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From Public Enemy to Urban Ghost: Roma Migrants and  
the Dismantling of the Nomad Camp Systems in Milan  
and Rome

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### Abstract

Roma migration from Eastern countries has been one of the main topics of public debate in Italy in the last decade. Roma people have been depicted as the biggest threat to citizens' safety, especially in the biggest cities, and have become the target of special *securitarian* measures that revive old stereotypes. At the same time, thanks to various European bodies, Roma people have also become the targets of ad hoc inclusionary policies, such as the National Strategy for Inclusion. The deconstruction of the camp system for nomads was one of the basic targets of all the interventions. This article describes what happened to Roma migrants during the last ten years – from the ‘Nomad Emergency’ of 2007 until the present-day dismantling of the nomad camp system. It focuses on Roma migrants who live in the two Italian cities where most of the Romanian Roma have settled since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Milan and Rome. The paper analyzes the public policies that were implemented by national and local authorities, and highlights some of the strategies that Roma migrants use to cope with the dismantling of the nomad camp system.

*Keywords:* Nomad Camp, Romanian Roma migrants, Italy, Rome, Milan, public policy.

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## *Introduction*

In Italy, Roma migrants are no longer perceived as the main security issue: new threats, such as terrorism and the refugee crisis now make up the focus of public debate. At the same time, sadly, Italy continues to be infamous for the living conditions of Roma groups, and especially for the housing policies that target them.

This situation continues despite the countless reports – both national and European – that denounce the inadequacy of the policies implemented by the central government and local administrations (Commissioner Jo Cox, 2017; ECRI, 2015). Since 2000, Italy has been famous as the ‘nomad camp country’ (ERRC, 2000); the displacement of the Roma within this specific type of settlement was only the first element in a wider system of governance.

Policymakers have now committed to slowly eliminating this system. In some Italian cities, new policies have been implemented, to little effect. This process is obviously affecting Roma people because it is changing the range of opportunities they have and the types of risks they face. The aim of this article is to analyze the reasons, forms and consequences of this policy shift, and to explore how Roma migrants deal with it.

While scholars with diverse perspectives have provided a deep understanding of what we can define as the ‘nomadic camp system’ (Sigona, 2005; Colacicchi, 2008; Vitale, 2008; Clough Marinaro, 2009; Picker, 2010; Daniele, 2011a), we have little scientific knowledge of how this policy shift has been implemented or what were its consequences. Policies governing the nomad camp system have changed throughout the last 30 years, and their implementation has been affected by the nature of the local contexts they encountered. Because of this, we focus on the most recent stage in the evolution of nomad camp policy – that which spans the so-called ‘Emergency Period’ to the present days.

Within this policy shift, we aim at describing some of the strategies implemented by Roma migrants. In their trajectories, we can recognize a new kind of challenge to the physical and symbolic border of the nomadic camp, and we will see if and how the Roma can create new links and connections in the local context or in a transnational environment. We critically refer to the notion of ‘campzanship’ (Sigona, 2015), and try to understand if and how this concept is useful during the process of dismantling the nomad camp system.

Moreover, our analysis will only include the cities of Rome and Milan. These are the two cities with the greatest number of Roma groups in Italy. In both cases, a great amount of resources have been allocated to deal with the issue, to little or no effect. Furthermore, both cities have been host to large Roma settlements for a long period of time in the form of unplanned shantytowns and authorized nomad camps, inhabited by groups with different migratory itineraries and different stories of co-existence within the city. We focus in particular on the Romanian Roma.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The main author of Part no. 1 is Daniele, in collaboration with Greta Persico; the main author of Part no. 2.1 is Pasta in collaboration with Persico; Paragraphs 2.2 and 3.2 were written by Daniele; Part no. 3 was written by Daniele and Pasta; the main author of Part no. 3.1 is Persico in collaboration with Pasta.

## *1. The theoretical frame for understanding nomad camps and their dismantling*

In the last ten years, the policy surrounding nomad camps has been studied using different theoretical frameworks.

Following Agambenian theory about state and citizenship, nomad camps have been depicted as an exemplary locus of exceptionality, where state authorities displace and confine non-citizens while preserving their 'bare life'. From this point of view, nomad camps, together with other kinds of camps, are tools that state authorities use to deal with populations that are considered different and dangerous because they disturb, if not threaten, 'national order' (Piasere, 2006; Clough Marinaro, 2009).

Critical perspectives related to post-colonial studies have highlighted the colonial origins of confinement measures and depicted the nomad camp system as a 'spatio-racial political technology' based on the simultaneous criminalization and protection of the so-called nomadic people (Picker, Greenfields and Smith, 2015). Nomad camps have also been defined as 'neo-ghettos'; that is, following Wacquant, a peculiar tool for managing urban marginality through control and punishment (Clough Marinaro, 2015).

Foucauldian approaches, inscribed within a general critique of the notion of power, have highlighted the circularity of power relations within the settlements and focused on the interactions among diverse subjects. In line with this perspective, Maestri (2017b: 6) summarizes the diverse recent contributions, underlining that '[...] the camp is co-produced "by a plethora of institutions and organizations" and "multiple partially sovereign actors" (Ramadan, 2013: 69), as well as by "the people acting on, inhabiting or surrounding it" (Martin, 2015: 14), including organizations acting in solidarity with the camp residents.' In line with this perspective, refugees studies are no longer focused exclusively on understanding the confinement and disempowerment of settlers. Besides deprivation of rights and limitation of freedom and agency, settlers are not reduced to 'bare life': they still have resources and opportunities for crossing the physical and symbolic border of the settlements (Turner, 2015).

Following the latter approach, we do not identify the nomad camp system as a static and homogenous mechanism that always produces the same kind of segregated and marginalized subjects.

First of all, following Shore, Wright and Però's perspective about the anthropological analysis of the related policy (2011), we consider the historical modifications of this policy and the diverse contexts of its implementation with a view to describing its life and changes, as well as what we can define as its unexpected outputs.

Moreover, we aim at describing the nomad camp construction as a dynamic setting in which, together with the circulation of specific resources and discourses, new subjectivities can emerge or disappear, and actors can modify their own strategies and aims. Focusing on the actors related to this scenario, we include other subjects in our analysis, such as those who share the same urban situation as the Roma, and we deal with the issue of the agency of Roma settlers. Our aim is to describe and theoretically

understand the action undertaken by Roma during the time that the previous frame of action, the ‘nomad camp system’, was being overcome, or dismantled.

The Italian literature about the agency of Roma within nomad camps seems to be framed using two main theoretical approaches. There are scholars, mainly anthropologists, who underline the cultural autonomy of Roma people as a feature that makes them somehow independent from the power that g g  authorities would exert over them. Roma people are depicted as a ‘*peuples-r sistance*’ (Ass o, 1989): they are deemed able to re-translate all experiences into internal scenarios that are totally different from those of the g g  and are closed off to them (Solimene, 2013). Furthermore, we have scholars, mainly sociologists and political scientists, who focus on the various forms of political re-action engaged in by the Roma within the nomad camps. These researchers apply notions such as resistance, protest or subversion (Armillei, 2016; Maestri, 2017a, 2017b) to reject the depiction of the camp as a ‘total institution’ (Nicola, 2011) in which Roma are reduced to a ‘bare life’ (Clough Marinaro, 2009) and upon whom the state can exert its sovereign power without restriction.

In this article, we employ a diverse perspective in which cultural identity and autonomy are not adopted as the ultimate explanation for all the strategies that the Roma engage in, and nor is agency limited to political activism. We aim at following and broadening the path opened up by Sigona (2015) who, following the wider theoretical debate about camps and encampment policies, and adopting Ong’s notion of ‘mutations of citizenship’ (2006), depicted components of dwellers’ agency in terms of a sort of ‘campzanship’. Moreover, we refer to the latest work by Clough Marinaro who highlights how Roma settlers in legal and illegal settlements manage formal and informal relations with g g  in their search for new opportunities (2017).

We focus on the new migratory and settlement strategies engaged in by some Roma families and individuals because, following Manzoni (2016), those are considered pivotal grounds for understanding the interplay between g g  interventions and Roma families’ strategies.

In the first part of the article, we present two life trajectories<sup>2</sup> of Roma migrants settled in Rome and Milan. We then inscribe these trajectories within the history of policies toward Roma people carried out at the national and local level: a decade marked by the increasing harshness of the security approach, the start of what is known as the Nomad Emergency, and the overcoming of this emergency as marked by the National Strategy.

Our aim is to describe the difference between the so-called ‘overcoming’ of the nomad camp policy and the more prosaic ‘dismantling’ of it. Within this frame, we also aim at providing some first insights into the strategies that Roma engage in to cope with this policy shift.

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<sup>2</sup> Life trajectories were collated as part of the international research project MARG-IN (project number ANR-15-CE28-0006): MARGInalisation/INclusion: les effets   moyen et   long terme des politiques de r gulation de la pauvret   trang re sur les populations-cibles : le cas des migrants dits « roms » dans les villes d’Europe occidentale (France, Italie, Espagne). (Mid and long term effects of the policies aiming at managing poverty on target populations : the case of the people called Roma in Western European cities.)

The three authors of the paper have been involved in Italian Romani Studies since 2004. Their work has focused on Roma in Italy and abroad – more specifically, in Romania. All of them have been in touch with Roma families since the very beginning of their fieldwork, approximately ten years ago.

Besides carrying out research activities with Roma families, we have also been actively involved in community development and social care projects alongside them.

During these activities, we collected and constantly updated a large amount of ethnographic data. In the present text, we focus on two of the 18 life trajectories that we have drafted in the last few months. Each life trajectory refers to a single Roma person and their household. It focuses particularly on their dwelling history, the economic strategies they adopted, and their spatial mobility, with the aim of highlighting the interplay between policies, social interventions and personal strategies. These life trajectories are based on data collected through interviews and individual meetings that occurred in Italy and Romania with the people involved in the research, as well as the researchers' participation in family life and special events such as marriage, *Judecata*, christenings, or family celebrations for Christmas, birthdays or Easter.

We do not consider the life trajectories we present here to be representative of the complex system of Romanian Roma migration from Romania (see: Pontradolfo and Piasere, 2016). On the contrary, we consider them a useful tool for triggering an analysis of the interplay between Roma agency, social intervention, and local policy because they allow us to identify the turning points that led to the adoption of new strategies.

## ***2. From policies to daily lives: two experiences from fieldwork<sup>3</sup>***

### *2.1 Costel's story: Milan*

We met Costel in the warm spring of 2008 while hundreds of evictions were taking place. Costel was moving his possessions from the shelter he was living in to a cousin's car. In this situation, we just helped him and his wife to save their property. During the weeks that followed the eviction, we met them in their new settlement nearby. Ten years have since passed, and many things have happened to him and his family.

Costel is now 46, his wife Aluna 42; he has two daughters: Anca, 18 – who he had with his first wife and who lives with him – and Elena, 8 whose mother is Aluna. In the last few years (especially from 2012 to 2015) Costel also lived with his first son Catalin, 25, his wife Flori, 24, and their three children. Costel's mother, Geta – who is 61 – joined them in 2015, and is still living with them. Costel was born in Draganești and emigrated to Milan in 2005 following the migration trajectory of several other families from the Olt region of Romania (Potradolfo and Piasere, 2016).

From 2005 to 2007, he spent only a part of the year in Italy, going back to Romania quite often to stay with his parents.

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<sup>3</sup> The authors have modified names and sensitive details to guarantee the privacy of the people involved in the research.

When in Italy, he stayed at his cousin's shelter in the Triboniano area, a big slum that was transformed into a regular nomad camp in 2008 by the right-wing local administration, only to be closed few years later, in 2011. From 2008 onwards, Costel and his wife Aluna decided to remain in Italy for longer periods. Because they were not allowed to live as residents in what was now an authorized nomad camp, they moved several times and stayed in different shantytowns, from which they were regularly evicted.

At the beginning Costel refused all offers from social services such as a foster house for his wife and child (at that time, Costel's daughter was seven years old) so as not to become separated from them.

In 2013, he agreed to be hosted in the Social Emergency Center<sup>4</sup> because at this center families were allowed to live together and because Elena's health condition was precarious due to the living conditions of the slums.

At the beginning of 2015, after several extensions of their permanent status at the CES shelter, Costel's family was displaced to the CAA<sup>5</sup> in the Western suburbs of the city. In this case, the center had been built a few meters away from a former nomad camp which had been closed by the municipality. Once settled into the CAA, Costel and his wife began what was defined as a path towards autonomy - at least by the social workers of the center.

Costel found and lost a job within a short time, but was then able to find another one. For a few months, Aluna undertook a paid internship which was not designed to result in a permanent position. At the end of 2016, Costel was told that he had to look for a rented house or an alternative housing solution because his stay at the CAA could not be prolonged. Costel and his wife had to leave the place in October 2017, and they rejected the offer, made by the municipality, to return to the CES.

By then, Costel had been in Milan for almost ten years and was at risk of going back to living on the street.

Thanks to some information received from another family from Draganești - previously lodged at the CAA - Costel came into contact with people of Maghreb origin who were in charge of the market that supported the illegal occupation of public housing in the Eastern suburbs. After paying approximately 1200 euros, he entered an apartment recently left by a family who had returned to their native country.

In the period, the eldest daughter, separated from her 'husband' from Salcuța, and who had returned to live with her son at her father's 'maisonnée', left her family of origin again. In January 2018, she started a relationship with a young man of

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4 The CES - in Italian: *Centro di Emergenza Sociale* - Social Emergency Center, is a public service for short- and mid-term housing emergencies. They are located on the periphery of towns, and are equipped with containers (one for several families, around 40 people each), common toilets and kitchens, and a big room for social activities. In these centers, surveillance is ongoing 24-7, and social workers are present every day.

5 The CAA - in Italian: *Centro per l'Autonomia Abitativa* - Autonomous Housing Center, is a public service for mid-term housing designed for families living in precarious housing. At these centers, each family has its own container. CAA is considered to be a second step in the autonomous housing process following CES.

Maghreb origin; they illegally occupied a second flat. Shortly after, however, Anca's new partner was arrested for drug dealing.

## *2.2 Estela's history in Rome*

Estela was born in 1996 in a very small town in the southwest of Romania. Her hometown is located only a few minutes from the Danube river, while Turnu Severin and Craiova are 30 minutes by car. She is the oldest of the four sons of Marian and Dorina.

The family left their hometown and moved to Rome in 1998 after a few failed attempts to settle in Germany by Marian, acting alone.

They chose Rome because many relatives and people from the same area had previously settled there and it was considered an easy place to settle in.

They settled in an unauthorized settlement in the Southern periphery of the town. The settlement was made of shacks built by the settlers themselves; no basic services were provided, and hygiene was very poor.

In 2000, Estela's family - together with many other Roma - moved into a new, authorized settlement recently inaugurated by the municipality. This is the Via Candoni nomad camp, located in the Southern suburb of the city. Estela's family was appointed a Portakabin with a size of 36 square meters. All the basic services, such as water and electricity, were provided. Besides the radical change in housing conditions, in the new settlement Estela and all the members of her family could benefit from the social interventions carried out by social workers specifically for the settlers. Since opening, the Municipality has funded NGOs that implement social projects related to schooling, health and job placement.

Estela's family receives significant aid from the social workers involved in these activities. and it was especially Madalina, born with physical problems in the winter of 1998, who benefited from these. During their stay in the unauthorized settlement, Marian and Dorina did not ask anyone for help, and could not get in touch with the Italian care system or social workers. They were used to keeping Madalina in the house, and none of their relatives were aware of the situation. Once they moved into Candoni, it was easier to get in touch with Italian social workers, and thanks to them she could start receiving professional treatment. Moreover, Italian social workers pushed the relatives to apply for financial support because of Madalina's disabilities.

It was not only Madalina who benefited from the social projects that were implemented within the settlement. While Marian continued to occasionally work with relatives and settlers of the Candoni camp, his wife engaged in some of the educational and vocational activities that were provided in the settlement. By doing this, Dorina could avoid begging, as she did when they lived in the unauthorized settlement. Since 2006, thanks to Italian social workers' help, she has been employed as a cleaner or a kitchen hand through daily contracts. This process has been long and slow but massively changed the family income.

In the spring of 2014, Marian and Dorina received an official marriage request for Estela from a family from the same Romanian town as theirs that had settled in Brussels. After many phone calls and chats, Estela was allowed to spend some time

with Viorel, a youngster of the same age as her who she had got in touch with the previous summer. The wedding was celebrated in the summer of 2014.

Estela moved to Viorel's house, a little apartment in the suburb of Brussels. The house was inhabited by Viorel's parents, an older brother with his wife and two little sons, and two younger children, one male and one female. Estela had very little opportunity to leave the apartment or meet other people: she did not know the town she was living in, and could not speak the local language; she was allowed to meet only Viorel's relatives, and could not leave the flat without her husband escorting her.

In February 2016, Estela's parents received a phone call from Viorel's father. He said that Estela had moved out of their house and had not come back for two days. The day after, Marian's cousin in Brussels found Estela on the streets and brought her to his house.

Marian immediately went to Brussels and brought her daughter back to Rome with him; she stayed in the nomad camp for few weeks and then, during Easter time, she went back to her grandmother's house in Romania. In the meantime, divorce proceedings were quickly concluded between the two families.

Estela moved back to Rome together with her family at the end of summer 2016, but at this time her parents had decided that their time in Rome was over. During the summer time in Romania they had talked with some Romanian Roma who were organizing travel to the United States. They made arrangements with these people and were supposed to move in December 2016. Their last autumn in Rome was devoted to earning money rapidly and to preparing for the trip. They found another family that was interested in renting their Portakabin and appointed a trusty person from the settlement to watch the Portakabins for them. None of the children attended school during those months, and for the very first time Estela's sister was asked to go begging on the streets.

### *3. A look at the national scenario: the public policies for managing Roma*

In Italy, the level of housing segregation of the Roma is still high; as scholars have pointed out, this ethnically based segregation is based on the erroneous assumption that these groups are nomads and therefore deserve different kinds of housing solutions, namely, nomad camps (Sigona, 2002; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009; Dalla Zuanna, 2013).

The genesis of these policies is to be found in the 1980s when various Italian regional councils adopted regional laws aimed at protecting so-called Roma culture, starting with their supposed nomadism. Local authorities tackled the issue exclusively on an ethno-cultural basis. In the absence of a national law that recognized the Roma and Sinti as minorities, this choice – also supported by Catholic pro-Roma NGOs – led to the creation of the nomad camp policy system. Besides Italians, Roma and Sinti with their specific history and Roma migrants from former Yugoslavia – not nomads – were the very first targets of the nomad camp policy. These individuals started arriving in Italy in the 1970s–80s and settled in the biggest cities, such as Milan, Rome, Turin and Naples. During the 1990s, the increase in their number due to the Balkan Wars accelerated the spread of the nomad camp policy.

Another turning point can clearly be highlighted: in 2007–2008, when the so-called ‘Nomad Problem’ became a national issue. The progressive increase in the migratory flux from Romania triggered this change, together with four local events which took place in the biggest Italian cities: the fire in the Opera shantytown, a camp entirely made up of tents located just outside Milan; the hyper-visibility of Roma minor ‘pickpockets’ in the main train station of Milan; the pogrom of Ponticelli in Naples (May 2007); and the murder of Giovanna Reggiani in Rome (October 2007). Taken together, these four events strongly oriented the public discourse about Roma migration and triggered the clear process of criminalization of the Roma population by politicians and media. We claim that these phenomena led to the proclamation of a state of emergency, and the signing of an inter-government agreement to send back to Romania those Romanian (European) citizens that Italy deemed ‘socially dangerous’ (Vitale, 2009).

On 21 May 2008, the Italian Government issued a Decree on the Nomad Emergency to be applied in the regions of Lazio, Campania and Lombardy (later extended to Piedmont and Veneto in May 2009). This emergency legislation included extraordinary measures, such as collecting fingerprints (even of minors) and a census of all the people living in nomad camps. The decree was renewed in 2010 and 2011. Although nomadism was used to formally avoid ethnic profiling (Daniele, 2010), this categorization excluded the two-thirds of Roma and Sinti who live in houses in Italy. This juridical measure permits emergency intervention by public authorities and is similar to those decrees issued in the same period to deal with the earthquake in the Abruzzo region and the waste emergency in Campania. At a local level, the implementation of the state of emergency was marked by hyper-visibility in the media, growth in social tension concerning the settlements, political manipulation by right-wing parties, the great availability of funds for local administrations to cope with the problem, and interventions targeting mainly large cities. The main feature, however, was the ongoing social criminalization of the populations who were targeted by the interventions, often through the demagogic use of more *securitarian* instruments of governance. During this period, the municipality of Milan carried out hundreds of evictions and issued fines of 500 euros for ‘vexatious begging’ or ‘illegal camping’. In Rome, the emergency regulations, which operate outside the ordinary juridical framework, led to multiple violations of the management of contracts regulating social services and activities targeting the Roma. Since 2014, the management of these services and activities had been under an investigation known as ‘Mafia Capitale’.

With decision n. 6050 of 16 November, 2011, the Italian Council of State declared the state of emergency illegitimate. This decision was made possible due to a petition signed by a Roma family settled in Rome and the ERRC, and coincided with the general election in Italy. The legal procedure that led to the withdrawal of the state of emergency ran in parallel with a slow and in many respects hidden shift in policy planning.

In 2012, in line with a wider change which involved European bodies and national governments, the National Anti-Racial Discrimination Office (UNAR) launched the National Strategy of Inclusion of the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti (Bortone, 2016).

The National Strategy seemed to open up a new season for policies towards the Roma in Italy: for the first time, the government adopted a policy document that tackled the issue at the national level. Unfortunately, an ex-post evaluation concluded that the new policy had limited effects.

According to Daniele (2014) and Bortone (2016), the strategy is worth remembering for three main reasons:

First, the strategy considers the Roma minority a structural component of the Italian population, thus overcoming the emergency narrative largely based on the idea of a 'sudden and exceptional invasion'. As a consequence, there is no need for exceptional measures: if Roma are simply a part of the Italian population, it makes no sense to invoke the notions of identity and cultural traits to justify ad hoc measures; following the 'explicit but not exclusive' policy approach, addressing the needs of Roma does not require special and dedicated channels. Last, nomad camps are identified as part of the problem: far from being a solution, the spatial segregation of Roma is acknowledged to cause poverty, particularly in the biggest cities.

To re-embed Roma policies within the mainstream system, the strategy calls for the creation of a complex system of governance (Bortone, 2016) based on four main areas of intervention: work, education, health, and housing. Ministries were invited to create national committees to study and tackle problems concerning these sectors. A special committee was formed to discuss the legal status of foreign Roma.

The new governance system was led by an inter-ministerial steering committee, directly connected to the government. The system also involved local authorities, such as regional and municipal councils. Regional councils were required to create local committees, one for each of the four areas mentioned above; they were also required to support municipalities in drafting and implementing new local plans for Roma. Local administrators and NGOs were also an active part of the system. Roma associations were considered key stakeholders: they were involved in the writing process and took part in some of the institutional action that was undertaken.

In the preliminary phases, UNAR encouraged the participation of Roma and pro-Roma associations, further boosting the process of speaking up against the censuses and the declaration of emergency which had started years before. During the preliminary phases, not only did the number of Roma associations increase significantly, but coordinating groups and federations of organizations were also formed, raising the level of dialogue with the institutions.

It is of note that, despite the introduction of new and positive elements and the commitment of the UNAR, the strategy did not produce any visible results (Pasta, 2017; ERRC, 2017).

After an initial period, during which some of the ministries and a few local authorities implemented the guidelines, the complex system of governance collapsed.

In the absence of political and institutional stimuli, no stable system of coordination among the ministries, or between regional councils and city councils was structured; the municipalities continued to act with full autonomy, oscillating between commitment to the new strategy and the adoption of the old emergency logic.

The substantial failure of implementation of the national strategy can be attributed to the genesis and the characteristics of this initiative.

The text contained an important series of general guidelines of strong symbolic and political value and set forth a governance system involving both local and national institutions. However, as already stated by the European Commission in all the periodic reviews of 2015, the text did not include objectives that could be effectively quantified, and nor did it provide a clear schedule for the implementation of the measures. Furthermore, it did not attribute clear responsibilities to the individual institutions and did not clearly quantify the resources to be used. In this sense, the text of the national strategy paradoxically seemed to lack those essential elements that define a policy; i.e., those elements that fix the concrete means of its implementation.

In this context, the absolute lack of a system of obligations (prohibitions, obligations) and of stimuli (rewarding elements, additional resources, etc.) for the implementation of the measures described in the strategy appears significant. The absence of these elements, together with the structural weakness of the UNAR - which was incapable of interacting effectively with ministries and local authorities - resulted in no administrations being obliged or even stimulated to abide by the guidelines expressed in the strategy.

In the face of the objectives and expectations that accompanied its launch, it can therefore be stated that the strategy did not succeed in redefining the national framework of policies for the Roma and did not influence significantly the political debate around these issues.

The Roma issue has been rescheduled onto the national agenda, and some of the structural funds for social policies have been redirected toward Roma peoples. Some symbolic changes have occurred: the term 'nomads' has progressively disappeared from the name of many municipal offices, and many of the training and coordination initiatives of the UNAR and ANCI have been implemented. Despite these efforts, and given the weakness of UNAR, none of these changes affected any policies deeply.

### *3.1 The city of Milan: towards a policy shift*

On 18 May 2007, the right-wing mayor Letizia Moratti, the prefect Gian Valerio Lombardi, and the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Marco Minniti approved the 'Security Pact for Milan'. This document anticipated the declaration of the state of emergency - which was issued one year later. The first act was a census which in Milan, unlike in Naples and Rome, did not include fingerprint procedures. During the state of emergency, the city's policy targeted two main areas: the 12 municipal camps and the shantytowns.

With respect to the illegal settlements, the 'extraordinary' measures envisaged by the state of emergency and adopted by the local authorities aimed at creating demagogic public policies, dictated by the quest for political consensus, which included law-abiding types of interventions and simultaneous exclusion of those concerned from municipal welfare programs. The public discourses and the political agenda concerning the shantytowns were aimed at their complete elimination from municipal territory; once translated into action the approach multiplied the number of shanty towns, worsening the quality of life of their inhabitants. Between 2007 and April 2011, over 500 evictions were carried out in Milan - half of which in 2010,

accompanied by press releases by the local authorities which criminalized the evacuees. Evictions of large settlements, such as the Bacula flyover and Via Bovisasca, were perceived as psychological violence by the inhabitants as they were carried out under the threat of placing minors into the custody of social services, the confiscation of documents, and compulsory deportation to the country of origin.

It is not surprising that the Milanese evictions, carried out ‘in the name of legality’, systematically violated national and international rules (Neri, 2011). The biennium 2008/2009 was also marked by ‘impressive’ evictions, targeting record numbers of people and involving the highest number ever number of policemen; between 2010 and May 2011 evictions proceeded at an alarming rate, and even the smaller settlements were affected. The great visibility of the Roma in the media and political discourse corresponds to the lack of social policies. Shantytowns have always been ignored by municipal social services. The third sector organizations operating in the illegal settlements are not recognized as stakeholders by the prefect or the city council, save on rare occasions. Schools are the only institutions that consider Roma to be entitled to social rights: although the mediation of associations is almost always necessary, Roma children could be enrolled in schools. Starting from 2008, some schools in the Lambrate area, close to the settlement of Via Rubattino, encouraged collaboration between Roma and gagè families, thus openly challenging public administrations (Giunipero and Robbiati, 2011).

Scholars and NGOs published several reports and pieces of research denouncing the impact of repeated evictions. Vitale (2008) and Persico (2010) highlight that the policy imprisoned individuals in what can be defined as a ‘perpetual present’, making any form of existential planning impossible and destroying any form of stability: each clearing obliged evacuees to reconstruct their present all over again.

When we asked Costel and his family to recall their life in Milan during the emergency period, their faces became very serious.

They started to list all the places they were forced to leave: ‘First, the Triboniano area, then Bovisa parking and the Bacula overpass, again Bovisa parking, but in a tent, because we had no time to look for materials to build a shelter.... We were moving around, but Triboniano area continued to be a crucial point.... I went there because of my cousin but also because it was the informal transport station to Draganesti, the place where judecata took place, and weddings were celebrated.’ In 2010 alone, Costel was evicted 17 times.

The discussion brought to our mind the various ways families deal with evictions: cars full of stuff, mattresses hidden nearby, and in some cases Italian teachers or friends storing bags, books and toys in their garages.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note how this was the period when the largest financial resources for Roma and Sinti were allocated to local administration. In the municipal nomad camps, four million euros from a total of 13,115,700 were allocated to social projects, housing and employment projects. The rest of the resources were used to fund security measures to control inhabitants. The municipality of Milan also introduced the *Regulation for the transient parking areas for nomads in the area of the*

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<sup>6</sup> Data collected during informal meetings from October 2016 to March 2017 aimed at updating Costel’s life trajectory.

*City of Milan.*<sup>7</sup> The implementation of the regulation was entrusted to a management committee, whose primary task was coordinating and monitoring Roma's adherence to the 'Pact for Sociality and Legality'; the pact committed Roma settlers to school attendance in exchange for 'school support, social inclusion, training and employment programmes.' This was to foster the 'process of integration into the urban fabric'.<sup>8</sup> The objective of the Council Department of Social Policy was to close down some of the municipal nomad camps and 'downsize' the others.

In spring 2011, right before the administrative elections, the camp of Via Triboniano – inhabited mostly by Romanian Roma – was closed for good, while the Via Novara camp was downsized. It is worth noting that these were the only two areas legally inhabited by Roma migrants. Two years later, all 52 families who had decided to stay in Milan after the closure of Via Triboniano camp were still living in social houses, and most of them regularly paid rent or an agreed contribution. The situation of the families who had returned to Romania was different: many had come back to Milan, sometimes even only a few months after their repatriation, and were living in illegal settlements. In the same period, the other legal nomad camps remained in a state of uncertainty due to incoherence between official communications announcing their immediate closure.

It was the political change of 2011 that caused the discontinuity; it should be noted how this transition coincided with what was new locally and the end of the emergency at a national level.

Policies towards Roma started to change with the election of Giuliano Pisapia as mayor in 2011. The center-left candidate was elected after a campaign in which the Roma emergency took center stage; he was critical about the eviction policy and won the elections although an alliance supporting Letizia Moratti – who was running for a second mandate – accused the left-wing coalition of planning to transform the city into a Zingaropoli (Gypsy-polis). With respect to both migrants and resident Roma, the first element of change was the tone of the public discourse, much removed from the one previously adopted by Moratti's Council. Roma continued to be considered a problem, but they were no longer labeled a criminal ethnic group, nor viewed as one of the main problems of the city. Evictions were carried out to a lesser degree, and without systematic exposure or negative reports in the media. Following Persico and Sarcinelli (2017), it is also worthy of underlining that very little change occurred among the staff of the Roma and Sinti Department (formerly, Nomad Department). Therefore, we now have public officers that, together with NGO workers, have acquired considerable competences and expertise, but have been called, and are still called, to implement very diverse – if not inconsistent – policies, often dealing with the very same migrant Roma who have been living in the city for years.

Since June 2016, after new elections in which the Roma issue was not among the pivotal issues in electoral debates, the city has been administered by a different mayor from the center-left alliance, Giuseppe Sala. One year after taking office, we can say that Giuseppe Sala has operated in continuity with the previous council.

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<sup>7</sup> Defined according to regional law 77/1989; the Regulation was published in the Official Journal of the Lombardy Region on 23 February 2009.

<sup>8</sup> See: the report *Segregare Costa* (2013) edited by Berenice, Compare, Lunaria and OsservAzione.

For the Roma living in the shantytowns, the main novelty was the drafting of the *Guidelines for Roma, Sinti and Caminanti People 2012–2015*, which were issued in 2012, after consultation with third sector organizations and Roma representatives.

Unlike previous policies, the document overcomes the distinction between legal and illegal settlements, granting access to social programs in both situations.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, most of the families evicted from illegal settlement and from authorized nomad camps were offered the opportunity to access the Centers for Social Emergency (in Italian: *Centro Emergenza Sociale*), preserving the unity of each family. In the centers, there are large rooms with 24–40 beds; NGOs and cooperatives provide social services and verify that guests follow the code of behavior.

Centers for Housing Autonomy (in Italian: *Centro Autonomia Abitativa*) were also created. These centers support autonomy in the short term and are made up of little apartments managed by the third sector. So far, this solution has been adopted for a small number of Roma.

Although these social interventions have been subject to criticism (Naga 2015), because of their limited effectiveness and results, we should underline that access to the CES-CAA system after eviction represented a clear change: it provided an opportunity to escape from dwelling in a precarious situation.

It is in this context that we will provide some ethnographic insights that foster understanding of what happened to Roma families, beside policy plans and NGO reports.

CES is situated in close proximity to a regular nomad camp inhabited by Italian Roma. Settlers living in both of the places told us that at the very beginning the relations among them were hostile. After a few months, the same persons described something like an alliance among some of the families from the two settlements. Besides the sharing of daily activities, this alliance also generated common involvement in economic activities, especially in the black or illegal market, such as street selling or collecting scrap metal.

If we consider the CES-CAA system from the perspective of the life trajectory of Roma, these services are opportunities that should be considered mere steps within a complex migratory experience.

Costel's experience in the CES started almost by chance. *'It was 2013 and another eviction occurred. Aluna and me were really tired and worried because of our daughter's health. She was three years old and always sick. When the tall and curly woman from the Comune [municipality] told us about the CES we really did not know what to do. Vom vedea... (we will see). We spent time with the woman. Then we discovered that Trandafir and his wife, and other families from Draganești were also moving there, so we thought... let's try.'*

Costel's experience in the CES was not so positive. In the center, he experienced the informal leadership imposed by some powerful families. He explained: *'Bocea Pavel's family wanted to command, as in Draganești. His sister was lodged in CES for seven months. They continued to lend money with a very high rate of interest: if you didn't pay, they would take your home in Draganești. This is their law.'* Costel was afraid for his daughter Anca: *'When a member of Bocea's family*

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9 In the discourse of policymakers and social workers, the idea of 'autonomy' concerns the ability of Roma families to earn enough money and obtain a place to stay lawfully.

wants [something], he kidnaps a beautiful girl for his son or grandson. You can't fight it, otherwise your home will be burnt down.'

Costel and other families told us how they 'got used' to the situation but also how it was quite difficult, especially at the beginning. Each container is shared by approximately 40 persons, 6 or 7 families in the same container. This means they lack privacy and there are numerous conflicts about managing common spaces such as toilets.

*'In the beginning we used blankets to separate each family. But they [the social workers] did not allow us for safety reasons. Then, when the social workers changed, we did it again and nobody said anything.'* Costel continued to complain about the rules in the center and described the ways he and other families found not to respect them.

While he was living in the CES he worked on construction sites and, thanks to a 15,000 euro loan he obtained from a bank in Draganești, bought a little house in Romania *'But don't tell them!'* (referring to the social workers). Anca and Elena went to school more regularly than before in that period. In the CES, Anca met her first husband again; they became closer until they decided to run away and get married.

In 2015, Costel and his family were placed in the CAA, a period Costel remembers as quite positive. *'I had a permanent job, and we had our own container... much better than the other Center!'* After one year, social workers told him they had to leave the center and to find another housing solution. Costel tried in different ways to extend their permanence in the Center; he collected documents from the job agency he used and in the end obtained an extension until October 2017.

Following Manzoni (2016), we can say that ethnographic data shows how Roma migrants can use the social measures that target them in unexpected ways. The tools and practices of local administrators and social workers are often subverted or attributed with new meaning. This reframing of *gagè* policies and interventions within migration strategies are much more unstable and flexible than what housing policies are able to foresee.

Concerning authorized camps, the decision of the council of state to call an end to the Nomad Emergency led to the abolition of the contested regulation of 2009 and the return to 'regulations for the settlement of gypsy minorities in the territory of the City of Milan' of 1998. Actually, this resulted in reduced social support and reduced investments in the sector. The need to overcome the logic of the camps was increasingly recognized by the municipality: in July 2014, the closure of the camp in Via Novara (Macedonian and Kosovar Roma) was completed and in March 2016, the camp in Via Idro (Italian Roma) was also closed.

Ethnographic data allow us to identify another original strategy that a growing number of Roma families – including Costel's – are now adopting.

Starting from 2014, diverse Roma families joined with many other migrants families in a wave of housing occupations that became a trigger for major social tension throughout the city, partly due to inflated media coverage.

While housing occupation is not rare in suburban areas of the town, the presence of Romanian Roma should be considered a novelty.

Roma families occupied public housing apartments mostly in the districts of Lotto, Lorenteggio and Molise-Calvaire. As far as we know, some of these families

were previously involved in social programs or joined CES-CAA programs but were somehow banned from the centers. These families settled in Milan for the first time at the beginning of the new millennium; they faced an eviction policy implemented by the right-wing administrations and considered occupation a means of emancipating themselves from the historical work of post-eviction reconstruction and a form of retaliation against evictions. Another relevant novelty concerning the housing occupation strategy is that some of the Roma families have built up original networks and alliances with other occupants.

In October 2017, Costel, Aluna, and their daughter Elena were required to leave the CAA; social services from the municipality offered to move them back into the CES. For Costel, this was not an option, so he found a different solution. Thanks to another family from Drăgănești he had met in the CAA, he got in contact with North African people who managed the illegal occupation of social housing. He paid 1,200 euros and moved into an apartment.

*I could not come back to the CES. I didn't want go back to Romania. I did not want to go back to living in a shack... What should I do?* In the neighborhood in which Costel occupied the apartment there are many families from Drăgănești. His daughter Anca is engaged to an Egyptian man and, until he was arrested, they were living nearby in another occupied apartment.

We are aware of Roma families who create and manage economic activities with families from North Africa who have historically settled in the same areas. We also collected data about family ties that have been created between Roma and Moroccan migrants; for example, through mixed marriage.

### *3.2 Rome: a policy shift without a policy*

According to scholars (Daniele, 2016; Maestri and Vitale, 2017), in the last 30 years policies toward Roma groups in Rome appear to be characterized by recurring cycles of emergencies or tragic events followed by announcements of new and radical plans of intervention. Both the right- and the left-wing administrations acted within the rhetorical frame of a supposed 'nomad emergency' and based their interventions on the nomad camp system.

The first organic plan of interventions in the city was issued in 1986 following a series of demonstrations by citizens and right-wing political groups against the presence of camper vans and shantytowns in various parts of the city (Daniele, 2016). The plan tackled the issue of the 'nomadic presence' in the town. It revolved around the identification of authorized areas where the 'nomads' could settle, combined with evictions from unauthorized settlements. From this moment on, the 'nomad problem in Rome' was mainly framed as a space problem (Legros, 2011), with local policy-makers aiming to control the nomadic presence, thereby guaranteeing the hygiene of the urban space (Daniele, 2011b).

The same pattern of interventions - based on evictions and displacement - was then repeated in 1993 and in 1999 - when the migration of Roma from former Yugoslavia intensified - and then again in 2000 and 2008, with the arrival of Romanian Roma. In these periods, evictions from unauthorized areas and relocation in authorized settlements consolidated the logic of the exclusive concentration of

Roma in nomad camps. Furthermore, local authorities moved the settlements to increasingly peripheral areas, concentrating them far away from built-up areas. The municipality guaranteed the provision of basic supplies such as water and electricity within these settlements, but they became bigger and bigger: they were generally capable of hosting several hundred people.

This is the historical period and the political frame in which Estela's family migration was planned and realized. Estela has some memories of the 40-hour trip in a minivan after which they were left at the entrance to one of the many settlements of the town. Estela's parents have very happy memories of this place because they were located right next to relatives and friends from the same area of Romania, but the housing and hygiene condition were very poor.

In 2000, Estela's family moved to the authorized nomad camp in Via Candoni; their situation there improved dramatically. They settled into an authorized camp where their presence was considered legal by local authorities; the settlement and the Portakabins they lived in were provided with basic services, such as water and electricity.

Around the same time, from 1991 to 2008, local authorities considerably extended the services that they provided in the authorized settlements. Besides the basic supplies, a wider system of social services was constructed with the aim of tackling the issues of schooling, job placement, and the everyday management of the settlements (Daniele, 2016; Clough Marinaro, 2017).

As mentioned above, Estela's family received huge help from this; her little sister and her mother benefited most from the regularization of relations with Italian social workers.

However, it is relevant to underline that while Dorina and her little daughter Madalina's situation improved, Estela paid a significant price: when her mother was at work, she was required to replace her by doing her domestic work. This increased in 2006 when Estela's mother gave birth to twins. Social workers in the nomad camp tried to support Estela's schooling career by intervening in diverse ways, but they faced Marian's opposition. While most of the other boys and girls of the same age in the settlement were enrolled and went to school, with some of them attending vocational courses and leisure activities in the neighborhood, Estela mainly spent her time in the settlement. Therefore she could not even get a primary school diploma. Besides the issue of the domestic work, Marian became more and more controlling: he was afraid that Estela could come into contact with other boys and be 'stolen' by them - as happened before to other couple of youngsters living in the settlements. Forced to stay in the settlement and the Portakabin and weighed down with domestic activities, Estela often defined the camp as a jail, stressing the control she was subject to from her father, but also from the other people living in the settlement: *'Everybody here watches you: whatever you do or say, wherever you go, everybody watches and goes back to my father and tells him about me...'*

She tried to take advantage of every opportunity she had to leave the settlement, but she needed her parents' approval to attend the Orthodox Church and to go to the supermarket. Moreover, her parents had strict control over her access to mobile phones and social networks, because they knew that these tools could help her make relationships. Given this situation, Estela was very happy to go back to Romania on

holidays with her family. During the weeks spent in the little village, her parents' control decreased and she was allowed to go around the city with her cousins and uncles and other relatives. She also spent a lot of time with her grandmother because, as she said, she was one of the only people who would support Estela's desires.

Despite the social programs within the nomads camp, Estela declared that all of her desires and relations were located only in Romania because her relatives and the other settlers were used to controlling her.

With this knowledge, we claim that the nomad camps became the fulcrum in a wide system of government of the Roma presence in Rome, because they defined the only places in town available to the Roma, while making them subject to formal and informal control measures.

This system had enormous economic costs<sup>10</sup> and negative social outcomes.

The declaration of the emergency in 2007 – which in Rome was accompanied by the election of the first post-Fascist mayor after more than 20 years of center-left administration –, did not produce a significant shift. Alemanno followed the same twofold pattern of intervention, evicting Roma from unauthorized settlements and creating new large structures in which to concentrate increasingly large numbers of residents.<sup>11</sup>

In the first months of the emergency, heated debate developed around the topic of the census of the Roma, in particular on the subject of collecting minors' fingerprints. After statements and interventions from European bodies, the municipality modified parts of the procedure. The census was then presented as a necessary tool for starting a new policy of reception and management of the nomad camps. In a few months, the controversy died down.

The main initiative of the center-right administration was the closure of two authorized settlements in the city, Casilino 900, and Tor De Cenci, both of which had been inhabited for decades by hundreds of Roma. The settlers were moved to the renewed nomad camp of La Barbuta, inaugurated in 2012, and three other nomad camps around the city that were spruced up for the occasion. One of these settlements is located in Castel Romano, 25 km outside the border of the city. This settlement is located between a mall, a natural park, and a railway. It was created in 2004, when Veltroni's administration relocated 800 Roma previously settled in a nomad camp located in the Ostiense neighborhood, right next to the city center (Daniele, 2011a). After Alemanno's interventions, this nomad camp hosted more than 1,200 Roma.

Alemanno's administration then established new structures, the so-called 'Collection Centers for Roma',<sup>12</sup> which were to be widely used in the following years when there were evictions or displacements from authorized and unauthorized settlements.

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10 Given the lack of accountability of the municipality and NGOs directly involved in the system, it was only in 2011 that data about public expenditure were published by an independent organization who were able to trigger a debate about policy toward Roma in the town (Berenice, Compare, Lunaria and OsservAzione 2013; Associazione 21 Luglio, Fondazione Michelucci, Amalipé Romanò, 2014).

11 As stated in diverse official documents, such as executive decision no. 2769 of 15/06/2012: '[...] all the nomads in Rome must be accommodated in the equipped villages with the simultaneous elimination of all the illegal settlements existing at present.'

12 In Italian: '*Centri di Raccolta di Romi*'.

Besides the intensification of the concentration policy, Alemanno's administration tried to modify the landscape of the NGO actors that provided social services within the authorized nomad camps (Armillei, 2017). The Red Cross became one of the main actors, while NGOs historically connected to left-wing administration lost their pivotal role but were not totally replaced. This shift was strengthened by budget cuts.

Other planned measures, such as the new regulations and the system of control of access, were not implemented.

In 2013, the center-left coalition won the elections and Ignazio Marino became mayor. Despite this, the real change in policies for the Roma occurred mainly because of two legal events. With the decree of May 2015, the Court of Rome stated unequivocally that placing Roma inside the nomad camps was an act of discrimination because it produced 'a deteriorated, not transitory, differentiated treatment with respect to other subjects who are in poor housing conditions.'<sup>13</sup> The statement represented a turning point because it legally required the municipality to modify the policy.

During the same period, an investigation by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Rome, informally called 'Mafia Capitale', highlighted the existence of a widespread system of corruption concerning the contracts signed by Rome's administration to fund social services for migrants, in particular the management of nomad camps and their maintenance.<sup>14</sup> The investigations of the 'Mafia Capitale' directly involved politicians and technical personnel from the municipal departments who, since the years of Veltroni's council, had played a key role in policies for the Roma.<sup>15</sup> Together with politicians and public officers, the investigations involved key figures from the third sector who for years had controlled the main social expenditure items for the Roma, and, for the first time, some Roma leaders.

The overlapping of the two events blocked all political initiatives in relation to the Roma, because personnel at every level of the chain of Roman governance of the nomad camps ended up involved in the investigations. The only initiative that was implemented during Marino's administration, was the closure of another authorized settlement (the one located in Via Cesarina), but all of the Roma residents were displaced to a Collection Center for Roma people, and no other kind of housing policy was created (Maestri and Vitale, 2017).

The Marino council fell after only two years of government; the next elections did not bring in a representative of the traditional parties to the City Hall: victory went to Virginia Raggi, a candidate of the Five Star Movement. However, at least for a long period, the new administration did not undertake any initiatives, while evictions of unauthorized settlements continued. It was only in early 2017 that the administration presented its Roma Plan. There is clearly novelty in this plan, because the focus is now on making the nomad camps obsolete with the closure in the coming years of the

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13 The decision can be accessed on the website of ASGI (*Associazione Studi Giuridici Immigrazione* [www.asgi.it](http://www.asgi.it))

14 'We earn more money managing migrants than selling drugs,' stated one of the key figures in the investigation.

15 The former director of the Nomads Office has been declared guilty, while many others employed in the same office are still under investigation.

first two settlements. The first stage of the plan involves the closure of the nomad camp called Camping River. For the very first time, the municipality started a process that, in their opinion, will not lead to the creation of a new nomad camp or to Roma displacement in segregated accommodation. This process is facing much criticism from Roma and pro-Roma organizations.

It is fundamental to underline that, beside the political orientation, cuts of the funds allocated for social intervention that started during Alemanno's administration<sup>16</sup> triggered the process of dismantling the nomad camp system. This gradual policy shift was not a topic of political debate, but strongly affected the daily lives of the thousands of Roma still living in the nomad camps. From that moment on, no social or management activities had been implemented within the settlement, nor did the municipality fund any sort of stable presence of social workers or local police officers.

A first consequence is the drastic reduction of Roma presence in schools. The municipality cut cultural mediation activities and reduced transportation services, leaving families who lived in nomad camps located several kilometers from the built-up areas in difficulty. Teachers and social workers employed in schools located near nomad camps estimated that the number of Roma pupils attending primary school has decreased by at least 20–30 per cent since 2012.<sup>17</sup> Funds for controlling the inhabitants and for social activities within the settlements were also totally cut off. It is worth pointing out that Roma settlers who were employed in these services were also fired, ending an experiment that, despite being ambiguous and complex to assess, had guaranteed a form of regular income to many families. The gradual reduction of the funds brings to a conclusion one of the pillars of the 'nomad camp policy system', that is, the extensively criticized presence of social services within the nomad camps. The end comes without any assessment or reconsideration in terms of social policy.

Moreover, spaces and facilities once used by social workers and local police officers were simply abandoned. In all of the settlements, the bars at the entrance, the Portakabins where the meters are and where social and educational activities were carried out were simply left without any monitoring or maintenance. Therefore, the living conditions of the settlers worsened because the provision of essential utilities, such as lighting and electricity, are guaranteed no more.

Furthermore, the progressive disappearance of all the *gagè* workers and authorities has triggered a process of reorganization of relations among the Roma settlers.

The evolution of Roma policies in Rome deeply affected Estela's family choices.

During the few weeks she spent in the nomad camp in the winter of 2016, Estela faced radical changes in her family life and in the whole settlement.

Her mother had to go back to begging on the streets because it became more difficult to find job opportunities, while all the support she had from social workers had vanished. Her younger brothers and sister could not benefit from the school

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16 Both in the case of Via Cesarina and Camping River, the municipality did not have resources for signing a new contract with the owners of the structures.

17 We interviewed four teachers and three social workers who worked in schools in the North periphery of the town, in proximity to the Camping River nomad camp, and in the South periphery, near the Candoni nomad camp.

transport service or any of the other school support activity. In addition to this, her older sister, who had physical disabilities, had to stop attending all the support activities she had been taking advantage of in previous years.

Estela found changes even inside her Portakabin: her family has started hosting another Romanian family that had recently migrated to Rome who were neither relatives nor friends. They were paying rent to stay in one of the rooms of the Portakabin and to use its facilities. Renting room inside of a Portakabin was one of the strategies that settlers used to generate money: it was also a quite easy strategy because on the one hand there were still many Romanian Roma families who were moving to Rome, looking for opportunities. On the other hand, all of the monitoring activities carried out within the settlement had been rapidly cut off by local authorities: there was no longer any surveillance at the entrance, nor was there the daily presence of Italian social workers within the settlement, so no one was checking the number and identity of settlers.

Moreover, in Estela's words, this lack of *gagè* presence within the settlement worsened hygienic conditions because no one was called in to clean, and even the garbage collection service became less and less efficient.

Information that we collected from Roma settled in Castel Romano, Via di Salone, and Via Candoni and from *gagè* who used to work within these settlements confirms that the spaces and the management activities once carried out by *gagè* authorities have been informally taken up by some of the residents, or groups of these. The strongest groups in the nomad camps have grabbed the chance to 'informally' carry out these activities. Therefore, there are now Roma families who have the power to control access to the settlement and 'assign' inhabitable spaces or reconnect meters. Roma and *gagè* interviewees affirm that families and groups acquired this power through acts of violence and intimidation against rival groups or *gagè* and they oblige other residents to pay fees for all of these activities.<sup>18</sup>

The further detachment of the nomad camps and of those who live in them from Italian society can be connected with another increasingly prevalent phenomenon: the resumption of the migratory experience for groups and families who had been settled for ten years or more in Rome. In recent years, Rome continued to be a pole of attraction for Roma from Eastern Europe. In particular, those coming from Bulgaria are establishing unauthorized settlements in abandoned areas of the city, often joining those of the Romanian Roma or living in close proximity. At the same time, Romanian Roma are opening new migratory paths.

Estela's family implemented the aforementioned strategies after losing all the benefits and opportunities previously granted by the nomad camp system, taking advantage of the absence of any form of control by the non-Roma authorities. Roma families 'sell' or rent their Portakabins to newly arrived Roma, entrusting one member with the monitoring of the asset.<sup>19</sup> In so doing, the Portakabins - which previously granted security and stability to the family - generate capital for investing or financing new journeys, a new stage on the family migratory path.

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<sup>18</sup> See also: Clough Marinaro (2017).

<sup>19</sup> Armillei (2016) describes other forms of trade with Portakabins by Roma settlers in a variety of authorized camps.

Photos published on social networks that circulate within the Roma community suggest that the numerous opportunities for making money in the USA make the investment required to move there worthwhile. The new migratory pattern, documented by pictures easily accessible with a mobile phone, occupies the thoughts of those who have not yet left. When thinking of this new form of migration Estela was excited and scared at the same time. She had heard many tales from Roma migrants who had settled in the United States and, along with her parents, thought she could easily earn money and find accommodation there. However, she did not know exactly what could happen, where and with whom they could settle, or how they could earn money. She understood that this could be a new beginning for her and for her family, yet, somehow, she was tired of it.

#### *4. Conclusions*

We will now try to provide some preliminary conclusions. We first focus on the evolution of the policies targeting Roma at both the national and local level. Following this, we focus on the Roma's reactions to this changing scenario.

After the 'emergency' and the unfulfilled expectations of the strategy, in certain regions Roma seem to have lost their role as public enemies. They seem to have become less interesting and useful for building political consensus. This is because other threatening subjects have modified the geography of fear and intolerance: citizens' protests now address reception centers for asylum seekers, which seem to have replaced the nomad camps and the shantytowns; the refugee is now the intolerable other who inopportunistically occupies parts of our cities.

Despite the efforts at building a national frame and regional committees to plan and implement policies for Roma, differences between the diverse municipalities appear relevant even during this phase - when the deconstruction of the nomad camp system is considered a common objective.

After implementing the *securitarian* approach that characterizes the years of the Nomad Emergency, Rome and Milan are now following very diverse paths that are leading to the simple dismantling of the 'nomad camp system' - not to its real deconstruction.

In Milan, new housing plans and tools of intervention have been designed, such as CES and CAA.

These centers should make it possible to improve the living conditions of those who live in shacks or illegally occupy flats. The centers represent both the first and the second ring of a chain of tools and services that should lead the inhabitants of shantytowns to housing autonomy.

However, Costel's story shows us all the notable limitations of this chain of intervention: CES are located in very marginalized areas of towns, ironically often in proximity to evicted settlements and authorized nomad camps inhabited by Italian Roma. Moreover, despite being designed not only for Roma but for all families who experience precarious housing conditions, the CES is mainly, if not exclusively, inhabited by Roma guests. Therefore, it reproduces the same spatial segregation as the nomad camps, and creates once again the exclusive relations of social workers who work within the centers. Furthermore, despite being aimed at supporting the

autonomy of guests, the special arrangement of the CES does not allow any familiar intimacy but recreate a compulsory communitarian dimension that was one of the features of the nomad camps. Beside the structural elements that remind one of the nomad camps scenarios, we should also underline that social work within the CES still faces some difficulties: the lack of a connection with public officers and local administrators, the authority being limited to crucial issues such as access and release from the center, and a lack of data about migratory paths and benefits that the hosts previously received.

Once more, Costel's story shows us that, despite the CES being a public service with a high level of control, it is governed by implicit rules that determine the geography of social interactions and power relations between families.

Moreover, we must underline that in Costel's experience the permanence in the center is designed to achieve an objective that is partly different from that defined by social workers: Costel is now buying a new home in Romania while still working and residing in Milan and is not investing (nor is he planning to invest) in better accommodation in Italy for his family. In these terms, we can say that the 'chain of services' provided to inhabitants of this center allows him and his family to overcome the housing instability he earlier faced, breaking the circle of eviction and re-settlement. However, such housing strategies are still planned and implemented alongside social workers and social projects.

The situation should be different in the CAA, where each family has its own Portakabin and the number of non-Roma families is much higher than in CES. However, the number of Roma families accessing this second step is at the moment very low. From this point of view, we may say that the overcoming of the 'nomad camp system' in Milan is much more an ambition than it a realization: the CES-CAA system does not seem to represent a path towards a stable and durable solution.

In Rome, a policy shift is yet to come. Despite announcements about a new plan for intervention, nomad camps remain the *locus* of the Roma issue in towns, while the whole scenario is being modified by juridical procedures and welfare budget cuts. Rather than overcoming the nomad camp policy, policy from Rome seems to be moving toward abandoning the Roma people still segregated in the nomad camps.

Besides the differences, there has not been any critical analysis of the nomad camps system in either city, thus policymakers have neither planned nor implemented consistent policy plans designed to deal with the situation. Moreover, in both cities the tools and principles underpinning the nomad camp system are still at work in the rhetoric of the policy makers, in the segregated and marginalized housing structures provided to the Roma, and in everyday relations with social workers and NGOs. As a consequence, the nomad camp system is not being overcome. It is being dismantled without a coherent plan.

Ethnographic observations in Rome and Milan led us to recognize the original strategies that some of the Roma families put into play while the nomad camp system is being dismantled.

In Rome we highlighted two complementary phenomena: on the one hand, many Roma, and especially many of those who were born and grew up in Rome, with all of the benefits and problems connected with the nomad camp system, are now moving away from the settlements and the city. On the other, Roma migrants who

remain in the authorized settlements are being abandoned by authorities and social workers and are even more confined within the system of relations located within the border of nomad camps. Therefore, nomad camps have become physically and socially much more detached from Italian society and invisible to non-Roma eyes. Between these two phenomena, we can see the divide between Roma and Italian society increasingly widening.

In Milan, the main novelty consists in Roma families creating unprecedented connections and alliances in the city: they are engaged in dealing with other migrant and marginalized groups, sharing housing solutions, economic activities and also creating family ties. While Roma families are still managing to keep connected to the homeland (the main place for investing or saving money), many of them are now vanishing within the cities in which they live: they are not the targets of exclusive interventions but rather hide from them and look for and create mixing strategies with other migrants and citizens.

Comparing these ethnographic data with the theoretical frame of 'campzanship', we argue that while the nomad camp system is being dismantled, it no longer works as a device for guaranteeing and allowing formal or informal citizenship to dwellers. Therefore, we find Roma families moving in original directions in their search for new tools with which to obtain opportunities and rights (that is, new migration strategies), open new ground for relations with other groups, and reproduce the old and well-established patterns of relations based on welfare exploitation and mistrust.

However, all of the paths pursued by the Roma families seem to be confined to marginalized areas of the town and separate spheres of society; therefore, the Roma still belong only informally to the territory where they settle and, while the nomad camp system is being dismantled, their citizenship remains fragmented and unassembled.

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