towards the schooling of nomad children (*scolarizzazione dei bambini nomadi*).¹⁷ In 1967 the first "Lacio Drom classes" (*classi Lacio Drom*) were set up in the Martin Luther King school, which was the closest school to the Via Lega settlement. Lacio Drom – a name meaning "Have a good trip!" in Romani – were special classes that Opera Nomadi ran in several Italian cities from 1967 to 1992, only for "Gypsy" (*zingari*) children. At the Martin Luther King school there were only Sinti children, who every morning from Monday to Friday were picked up from several settlements in the outskirts of Turin in cars provided by the municipality. However, between the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Turin became the destination of several Romani families arriving from Yugoslavia – mainly from Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia – who found precarious and provisional shelters in peripheral areas, one of which was right next to Via Lega, 50.¹⁸ Since their arrival, those families had been moving from one area to the other, according to economic needs and family relations. Turin Opera Nomadi started to progressively deal with those foreign families as well, but its main focus was the schooling of "Gypsy children" through the Lacio Drom classes.

In 1970 the charity decided to lobby the government for a more widespread solution to the "nomads problem" (*il problema dei nomadi*).¹⁹ This resulted in a national politics of sedentarisation, beginning in 1973 with a series of circulars issued by the Ministry of Interior and addressed to local authorities. The first circular (number 17/1973) stated the necessity for municipalities to abolish the prohibition against halting for Romani families.²⁰ The circular also stated that the "inclusion of nomads is difficult, sometimes also due to prejudices that local population and local authorities have. The problem is also acknowledged at the national level, it being evident that a socio-economic and cultural evolution of nomad groups would be useful".²¹

I now turn to a historical-ethnographic discussion of a few details, which seem to be fundamental to an understanding of the main representations and programmatic ideas behind the

construction of the first "halting areas" (*aree sosta*).²² Prior to the government's circulars, and due to the increasing presence of Romani families from Yugoslavia, in May 1972 the Turin division of Opera Nomadi received a letter from its headquarters in Rome. In the letter, the charity's managing board defined the main problem for which "halting areas" were thought to be a solution: "One of the most serious obstacles to education activities and to school attendance [of Gypsies] is forced nomadism, namely the fact that as soon as they settle down, their neighbours protest and the police evict them [Gypsies]". In the name of Gypsies' interests, the charity proposed to build two kinds of areas, a "camping site" for "nomad Gypsies" [*zingari nomadi*] and a "village for sedentary Gypsies" [*zingari sedentari*]. The letter was written in view of "involving [in the project] state authorities and regional councils throughout the national territory", and it made direct reference to both a French project to create a halting area and to the 1968 Dutch Caravan Sites Act.²³

According to Opera Nomadi's programmatic letter, camping sites had to include the following five elements: "(1) a sufficient surface in order to allow caravans and other vehicles to halt; the surface should be divided in view of allowing each family to have its own space; (2) hygienic services, such as toilettes, showers and a laundry; (3) a 'social house' [*casa sociale*] comprising of an office, a medical ambulatory, meeting rooms; (4) a nursery, along with a knitting and cooking space for women, who should provide to cook meals for the children; (5) adequately prepared personnel, such as a gatekeeper, an administrator; a social worker; a health care worker; a male educator for children; a female educator working in the kindergarten, a nurse for newborns, and a teacher for helping children doing their homework. Additionally, a physician and a lawyer for at least half a day per week are needed. They should work along with the health care worker and the social worker respectively".

The second type of areas, those for "sedentary Gypsies", were thought of as necessary due to the fact that "Sedentary Gypsies at the periphery of cities live in miserable shanties, often in contact with asocial or antisocial elements, with consequences which are always negative". Areas for sedentary Gypsies were to comprise the following seven elements: (1) Gypsy housing [*abitazioni zingare*], meaning one-family-size houses with a garden and parking space for one car; (2) personal housing – two places, one for the educator, and the other for the gatekeeper; (3) social house [*casa sociale*] with a meeting room, administration office and health care ambulatory; (4) artisan laboratory – in order to provide jobs which are suited [*adatti*] to the group (possibly an activity which would change over the years as the group members became progressively included within the mainstream economy); (5) a vocational school for young people who want to learn a job; (6) a nursery, including a space for women (see equivalent in the project for nomads); (7) personnel (see equivalent in the project for nomads).

The contents of this letter provide a first impression of the purposes that camps were intended to serve, and of the ways in which they were intended to function. This is obvious in the fact that Opera Nomadi drew on two major principles. First the exclusiveness of the population to which those areas were addressed; "Halting areas" were places which should have hosted only *zingari*, no matter whether they were Sinti, Italian Roma or foreign Roma. The second principle was the peculiar idea of social inclusion underpinning Opera Nomadi's project; it is notable that "halting areas" primarily aimed to respond to low education rates among "Gypsies" without any reference whatsoever to the socio-economics of Romani families. Rather than considering Roma as migrant, deprived, poor, or marginal people, Opera Nomadi exclusively labelled them simply as either nomadic or sedentary people – two cultural concepts – thus adopting a culturalist understanding of them.²⁴

III. The making of the first "halting camp" in Turin (1977–1979)

Now I narrow down my discussion to a largely meaningful case, in which Opera Nomadi's two main principles, i.e. the concentration of all Gypsies in the same space, and the culturalist understanding of their subjectivity, were implemented. Although local voluntary assistance for Roma had already appeared in the mid-late 1960s in the "Via Lega" settlement, it was not until March 1979 that the first legally recognized "halting camp" in Turin was completed. In what follows I will discuss, in a historical-ethnographic tone, the relationships between facts, agencies and worldviews that contributed to the crystallisation of the first material and representational limits on how and why camps were to be set up for Roma.

In order to move from projects and ideas to actions, in the mid-1970s Opera Nomadi needed the full support of local authorities. Between October 1976 and March 1977, the charity, along with the municipal office for technical assistance, found two areas that could be suitable for camps. This went ahead with the full support of the Sinti community, who were asking for better "halting conditions", meaning less evictions and less protests by neighbours. The first official result was a deliberation proposal,²⁵ which councilman Mazzaro read in front of the municipal council on May 23, 1977. The proposal sheds light on the definition of the problem for which "halting camps" were envisaged as the solution:

The phenomenon of nomads' caravans stopping within the urban area currently occurs in a messy way, lacking any control. Caravans regularly camp on open, house-free areas, which are close to houses and blocks of flats, and, in some cases, they also camp on large traffic islands (*banchine spartitraffico*). For obvious reasons, those caravans provoke the protests of nearby inhabitants, creating problems for the local police, who cannot easily control and regulate them.

This excerpt shows that at the beginning, the main problem according to the municipality was "nomads" breach of public order. The "obvious reasons" mentioned by Mazzaro can be interpreted as the creation of disorder, which, in order to be turned into order, required the construction of camps. Further, the councilman stated that – working together with the representatives of Opera Nomadi – "an area at the extreme Southern periphery had been chosen. The area is located between the left bank of Sangone spring, and Unione Sovietica alley, to which the area is connected by a road". This was followed by a description of the division of the area into two spaces, and this clearly resonated with Opera Nomadi's 1972 programmatic letter: "The area at hand will be divided in two parts. The first part, more internal, will serve prolonged halts, hosting about thirty families, while the second part, closer to the entrance, will serve short halts, catering to travelling families". Further, the councilman listed the concrete measures that the municipality would fund, namely (1) the construction of roads, internal and external to the camp; (2) the construction of green areas and playgrounds, and (3) the construction of an electricity distribution system. In May that year the proposal was passed, and in March 1979 the Sangone halting camp – the first halting area divided in two in order to accommodate both long and short sojourns – was completed.

At that time the Sangone camp hosted both Italian Sinti and Kalderash Roma from Yugoslavia. Italian Sinti living in the camp put forward their request for more social assistance, especially healthcare-related, and, interestingly, they claimed that camp, and the others that would have

been constructed, only for themselves. The reason for this was that it was Italian Sinti who had initially asked for a halting site, and who were waiting for its construction to be completed. According to Italian Sinti, Kalderash Roma (or "Slavs" [*slavi*]), had to find shelter somewhere else, in areas hosting them exclusively. Kalderash Roma, in return, who used to travel in small groups, asked for smaller camps, because a big halting camp could not facilitate community life for three to four caravans. These first divergences were not a temporary feature of the Roma camp scene in Turin. Indeed, they have had a significant impact on the later organization of camps, which have progressively shifted from being camps for all "nomads", no matter their subgroups, to camps each hosting only a single subgroup.

So far I have examined the main views of Opera Nomadi national headquarters and Turin local council with regard to "the Gypsy problem". In order to conclude this section about ideas and practices in the making of the first camp for Roma in Turin, I now focus on Turin Opera Nomadi's definition of "the Gypsy problem" and its repercussions on the construction of camps. Those views are expressed in a 1978 letter that the charity sent to the mayor of Turin and to the councillors and municipal assembly members. The letter is entitled "Gypsy problem in Turin", and Opera Nomadi's goal is stated:

Over the last years several initiatives have been carried out by our national headquarters and local offices, in order to turn the Gypsy problem into a problem of the entire Community. This included legislative or practical interventions in view of removing those obstacles, which Gypsies have in our society due to their nomadism, to their identity and to their culture.

This description shows that, according to Opera Nomadi's Turin division, the reasons behind "the Gypsy problem" were the Gypsies' own lifestyle, i.e. nomadism. This vision underpinned Opera Nomadi Turin offices' actions and decisions towards solving that "problem". Consequentially, camps were constructed in order to "correct" a lifestyle, an identity and a "culture" that were viewed, by Opera Nomadi local offices, in contrast with "our society". This idea is interesting because it inspired several later legislative initiatives and policy practices concerning camps for Roma.

The detailed description of the case of Turin sheds light on the complex array of agencies, world views, intentions and actors that contributed to the construction of places exclusively for Roma at the extreme urban periphery. While the education of Gypsy children was Opera Nomadi's first priority, camps also served other purposes, primarily those related to public order, police control and especially the "correction" of Gypsies' lifestyle. Sinti's agency also contributed to shaping the characteristics of the first camp, and the first tensions between the Sinti and the "Slavs" show that camps did not reduce the significance of ethnic boundaries in everyday life. And clearly, the entire process referred to above, which took place in Turin between the end of the 1960s and the end of the 1970s can be described as "sedentarisation".

IV. "The right to nomadism". The genesis of nomad camps in Florence (1987–1995)

In the late 1960s, Yugoslav Roma, generally only men, started travelling regularly to Florence to do small business, staying for short periods of time. At the end of the 1970s, concomitant

with the crisis of Yugoslavia's economic and political structure, Romani families began staying in Florence for longer periods.²⁶ Little by little they found relatively safe areas where they could stay with their caravans. One of these areas was in Castello, which is still one of the richest areas of Florence, where renaissance villas mark the northern end of the urban landscape. Given that context, it was probably not surprising that Castello residents were not inclined to welcome into their neighbourhood poor and often jobless men and families without fixed abode.

Adin is a Romani man who was born in 1964 in Pristina (Kosovo) and arrived in Italy in 1977.²⁷ In 2007, when I met him in a Florentine nomad camp, where he had been living since the camp was built up. He had five children. The history of his family's migration is illustrative of the conditions under which the first camp in Florence was built up. Once in Italy, Adin and his family first spent some years in Verona, where they engaged in begging, and in other cities, where they could carry out less precarious and dangerous activities, before arriving in Florence. They first spent three years in the Castello neighbourhood, and in 1988, as Oلماتello, the first camp, was built, they moved into it. In his own words:

As I was living first in Via Pistoiese and then in Via Sestese [both in the Castello neighbourhood] policemen used to come and bring me to their headquarters in Borgo Ognissanti [a nearby street]. Once inside the building, they beat me and they made me cut the grass in the garden. They asked me who were the thieves, who had guns ... but I only knew the situation of my own family, and it was perfectly legal.

Our neighbours in Castello hated us. Once there was a small fight involving young locals and some of us. The next day they [locals] agreed to burn down our caravans with fuel. Don Sergio, a priest, alerted us, saying: "Go and tell the other Roma! They want to burn down your caravans". All our families escaped, and I remained alone with my mother and my aunt. Carabinieri [an Italian police force] came to protect us. After that day I got to know Italian activists and priests to whom I started talking about our miserable living conditions.

Due to their neighbours' recurrent aggression toward the Roma, the Regional Council voted on the proposal of a law addressing Roma and entitled "Interventions for the protection of Roma ethnies [*etnia rom*]"²⁸ Contrary to the case of Turin, however, in Florence local Roma were never consulted before drafting policies addressing them were drawn up, until the beginning of the 1990s. Before being voted on, the law, which was passed on 12 March 1988, went through a process of interesting debates and consultations.

Of particular importance for deciding the shape and functions of the camps were consultations with "expert" civil society organizations working for Roma, including local divisions of Opera Nomadi and other local actors. These consultations with "experts" revolved exclusively around the issue of nomadism and its consequences in terms of education for children, inclusion in the labour market and, especially, housing solutions. What is interesting to note here is that nomadism, besides being presented as a lifestyle or a cultural trait, was also considered as a "right". "The right to nomadism" is stated in Article 1 as the main principle underpinning the law: "The Region states these norms for the protection of the Romani cultural heritage, in view of avoiding impediments to the right to nomadism and to remaining within the Regional territory, as well as to getting access to social and healthcare services". Therefore, the first institutionally imposed idiom for defining the social conditions of Roma in Tuscany was conceived of as a special kind of "right".

In 1988, the "right to nomadism" was the main official rationale for dealing with a local conflict, which, far from being "cultural", was about public order. "The right to nomadism" therefore

can be seen as the epitome of the first camp policies in Florence, and it can be found also in several other regional laws.²⁹ In order to understand in details the precise meaning of such a "right", it is helpful to look at one article published in 1970 in *Lacio Drom*, the aforementioned bimonthly journal directed by Opera Nomadi activists, and entitled "The right to nomadism" [*Il diritto al nomadismo*]. The author, Francesco Gangemi, argues that this right has no positive applicability in Italy.³⁰ He then identifies the main problems in defining and implementing such a "right", explaining that there are two possible practical implementations of the right to nomadism. The first, in the case of nomads who aim to become sedentary, is the construction of a site in which the group of nomads can stay and get in touch with the local population; the second, in the case of nomads who do not want to become sedentary, is a reference to public security and penal laws. Thus, it is evident that at the beginning, "the right to nomadism" was rather paradoxically thought of as a device of sedentarisation. As with the case of Turin, particularly in its adoption of the same analytical tool of sedentary/non-sedentary nomads that Opera Nomadi had developed, the goal of the first Tuscan regional law regarding Roma, and along with this the function of the first nomad camp was, ultimately, sedentarisation.

Sedentarisation was to be enforced by granting more social rights to those who intended to stay in the camp longer than thirty days. Moreover, according to the law, staying away from the camp for more than three days would result in the loss of the right to come back. What is interesting to note in the tension between the "right to nomadism" and these sedentarising efforts is that nomadism became something to be *protected*, yet at the same time, something to be *corrected*. This suggests a strong similarity with the efforts towards sedentarisation that characterized the Turin section of Opera Nomadi's work.

The 1988 Regional law was then abrogated by the following one, which was passed in 1995. In view of drafting the second law, the Michelucci foundation, an important local research institution, carried out field research among Roma in Florence, and found out that only a small proportion of them were nomads. Hence, the new law set as its first priority "communication between cultures", and, only as a secondary priority, the "right to a nomadic life". However, as I have explained elsewhere,³¹ this new law did not have a significant impact on camp policies in Florence, and the main idiom for defining both Roma and their social conditions had already been set by the first Regional law. This idiom, which is still used by civil servants working with Roma in Florence, can be heuristically understood within the framework of "cultural fundamentalism", an influential phenomenon in European political history which has been discussed by anthropologist Verna Stolcke.³² One proof of this is that – as with the case of Turin – in Tuscany Roma have never been perceived as labour migrants, but only as cultural subjects, i.e. nomads.

V. Conclusion

In this article I have discussed the social contexts, agencies, worldviews and practices whereby the first camps for Roma were constructed in the cities of Turin and Florence. I have shown, in an ethnographic-historical tone, that contrary to what mainstream literature on nomad camps in Italy suggests, segregated areas for Roma at the extreme peripheries of towns are not the mere refraction of widespread racism. As my analysis of Turin has disclosed, camps were constructed through a complex and efficient web of solidarity and help by the most active charity in town, Opera Nomadi. This process implied a serious commitment by Opera Nomadi's volunteers towards schooling and providing sedentary housing conditions to Romani families; and this

was coupled with the necessity for public order. Those two main goals, solidarity and public order, could be kept together, thanks to Opera Nomadi's peculiar view according to which "the Gypsy problem" was caused by Gypsies' own culture, identity and lifestyle; first and foremost by nomadism. In order to "solve" this "problem", and concomitantly to secure public order, sedentarisation was seen as the key. In Florence, on the other hand, although sedentarisation was also present in the first regional Law for Roma, it was coupled with the "right to nomadism", the epitome of the first camp policies. The "right to nomadism", which did not have any positive juridical applicability, can be seen as a tentative means by which to recognize Roma cultural difference, one which would not clash with the norms of public order.

As the mid-1970s oil crisis was globally rescaling power down to more local contexts, local authorities and civil society groups became significantly powerful in turning migrants and migrant families, who were following economic and political contingencies, whether internally (regionally) or internationally, into subjects of the state. Those (public) authorities and (private) civil society groups did not view mobility as a trait that was, to varying extents, induced by large socio-political issues. Contrarily, they considered mobility only within the "cultural" context of nomadism. This seems to be the main reason why *sedentarisation* and *the right to nomadism* set the available discursive and practical ways in which Roma in Italy were – and, to a large extent, still are – governed. *Sedentarisation can thus be viewed as the main material apparatus ("dispositif")³³ of the local dynamics leading to the first camps for Roma in Italy, while "the right to nomadism" can be viewed as the main discursive apparatus with which policies and governance practices were designed and carried out.*

The "racial segregation" of Roma that the European Roma Rights Centre witnessed in Italy in 2000 was an exceptionally tightly woven net of ethnoracial encapsulation of many Romani families in camps and other segregated areas in several urban peripheries.³⁴ This system of encampment was largely made possible due to the impact of structural changes in the world economy since the mid-1970s on migration processes. Tracing back the origins of camp policies for Roma in Italy, as I have in this article, does not reveal an unproblematic and linear link between the first "halting areas", such as the Sangone area in Turin, and contemporary segregating camps. Rather, it suggests that the origins of the very idea of "camps" for Roma as sustainable policy devices in Italy was the result of a complex mélange of (1) historical-material contingencies such as rural-urban and international migrations, (2) charities' culturalist and, to a certain extent, "creative" worldviews defining those contingencies, and (3) in some cases, the desire of a number of Romani families to find a shelter, wherever this could provide a space of relief and freedom from continual evictions.

More case study focused historical analyses on the initial functions and subsequent historical pathway – and path dependency – of policies addressing Roma in Italy would be able to generate a debate on the contemporary governance of minorities and migrants in urban peripheries. This article can already contribute to promoting a more (self-)reflexive stance that politicians, policy-makers, charity leaders and all citizens may want to embrace when approaching issues involving Roma at the local and national level. Political élites and charities in Italy and elsewhere in Europe could benefit substantially from such a (self-)reflexive stance.

Endnotes

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- 7 Giovanni Picker, "Welcome 'in'. Left-wing Tuscany and Romani migrants," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16 (2011): 607–620; Gabriele Roccheggiani, "Le nomadisme: une anomalie ethnique? Le marquage biopsychologique des Roms et des Sintis en Italie en tant que régime de vérité," *Etudes Tsiganes* 46 (2011): 96–113.
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- 9 Leonardo Piasere, *Popoli delle discariche* (Rome: CISU, 1991, 202–213).
- 10 Piasere, "Che cos'è un campo nomadi?."
- 11 Tommaso Vitale, "Da sempre perseguitati? Effetti di irreversibilità della credenza nella continuità storica dell'antiziganismo," *Zapruder*, 19, (2009): 47–61.
- 12 Luca Bravi, *Tra inclusione ed esclusione. Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia* (Milan: Unicopli Press, 2009).
- 13 It should be noted that there are also few cases of nomad camps only for Italian Sintis. See for instance a discussion of the case of Bozen and Bressanone (Südtirol): Gertrud Tauber, "Die 'campi nomadi' oder, wo beginnt die Planung?," in *Sinti und Roma. Eine Spurensuche*, ed. Elisabeth Tauber (Löwenzahn-Verlag, 2005).
- 14 See: Giovanni Picker, "Welcome 'in'. Left-wing Tuscany and Romani migrants," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16 (2011): 607–620; "Left-wing progress? Neo-nationalism and the case of Romani migrants in Italy," and "La biopolitica della differenza. Un'antropologia delle politiche dei campi nomadi a Firenze," *DADA. Rivista di antropologia post-globale*, 2 (2012): 93–109.
- 15 Goffredo Fofi, *L'immigrazione meridionale a Torino* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964); John Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).
- 16 Individuals and collectives self-identifying as Sintis live mostly in Germany, France and Northern Italy. See, e.g., Elisabeth Tauber, ed. *Sinti und Roma. Eine Spurensuche*.
- 17 In 1965 Opera Nomadi signed an agreement with the government whereby the charity became the only accredited charity for providing education to Romani children.
- 18 Carlotta Saletti Salza, *Bambini del campo nomadi. Roma bosniaci a Torino* (Rome: CISU, 2003, 44).

- 19 I translate "*Il problema dei nomadi*" with "nomads problem", as well as "*il problema degli Zingari*" with "the Gypsy problem". This should be explained because the Italian expression can have two meanings, i.e. the problem that Roma would experience and the problem that Roma would pose to non-Roma. As Sigona argued, it probably carries both meanings at once. See Nando Sigona, "Locating the 'Gypsy problem'. The Roma in Italy: Stereotyping, Labeling and the 'Nomad Camps'" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31, 4 (2005): 741–756. It should be noted that at the moment of writing these two expressions are still widespread among journalists; politicians; local authorities and in everyday life among lay citizens.
- 20 The first circular was the result of an Opera Nomadi motion, which was approved in Turin on 18 September 1970 during an internal meeting.
- 21 Ministry of Interior Circular 17/1973, quoted in Gabriele Roccheggiani, "Le nomadisme: une anomalie ethnique? Le marquage biopsychologique des Roms et des Sintis en Italie en tant que régime de vérité".
- 22 All quotations here are taken from the mentioned letter, which was written by the Opera Nomadi headquarter in Rome on the 23rd of May, 1972. The letter is part of the Turin section of Opera Nomadi's archives.
- 23 With regard to the French project, the letter mentions one article, which appeared in 1971 in *Lacio Drom*, i.e. the bimonthly journal published by the Gypsy Studies Centre (*Centro Studi Zingari*). The article, as well as the 1968 Dutch Caravan Act, pointed out one major dilemma, which can be paraphrased as follows: "how can we guarantee both sedentarisation and mobility?" The halting site for Roma in Europe, as a policy device, spatial formation, and representational object, clearly emerged along with this dilemma. More research on the 1960s transnational connections of power/knowledge concerning Romani housing would probably be necessary in order to shed light on the emergence of what has gradually but steadily become a device of ethnoracial urban confinement across Europe.
- 24 The culturalist understanding and the consequent lack of recognition of any Romani agency resonated perfectly with the coeval European institutions' views on Roma – see Simhandl, Katrin, "Beyond Boundaries? Comparing the Construction of the Political Categories 'Gypsies' and 'Roma' before and after EU Enlargement", in *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe. Poverty, Ethnopolitics and the Neoliberal Order*, ed. Nando Sigona and Nidhi Trehan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009). On Opera Nomadi's 1970s and 1980s static and ahistorical notion of culture, see Luca Bravi, *Tra inclusione ed esclusione. Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia*, and Luca Bravi and Nando Sigona, "Educazione e rieducazione nei campi nomadi: una storia," *Studi Emigrazione*, 18 (2007): 857–874.
- 25 A municipal deliberation is a political decision about a concrete matter concerning urban social life.
- 26 Vieri Gaddi "I Rom a Firenze: analisi di un processo di integrazione," MA. Diss., University of Florence, 2002, 24.
- 27 All names of persons have been changed by the author of this text.
- 28 On the reasons behind the first regional law, see also Piero Colacicchi, "Rom a Firenze", in *L'urbanistica del disprezzo*, ed. Piero Brunello.
- 29 Between 1985 and 1993 twelve Italian regional councils passed laws for Roma. All laws invite local authorities to build camps for Roma.
- 30 Francesco Gangemi, "Il diritto al nomadismo," *Lacio Drom*, 6(3) (1970): 2–24, quoted in Gabriele Roccheggiani, "Come spighe tra granaio e campo. Costruzioni culturali e normative del 'nomadismo' in Italia," Ph.D. Diss., Urbino University, 2011, 307–308.
- 31 Giovanni Picker, "Welcome 'in'. Left-wing Tuscany and Romani migrants," 617.
- 32 Verena Stolcke, "Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe," 4.
- 33 I refer here to Foucault's concept of "apparatus" (*dispositif*) meaning, firstly, a set of "discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, *the said as much as the unsaid*. [...]; secondly, "the connections that can exist between these heterogeneous elements"; and thirdly, "a sort of–shall we say–formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent need*", Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, 194–195).
- 34 ERRC, *Campland. The racial segregation of Roma in Italy* (Budapest: European Roma Rights Centre, 2000).