



***The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe:
Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies
(MigRom12)***

**REPORT ON
THE PILOT SURVEY**

University of Verona

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Stefania Pontrandolfo

Marianna Agoni

Suzana Jovanovic

Eva Rizzin

Dainef Tomescu

Leonardo Piasere

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNTRY-BASED CASE STUDY

1.1. General profile of the community

The Italian research team mapped out a detailed layout of the presence of Romanian Roma in Italy as the initial step of the pilot survey with the aim of drawing up a reliable estimate of the numbers of these migrants in the various Italian regions and cities and to collect data on their different life conditions. Although well-aware of the problems that such a census could cause, we decided that mapping the presence and different situations in Italy would help us select the groups on which to focus our survey.

According to the results of this preliminary stage of the research (data collected from April 2013 to January 2014), we can estimate the presence of at least 20,000 Roma migrated from Romania to Italy. Due to the many difficulties in gathering data about Roma in general, and about Romanian Roma in particular, these data are most certainly incomplete and underestimated. However, they do offer important insights into the presence of these people in Italy.

When considering the Provinces (see *Map 1*), we can observe a greater number of Romanian Roma in Italy's four largest cities: in Milan, where we found at least 3,000 individuals, and in Turin, Rome and Naples, where we found at least 2,000 individuals. We can also see other important urban concentrations in towns like Bari (about 600 individuals) and Catania (about 700 individuals), as well as Cosenza and Bologna (about 400 individuals), Reggio Calabria, Cremona, Florence (about 300 individuals) and Pavia (about 200 individuals). Lastly, we can note a general presence of a few families all over the Italian territory.

From a Regional perspective (see *Map 2*), we can observe the highest number of Romanian Roma in Lombardy (about 5,000 individuals). The other regions with a large concentration (from 1,500 to 2,500 individuals) are Sicily, Calabria, Puglia, Campania, Lazio and Piedmont.

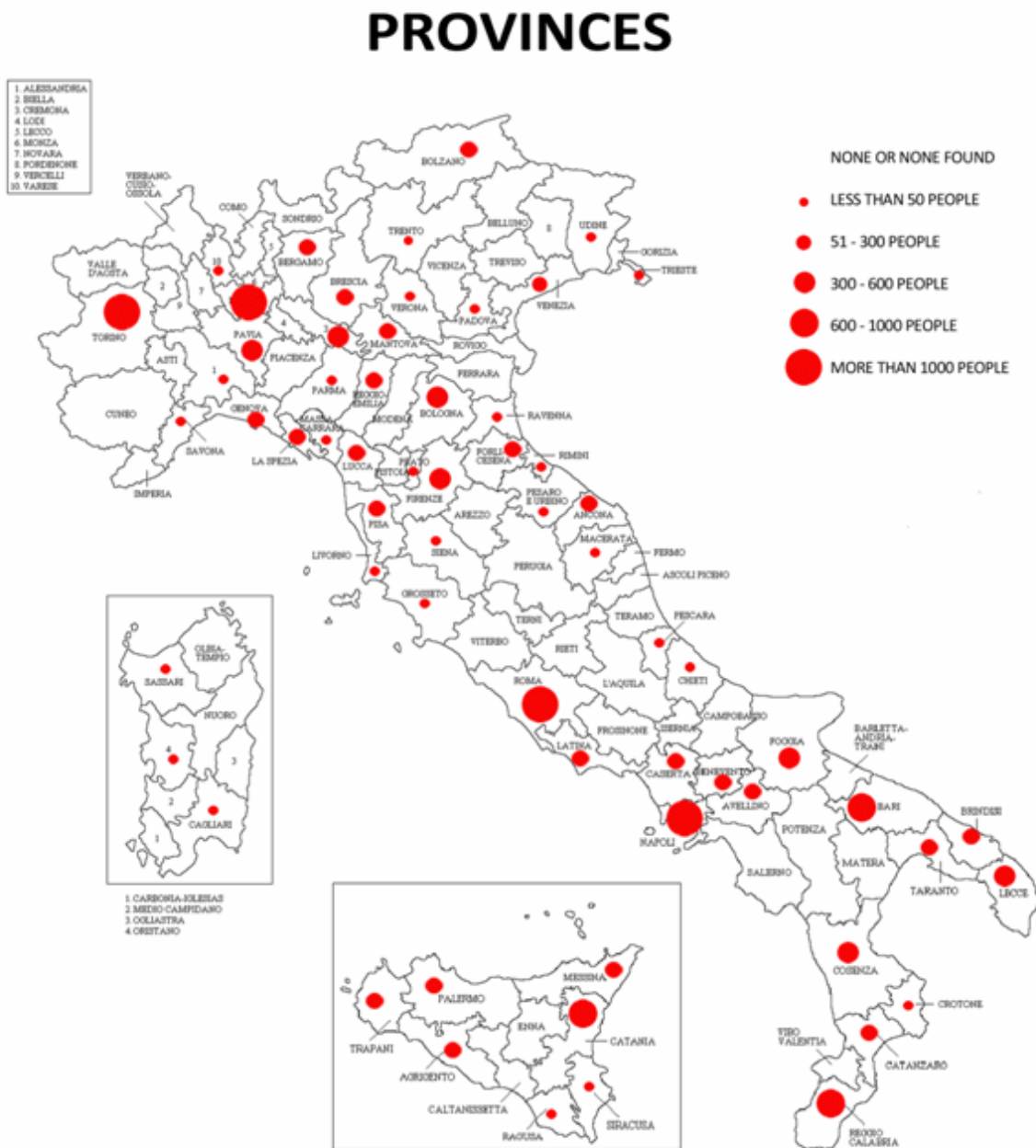
As we can clearly see from the maps, there are presences dotted here and there throughout the Italian territory, but the greater concentrations concern the four metropolises and some large urban areas of the country.

1.1.1. Background and origin

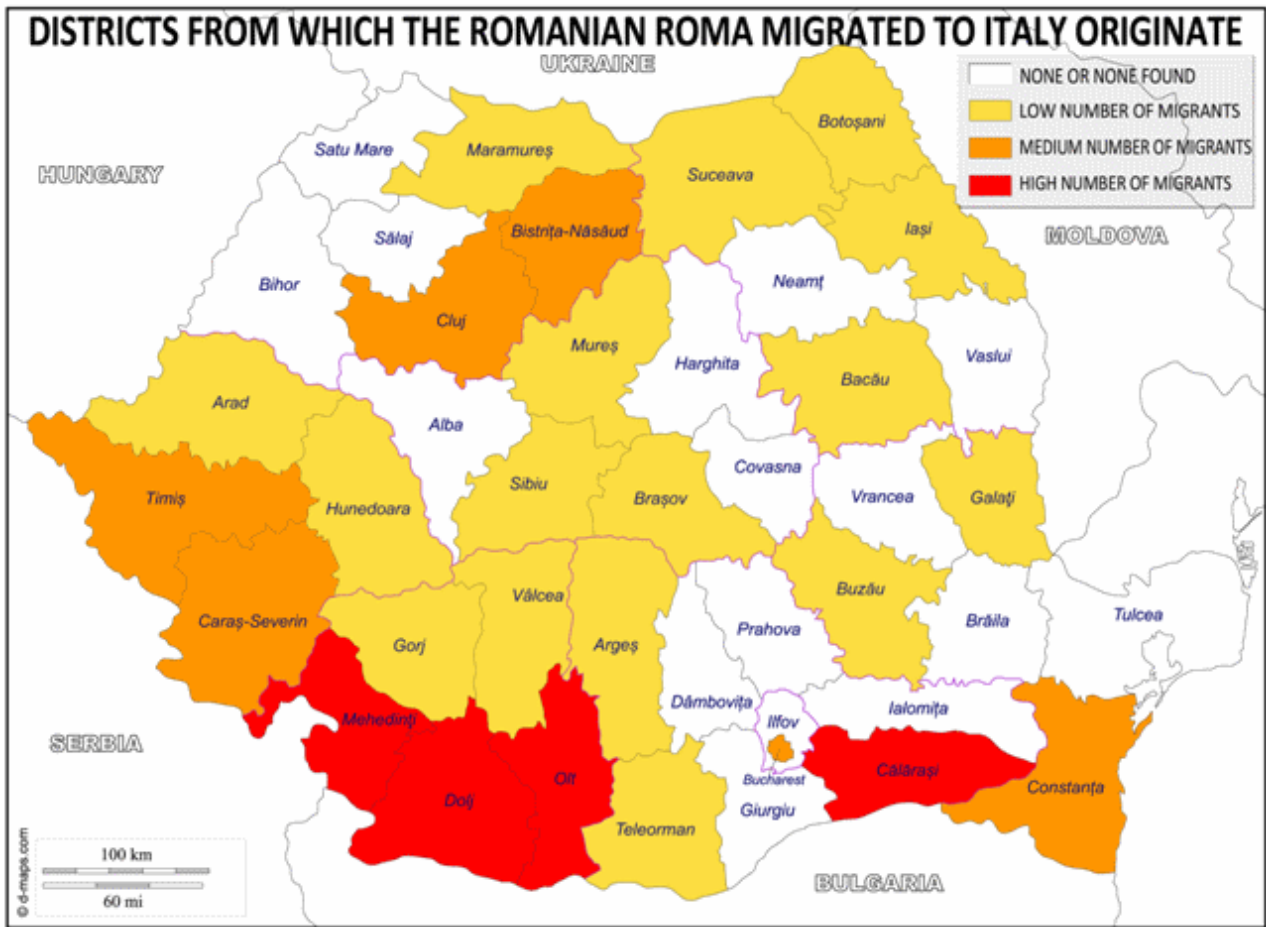
On the basis of these data, the Italian team chose to start two research studies for the pilot survey: one in Milan and Lombardy (Northern Italy), and another in Bari, Puglia (Southern Italy). In both cases interviewed have been in Italy since about 10 years.

- Milan and Lombardy were chosen due to the greater number of Romanian Roma observed in this city and region;
- Bari and Puglia were chosen due to the considerable number of Romanian Roma in this territory, as well as the fact that this Southern Italian case study could, to some extent, be representative of an Italian context that is very different from Lombardy for many historical and economic reasons;
- last but not least, the reason we chose the Milan and Bari areas for our research is that the Roma who have migrated to these areas come from the same Romanian territory. It seemed interesting to follow the social network connections of the families living in Milan or Bari who came from the same zone in Romania, especially from the District of Olt (the town of Drăgănești-Olt and surrounding area) and the District of Dolj (the town of Craiova and surrounding area). In fact, the historical Romanian region of Oltenia seems to be the zone from which most Roma migrants to Italy originate (see *Map 3*).

Map 1. Presence of Romanian Roma in Italian Provinces



Map 3. Districts from which the Romanian Roma migrated to Italy originate



1.1.2 Access to housing

The Roma interviewed for the pilot survey can be divided into three groups according to the form of dwelling. The first group comprises those living in apartments (5 interviewed); the second, those living in authorised camps (4 interviewed); the third, those who previously lived in unauthorised camps and now live in reception centres (established by local authorities as a consequence of forced evictions) (6 interviewed).

The worst life conditions are those living in unauthorised camps or temporary reception centres because they are more unsettled and uncertain. Not only are they without essential utilities, such as electricity, running water, sewers and waste collection services, there is always the risk of being constantly evicted (forced evictions) (see paragraphs 3.2 and 3.4 below).

1.1.3 Access to health care

Considering that registration in the Romanian National Health Service is very expensive, many of the Roma interviewed for the pilot survey had no Romanian medical insurance. Considering also that these Roma often have no residency permit and no employment contracts in Italy, many of them are obliged to use the so-called Code E.N.I. ("*Europeo non iscritto*"- *Unregistered European*), and can only access emergency care, child care, maternity care, voluntary abortion, vaccinations and infectious disease care (but, for instance, they have not the right to a family doctor) (see paragraph 3.8 below).

1.1.4. Access to education

Almost all the interviewed Roma attended school in Romania. Nevertheless, school attendance amounted to a maximum of 13 years (8 years of compulsory school and 5 years of high school). Only three of those interviewed never attended school and are illiterate.

In Italy too, the Romanian Roma children are regularly sent to school at least until marital age. In all cases, school attendance is one of the main negotiation topics with the Italian gagé: it is an Italian peculiarity the fact that local authorities and NGOs help Roma families, mainly, if not entirely, through school attendance support (e.g. economic help to buy school equipment; school bus services; after school projects and so on) (see paragraph 3.5 below).

1.1.5 Employment

The main economic strategy of the Romanian Roma once migrated into Italy, especially at the beginning, but also later if they are not able to find work, is *mangél*, but all those interviewed add other economic strategies to this activity (which is practiced very sparingly in Romania), such as, above all, subordinate work with a fixed-term contract and undeclared and occasional work.

In many of the interviews, the recurring and prevailing theme was the lack of work and the difficulty to access to work in Italy (see paragraph 3.3 below).

1.2 Public debates

Since April 2013 (MigRom Launch date), no national public debates concerning Roma have been reported since in Italy this topic is often discussed at a local authority level. Unfortunately, the so-called "*National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti 2012-2020 - Activation of European Communication no. 173/2011*" (drafted by UNAR (*National Office on Racial Anti-discriminations at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers*)) is taking a long time to make any concrete headway.

1.3. Policy and outreach

1.3.1. Local authority engagement

In Bari there are 7 Roma settlements (including Romanian and non Romanian Roma), even if only one of them is an authorised camp (equipped with electricity, running water and toilets). The Local Authorities of Bari have adopted a non-intervention policy with regard to unauthorised camps, i.e. they have decided to avoid forced evictions and to try instead to promote the inclusion of Roma both at school and in the wider social context. Despite the absence of a Regional Law specifically for Roma inclusion, and thus the impossibility to rely on regional economic resources, the Municipality is planning to build a new authorised camp with prefabs. This plan, however, has led to protests from other Bari residents and many things still have to be solved. Bari Local Authority representatives argue that Italian bureaucratic restrictions in certifying the residence of people who live in camps, constitute an obstacle for many policies that could support Roma (see the "Report from the first Local Authorities Workshop").

In Milan there are 7 authorised camps for Italian Roma or for Roma from ex-Yugoslavian countries. About 1500 Romanian Roma live in unauthorised camps and are subject to continuous forced evictions. To face this situation, Milan Municipality is planning to adopt the so-called "Rom, Sinti and Caminanti Project - 2012-2015" (in line with the "*National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti 2012-2020*"). The budget for this project is around Euro 5,700,000, and the Municipality plans to use about Euro 2,000,000 for the so-called "*Social Emergency Centres*" ("*Centri di Emergenza Sociale - C.E.S.*"), and a further Euro 2,000,000 for actions to support Roma access to housing and employment, such as a forthcoming self-build

project. Representatives from the Milan Local Authority argue that the many Italian restrictions to access social housing are bureaucratic stumbling blocks for many policies that could help Roma inclusion (see the "Report from the first Local Authorities Workshop").

1.3.2. Voluntary sector engagement

In Italy, especially when Roma live in unauthorised camps or in reception centres, relationships with institutions are almost entirely through volunteer or social worker mediation. Politicians rely on the reports of local association representatives rather than listening to the actual voices of Roma, despite the fact that there are now many Roma cultural mediators in Italy (see, for example, the actions of the European Programme *ROMED*, <http://romed.coe-romact.org/>). We were only able to ascertain regular direct formal and informal exchanges between local authorities and some Roma from the community in Bari (which is what makes the case of Bari such a particularly interesting case study from the socio-political relations point of view) (see paragraph 3.9 below).

1.3.3. Project links

The Italian research team mapped the number of Romanian Roma in Italy since April 2013 (see paragraph 1.1 above). In order to carry out this research, the team established contacts (in every Italian province and in every Italian region) with local authorities, especially social services and immigrant help desks, law enforcement agencies, Prefect's Offices, various associations, NGOs, charities, churches or other social organisations that, to variable extents, have contacts with families in arrival from Romania. These team's contacts were mainly by e-mail and telephone, but in some cases, the researchers went to some of the cities to meet and speak with persons from the local authority, law enforcement representatives, volunteers or operators from the tertiary sector. The large number of contacts made during this stage of the research led, among other things, to the organisation of the first MigRom12 Project workshop with the Local Authorities, which was held at Verona University on 14th March 2014 (see the "Report from the first Local Authorities Workshop").

2. THE PILOT SURVEY: BACKGROUND

2.1. The research team

Verona University team composition:

Task: Project Coordination

Leonardo Piasere

Task: Management

Federica Corvaglia: administrative assistant - Period: 1st February 2013 - 31st January 2015

Task: Attitudes survey

Anna Maria Meneghini: senior lecturer

Lisa Pagotto: research fellow (AdR - Assegno di ricerca) - Period: 1st September 2013 – 31st August 2014.

Task: Pilot survey

Marianna Agoni: research fellow (AdR - Assegno di Ricerca) - Period: 1st June 2013 – 31st May 2014 (contract to renew).

Stefania Pontrandolfo: research fellow (AdR - Assegno di Ricerca) - Period: 3rd September 2013 - 31st March 2014.

Stefania Pontrandolfo: main project researcher (RTD - *Ricercatore a Tempo Determinato*) - Period preview: 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2017.

Eva Rizzin: Roma research assistant (from the Sinti Gačkane group) - Period: 2nd May to 1st July 2013

Suzana Jovanovic: Roma research assistant (from the Kaňarja Roma group) - Period: 1st October 2013 - 31st December 2013 (contract to renew).

Dainef Tomescu: Roma research assistant (from a Romanian Roma group) - Period: 1st December 2013 - 31st January 2014.

From September to December 2013 researchers and Roma assistants underwent ethics training, research training and took Romani language classes.

2.2. Pilot survey strategy

The pilot survey was carried out by researchers and Roma assistants in the period going from October to December 2013. 15 lengthy interviews with Romanian Roma originating from the zone of Oltenia were recorded: 11 in Lombardy (in Milan and in other towns of the region) and 4

in Bari.

The Italian researchers carried out their work by collecting interviews in the Romani language and simultaneously by ethnography. Ethnography turned out to be a highly valuable method for putting into context and gaining some data that interviewing neglected to include, often only due to a lack of time. From a methodological point of view, in fact, the greatest problem that emerged during the pilot survey was the length of the interviews. We found that the time normally conceded for an interview hardly ever went beyond two hours of recording with the same individual. Therefore, interviews do not appear to be an adequate tool for finding information on "all" of the inquiry themes planned in the MigRom12 Fieldwork Guidelines. To give an example, it is not possible to reconstruct "detailed genealogies" of interviewed families in the same interview in which we have to ask about many other aspects of their lives (such as economic strategies, health, housing conditions, and so on). We maintain that, through trial and error testing, the pilot survey was very helpful in uncovering the themes proposed by the MigRom12 Fieldwork Guidelines which were more relevant for the Roma we interviewed. The pilot survey results give us important insights into the areas of inquiry to investigate with further in-depth analysis precisely because of their relevance from the Roma point of view. In particular, we found that those we interviewed consider it important to speak about their particular stories and experiences of migration, housing conditions, work possibilities, family and social needs, as well as the fears or worries that particularly recurred during the interviews. Some of these fears are immediately justifiable since they concern the unstable housing conditions in which most of the interviewed persons live in Italy and include the fear of forced evictions. But other recurring fears spontaneously emerged in the interviews without any precise investigation on the part of the researchers since they do not concern any of the research themes outlined in the Fieldwork Guidelines. One of these was the fear of being estranged from their children by gagé institutions who could give them up for adoption. We will see below that, unfortunately, this might be a well-founded fear in the Italian context.

3. PILOT SURVEY RESULTS

3.2. Migratory history and experience

3.2.1 Migration movements and travels

3.2.2 Motives for migration

3.2.3 Migratory experiences

Romanian Roma migration movements are part of a much wider series of migration movements from Romania towards Western Europe, which began just after the fall of the Ceausescu regime. The first appearances of Romanian migrants in Italy date back to the 1990s, but migratory flows became more consistent as of the turn of the century, especially in 2002, with the abolition of visa requirements for Schengen Area countries, and in 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria became members of the European Union. Since then, the number of Romanian Roma living in Italy has remained stable, despite "invasion" forecasts and the rapid turnover of people effectively present in the territory due to many people making continual round trip movements or only staying briefly.

Most of the Roma interviewed for the pilot survey said that their migratory experience started at the end of 1990s (from 1997 to 2000). According to them, the economic crisis inherited from the Ceausescu regime and worsened by the entrance of Romania into a free market system (in the political framework of a weak and young democracy), was the decisive push factor for their migration towards Western Europe. Another important push factor, in the words of those interviewed, was the desire "to be like the others" ("*essere come gli altri*"), (see for example interviews *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*; *Agnadello(CR)_01_29-10-2013*; *Gessate(MI)_01-02-12-2013*; *MI_01_17-12-2013*), that is, to be able to drag themselves out of a situation of need and poverty, provide for their families and improve their life conditions in Romania by buying or building themselves a house, for instance.

From some of those interviewed, it appears that their destination was not initially Italy having first "tried out" migration towards other countries (such as Serbia, Germany, Spain and France, see interviews *MI_03_17-12-2013*; *BA_01_29-11-2013*; *Brescia_01_21-09-2013*; *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*; *Castelleone (CR)_01_02-12-2013*; *MI_04_18-12-2013*) before deciding to stay longer in the Italian territory.

In some cases, only one member of the family, usually the head of the household, initially went abroad making very frequent round trips. This way of moving was particularly common before

Romania's entry into the European Union, and also due to the immigration restrictions foreseen by the Italian Law (see interviews *MI_03_17-12-2013*; *Gorgonzola (MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *Castelleone (CR)_01_02-12-2013*). The wife and children migrated later, even after several years, and sometimes even ten years passed before the family was reunited (see, for instance, interview *Gorgonzola (MI)_01_28-09-2013*).

Departures always follow migratory chains built on networks of family, friendship and neighbourhood relations. The departure point of these chains is always the *țigania* and it is always organised with relatives or neighbours. Their help is a crucial factor for survival during the initial period in Italy. The term "survival" is not an overstatement since the majority of newly arrived Romanian Roma in Italy have to adapt themselves to living in shacks or tents in makeshift settlements, in abandoned factories, on uncultivated land or under the bridges of large urban roads, and so on. All of the Roma interviewed had experienced an "unauthorised camp" as their first form of dwelling, even if some of them now live in different conditions (authorised camps or flats).

At this stage of our description it is important to briefly illustrate the wider context and the housing conditions in which most of Roma live in Italy, a country labelled as a "Campland" (ERRC, 2000) for far too long because of the over-endurance of a unique policy in act in reference to Roma people: the policy of "nomadic camps".

"The approach of the Italian authorities to Roma has been marked by the classification of these groups as "nomads", although almost all Roma in Italy are sedentary [...]. The continuing misperception that Roma are "nomadic" implies that Romani settlements are not intended for long-term use, and the construction of nomadic camps has been the main policy towards groups of Roma, labelled as "Nomads" since the 1980s, throughout the whole national territory, giving such local policies a national uniformity.

In general, the Romani camps can be classified into three main groups: formal, semi-formal and informal camps. The first type are called "formal" or "authorised" or "equipped" camps: they are established by local authorities (municipal councils, prefects or other authorities) and "equipped" with basic facilities. Roma families live in caravans, mobile houses or metal containers and have running water and electricity. Some settlements have pre-school facilities, while most offer some form of transportation to and from school. This kind of camp is often strictly controlled, and may be surrounded by fences and walls, with a security guard at the entrance and cameras all around the camp. [The inhabitants of these camps often need identification pass and also] authorisation

to receive external visitors, even family members.

The second type are semi-formal camps: spontaneous settlement subsequently recognised by municipalities, or formal camps "downgraded" and for this reason destined to be evicted. In the latter case, a municipality halts any work to improve the camp because it will be closed. Only basic services are provided by municipalities: rubbish collection, water, and electricity.

The third kind of camp are "informal" or "unauthorised": these camps are often located far away from city centres, close to railways or waste dump or industrial areas or, in some case, directly on former waste sites. Roma families live in caravans and shacks, often without access to drinking water or electricity, gas for cooking or heating, access roads or drainage systems. Their health conditions are very poor in many cases, access to health services and schools is provided by civil society and voluntary organizations that sometimes receive funds from local administrations" (ERRC, 2013, p. 8).

"Roma from Romania are among the groups that face the worst housing conditions. They bear the brunt of being the latest arrived [in Italy] and are confronted with local administrators who try to keep them out because, according to them, there are already more Roma than the cities can absorb" (ERRC, 2013, p. 9).

Regarding the issue of camps, which is, as we can see, of considerable importance in Italy, many of the interviewed Roma declared that their first impact with Italy was traumatic (see, for example, interviews *Agnadello(CR)_01_29-10-2013*; *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*; *BA_01_29-11-2013*; *BA_02_02-12-2013*). The image they had of Italy when they lived in Romania was one of a rich country that could offer job opportunities to newcomers. However, when they arrived in Italy, they soon changed their minds, mainly due to the experience of living in unauthorised camps, which they were forced to do because of difficulties in finding work (see for examples interviews *Agnadello(CR)_01_29-10-2013*; *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*). In any case, all those interviewed agreed that, although the housing conditions in Italy were very harsh, they were better than those they had left behind in Romania: in other words, for these people, few opportunities are better than none.

3.2.4 Current perceived needs and aspirations

Due to miserable conditions and poverty in Romania, it is much more convenient for the Roma to stay in Italy, but this nevertheless implies paying several high prices, namely:

- a) distance and separation from their loved ones;
- b) precarious housing conditions;

c) job insecurity;

d) fears and worries about physical or symbolic acts of violence they might suffer due to their unstable life conditions;

e) dependence on external aid for survival.

This dependence, along with fears and insecurity, is to some measure fuelled by the policies enacted by the Italian authorities in reference to Roma. It would actually be more correct to speak about political or administrative measures rather than policies. Among these measures, the most common is the "*sgombero*", i.e. the "forced eviction", which does not normally improve or resolve the situation, in fact, it tends to make the Roma life conditions worse. If living in unauthorised camps was already a trauma for those interviewed, it was even harder to face the violence of local authorities' constant forced evictions.

"Families living in informal camps were persistently evicted without respect for the protections prescribed by international standards: residents are not [always] consulted prior an eviction, do not [always] receive formal eviction orders, which makes it difficult to legally challenge the evictions, and [often] are not offered alternative accommodation, which forces them into an endless cycle of evictions. [In many cases] the situation of schoolchildren, ill and old people is not taken in consideration" (ERRC, 2013,pp. 18-19).

In the pilot survey interviews, the sense of insecurity due to the incessant forced evictions recurs as a *leit motif*. We will mention, by way of example of the very high frequency of evictions, the list of measures carried out by the Milan Municipality Local Police only in the period from January to March 2013:

"Measures carried out in authorised nomadic camps and unauthorised settlements

- 101 forced evictions (76 in public buildings/areas and 25 in private buildings/areas)
- 667 man-made constructions pulled down (brick houses, shacks, tents, makeshift shelters)
- an estimated 2,000 persons in the evicted settlements
- 720 adults and 250 minors actually removed
- about 150 individuals accepted hospitality in municipality facilities
- 68 reports to the Judicial Authority [...]

Removals of nomadic caravans installed without authorisation

- 88 removals (all from public areas)
- 791 caravans/campers removed
- 730 cars removed

- about 3,000 individuals removed
 - 67 charges made (for [...] "prohibition of camping in the public road" - "*divieto di campeggio in pubblica via*")
 - 1 sequestered vehicle
 - 1 Police custody (before formal accusation of a crime)
 - 1 report to the Judicial Authority [...]"
- (Polizia Locale di Milano, 2013, p. 7)

During forced evictions, brick-built houses, shacks, tents or makeshift shelters are systematically destroyed together with all the belongings accumulated from living in a place that had been "home" to their owners for a period of time. Every time these people are evicted, rather than leave Italy, they just look for another place to stay, in the hope that they will not be sent on too quickly, that the homes they painstakingly build (a shack for example) will not be destroyed immediately and that they will enjoy a few weeks' or months' truce before the next eviction.

Many of the pilot survey interviews include comments on the difficulties caused by evictions. Not only did they lose their belongings, but the experience of sleeping on the road, on benches or in cars with children and elderly family members and the anxiety and fear created by evictions in adult individuals, and especially children, was often traumatic (see, for example, the story of the child shocked by the violence of forced evictions in the interview *Agnadello(CR)_01_29-10-2013*; as well as interviews *Gessate(MI)_01-02-12-2013*; *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *Castelleone(CR)_01_02-12-2013*; *MI_03_17-12-2013*; *BA_01_29-11-2013*; *MI_04_18-12-2013*). Furthermore, evictions often abruptly interrupt Roma children's schooling by forcing them either to change schools or sometimes go without scholastic education for a period. In some cases, acts of racism against these children occur at school only after an eviction, i.e. in situations in which parents and children are obliged to sleep in the street and have no possibility to wash themselves or their clothes (children living in camps are not always recognised as Roma and therefore are not always discriminated against) (see interview *MI_01_17-12-2013*).

The fact that many of those interviewed had been living in Italy for at least ten years should be enough to demonstrate the inefficacy of evictions to permanently remove these families from our cities. One of the most violent aspects of implementing these measures is that, in most cases, Municipalities do not offer alternatives to the people they evict. Moreover, the only alternative that is occasionally offered is to divide the households by temporarily accommodating mothers and children in foster homes and leaving husbands or adult, non-married sons to manage by

themselves, often sleeping alone in the street. In these cases, those interviewed not only describe enormous suffering at being separated from their husbands, fathers or brothers, but also even further difficulties due to the strict rules imposed by the foster homes in terms of check-in and check-out times and scheduled times for receiving visits from other family members or relatives. Similar problems occur when families are accommodated in temporary reception centres (containers or equipped camps of tents). In these cases, the additional inconvenience of different families having to share the same living space enhances the emotional pain of being separated from a part of the family, not to mention the rigidity of the rules. In these reception centres, some thirty individuals may be hosted together in one single large room or tent. By way of example of the typical inconveniences of these centres, we will mention the fact that it is common to find about 15 families having to share the same stove on which to cook their meals. Almost all those interviewed who were living in one of these centres at the time, declared that they would prefer to live in a camp, even an unauthorised one, especially if there were no risk of being subject to continuous evictions and to physical and symbolic acts of violence by the security forces (local or national police) (see interviews *MI_01_17-12-2013; MI_02_17-12-2013; MI_04_18-12-2013; MI_05_18-12-2013*).

3.2.5 Future expectations

The future expectations of the Roma interviewed vary considerably according to the length of time each one had spent in Italy. It is common to find that families which have been living in Italy for more than ten years are beginning to consider not returning to Romania, holidays apart, because their children and grandchildren were born in Italy, their second language is Italian and not Romanian, and they are starting to have their own families in Italy. This expectation, however, mainly involves those who have been living in Italy for a long time and who have managed to acquire stable housing conditions. Those living in unauthorised camps or reception centres continue to move frequently between Italy and Romania, often taking advantage of periods following forced evictions or festivities to go to Romania and return to Italy at a later date. They often temporarily leave part of the family in Romania (wife and children or children in the care of other relatives). Sometimes different family members (i.e. husband or wife with children) alternate their stays in Italy. Once again, housing conditions contribute in determining many of the choices these people make. Many of those living in precarious conditions consider their stay in Italy as temporary, linked to providing for the family, the desire for a house and achieving short-term aims, while still continuing to imagine their future life in Romania.

3.3. Occupation, work, economic strategies

3.3.1 In Romania before and just after 1990

During the Ceausescu regime, the most common jobs among the Roma we interviewed were: brick-making (*Caramidari*), fruit and vegetable picking, gathering bundles of sticks in the woods and selling second-hand clothes or fabric remnants in open-air markets. Some people also worked in the service of other Romanian families, both in the countryside and in towns, in exchange for board and lodging instead of hard cash. On the other hand, some people contributed to public works (such as the building of the Romanian railway lines). Before 1989, the first of the above-mentioned jobs were organised through state cooperatives but, after the fall of the communist regime, they almost totally disappeared.

3.3.2. Economic strategies in different migration phases

3.3.3. Present occupations and strategies

3.3.4 Plans and expectations

The main economic strategy of the Romanian Roma once migrated into Italy, especially at the beginning, but also later if they are not able to find work, is *mangél* (i.e. begging, for example at supermarket entrances or at traffic lights. They also receive donations from charitable organisations in the form of food, clothes, school equipment, and so on). All those interviewed have, for the sake of necessity, tried *mangél* at least once, however all of them add other economic strategies to this activity (which is practiced very sparingly in Romania), such as:

- subordinate work with an open-end contract (only in one case, see interview *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*)
- subordinate work with a fixed-term contract (the women are often employed as carers for the elderly or domestic helpers, while the men work in the construction industry or agriculture); in 6 cases the Roma interviewed work under social cooperatives (*MI_05_18-12-2013*; *MI_04_18-12-2013*; *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *BA_01_29-11-2013*; *BA_03_02-12-2013*; *BA_04_02-12-2013*).
- too much undeclared and occasional work;
- some cases of pimping or drug trafficking (the persons interviewed did not admit to these activities but they attributed them to other Roma in their migratory networks).

In the opinions of those interviewed, ideologically the head of the household should work to provide for his family, while the wife's job should be to stay at home and raise the children.

However, in most cases the wife actually makes a substantial contribution to family sustenance by means of *mangél* and other jobs, such as a carer or domestic helper.

In the end, what these Roma want most out of life is a job and a house!

In many of the interviews we conducted, the recurring and prevailing theme was always the lack of work (see, for example, interviews *Agnadello (MI)_01_29-10-2013*; *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *MI_04_18-12-2013*).

3.4. Housing and Habitat

3.4.1. Present housing conditions

The Roma interviewed for the pilot survey could be divided into three groups according to the form of dwelling. The first group comprises those Roma living in apartments; the second, those living in authorised camps; the third, those who previously lived in unauthorised camps and now live in reception centres (established by local authorities as a consequence of forced evictions).

Form of dwelling	People who live in apartments	People who live in authorised camps	People who live in reception centres (after evictions)
Location	5 (Lombardy, Milan and other provinces); apartment for private rent (4); social housing paid (1)	4 (Puglia, Bari)	6 (Lombardy, Milan)

3.4.2. Background of housing conditions in Romania

Almost all the Roma interviewed for the pilot survey declared not to own residential property in Romania. In fact, one of the crucial push factors which urged them to migrate in the first place was the desire to buy or build a house in their own country. This often concerned young couples who wanted their own house and independence from the extended family with whom they cohabitated (generally the husband's parents together with his brothers and their wives and children) (see, for example, interviews *Castelleone(CR)_01_02-12-2013*; *Gessate(MI)_01_02-12-2013*; *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *Agnadello(MI)_01_29-10-2013*).

Almost all the Roma interviewed lived in the so-called *țigania*, i.e. the Roma neighbourhood of their Romanian towns of origin, and their common desire is to create something similar in Italy. In some cases the Roma interviewed have achieved this desire and they have indeed been joined by migratory chains of relative, friend and neighbour networks from the same towns of origin. However, reaching these objectives are at many different stages for those involved: some have not yet built their house in Romania, while others have (*Brescia_02_16-11-2013*; *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *MI_01_17-12-2013*; *MI_02_17-12-2013*; *MI_03_17-12-2013*; *Mi_04_18-12-2013*; *BA_01_29-11-2013*). In any case, the houses are built little by little as resources become available and lastly, resource availability depends on the kind of economic strategy these Roma choose, or is imposed upon them, in Italy.

3.4.3. History of housing in migration

All the Roma who are now living in apartments initially experienced life in unauthorised camps. Access to apartments was always mediated by *gagé* who helped to find owners willing to rent their apartments to Roma or organisations ready to temporarily concede lodgings in exchange for favourable rents. It was only in the case of Bari that Roma passed from unauthorised camps, to social housing (in apartments belonging to the local Clergy), to the authorised camp.

3.4.4. Plans, investments, expectations, dreams

The Roma interviewed spoke of a great desire to find a way to combine the comforts and conveniences of living in a house (i.e. heating, running water, a constant supply of electricity) with their social needs, which for them are as crucial as their physical requirements. All of those living in a house spoke variably of feelings of solitude due to their isolation and being far away from their relatives and social network (see, for example, interview *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*) since apartments are always located in little towns in the Milan hinterland or in the peripheral neighbourhood of other towns, where access to urban facilities is not so easy (see, for example, interview *Agnadello(CR)_01_29-10-2013*). Living in close proximity to other Roma is considered so essential that some have refused apartments in order to be near other Roma. In the case of Bari, for example, the Romanian Roma community negotiated with local authorities for the concession of a public area on which to build an authorised camp instead of asking for social housing, because it was the only way to guarantee that a certain number of families could live close together. The proximity of other Roma families is of such importance that these Roma would rather live in shacks which let in water whenever it rains and where rats easily circulate, than live in a

comfortable apartment, but alone and isolated from other Roma (see, for example, interview *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*).

Obviously, one should not generalise, since these are decisions that every family takes by evaluating the various situations and factors at the time. One factor that is considered essential, is the well-being of children (see, for example, the cases of temporary returns to Romania on the birth of a child so that the infant does not have to live in a nomadic camp, see interviews *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*; *MI_04_18-12-2013*).

Although most of those interviewed said that they wanted to live alongside other Roma, there were also some who are happy, or would be happy, to leave them in order to live in more comfortable conditions in an apartment (see interviews *Brescia_01_21-09-2013*; *BA_02_02-12-2013*).

As previously mentioned, other inconveniences concern reception centres and foster homes because these forms of dwelling often involve painful separations from loved ones or difficult cohabitation with other families. If some of those interviewed could live in a camp (whether authorised or not) without running the risk of being constantly evicted, they would probably prefer the camp to the reception centres or foster homes due to greater freedom and independence.

3.5. Education, learning, training history

3.5.1. Family education/training background

3.5.2. Schooling Experience

3.5.4. Attitudes/Expectations about education by gender

Almost all the interviewed Roma attended school in Romania and some told us about similar experiences that their parents and grandparents had. Nevertheless, school attendance amounted to a maximum of 13 years (one case only, *Brescia_02_16-11-2013*) (8 years of compulsory school and 5 years of high school). Only three of those interviewed never attended school and are therefore illiterate (*Gessate (MI)_01_02-12-2013*; *MI_03_17-12-2013*). Although we know that other illiterate Roma are living among the Romanian Roma in Milan, we can positively state that most of those involved in the pilot survey send their children to school more or less regularly and think that school is useful for teaching them the basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic).

The men were found to have attended school longer than the women and many of them also held a driver's licence. On the contrary, some of them were of the opinion that "4-5 years of school are

enough" for girls "4-5 anni di scuola bastano" (BA_02_02-12-2013) and only one of the interviewed Romniá held a driver's licence (BA_04_02-12-2013).

3.5.3. The schooling of children of the family in migration

3.5.5. Teachers, professors, staff and the other students

On arrival in Italy, the children are regularly sent to school at least until marital age. School essentially becomes a safe place for children to stay while their parents work or beg to earn the resources to raise them, especially as far as those families living in unauthorised camps or reception centres are concerned.

In all cases, school attendance is one of the main negotiation topics with the gagé: these Roma are well aware that Italian gagé will consider them either as good or bad parents, and therefore either deserving of help or not, according to how their children attend school. Furthermore, usually - and here we are dealing with an Italian peculiarity - local authorities and NGOs help Roma families, mainly, if not entirely, through school attendance support (e.g. economic help to buy school equipment; school bus services; after school projects and so on).

Cases of racism or some form of discrimination at school are reported together with episodes of positive integration both in the Romanian and Italian school experience. Racist actions are more likely to involve children living in unauthorised camps, whose visible condition of poverty makes them more exposed (see, for example, interview MI_01_117-12-2013).

3.6. Family history and family networks. Kinship and marriage

3.6.1. The family of the husband/father

3.6.2. Family: views from the women's side. Mothers, daughters, grandmothers

The Roma interviewed for the pilot survey did not like to talk about their relatives or, more generally, about people who were not present when their words were recorded. Descriptions of their extended families were essentially useful in understanding that all those interviewed have various dimensions of family networks in Italy and almost all these Roma left Romania in the wake of someone else in their own family or have themselves been followed by others.

3.6.6. Cultural constructs and ideologies

Generally, discourses about family, marriage and procreation were of primary importance among the Roma interviewed. According to them, every dream can come true and all pain can be tolerated when the well-being of their children is at stake. They repeatedly stated that marriage,

and especially children, were what truly gave a sense to their lives. Nothing mattered more to them than their own children.

In reference to this, it is important to highlight one fact that emerges with emphasis from the interviews: the great fear that Roma parents have of someone taking away their children.

The results of three researches carried out over the last five years show that the probability of being given up for adoption in Italy (i.e. to be removed from the family of origin) is twenty times higher for a Rom child than for any other child (Saletti Salza, 2010). In the specific case of Rome, a city with a high concentration of Roma families in several huge nomadic camps, this probability is forty times higher (Associazione 21 Luglio, 2013). In fact, the probability increases exponentially when Roma children live in nomadic camps (authorised or not), because poverty constitutes, even if not at all indicated in Italian Law, a factor that weighs heavily on decisions to estrange children from certain families (Saletti Salza, in print). The interviews included in the pilot survey indirectly confirm these data, clearly showing the awareness of Romanian Roma families of the real possibility that their children could be taken away and/or given up for adoption. In almost all interviews, the Roma openly expressed their fear that representatives from some Italian institutions could take their children away due to the poor conditions of life in which all the family is obliged to live, despite good parent/child relations or notwithstanding the care that parents actually take of their children. Paradoxically, the decision to move and live far away from one's own children, leaving them behind in Romania with only one of the parents or with other relatives, is a way of not losing them: many Roma are well aware that keeping their children in a nomadic camp could be the first step towards their estrangement (see interviews *Brescia_01_21-09-2013*; *Agnadello(MI)_01_29-10-2013*; *Gessate(MI)_01_02-12-2013*; *MI_04_18-12-2013*).

3.7. Language and communication

3.7.1. Linguistic competences

The persons interviewed are of Romani mother tongue, their second language is Romanian and they currently also speak Italian. Almost all of them can read and write Romanian, and some can also do the same in Italian. They speak *romanes* with other Roma in Italy and in Romania, Romanian with other Romanian Roma and other Romanians and Italian with Italians. Those who have spent time in other European countries also knew, to various degrees, some other European languages (such as German, Spanish, French, Serbian). Some argue that one of the reasons they stay in Italy even though the life conditions are worse than in other countries, is that they already

know Italian, since, being based on Latin like Romanian, it is easier for them to learn and speak (see, for example, interviews *Castelleone(CR)_01_02-12-2013*; *MI_04_18-12-2013*). Moreover, some of them know a little Serbian or Bulgarian and they are able to communicate with other Roma coming from these countries even if their *romanes* includes some Slavic words. They are able to recognise many different versions of the Romani language spoken by different Roma and by different Romanian Roma.

3.8. Health and health care

3.8.3. Access to health care

Anyone who has a residency permit or an employment contract in Italy has the right to enrol himself and his family in the Italian National Health Service ("*Servizio Sanitario Nazionale Italiano*"). Therefore, the Roma we interviewed who had an employment contract or residency permit also had access to the same healthcare services available from the National Health Service as Italian citizens. Basically they have the right to a family doctor.

Those with no residency permit or employment contract (and who live in nomadic camps or do undeclared work), but have Romanian medical insurance, can access the public health facilities for a period of three months (but do not have a family doctor).

Those who are not enrolled in the Italian Health Service nor the Romanian one, by using the so-called Code E.N.I. ("*Europeo non iscritto*"), can only access emergency care, child care, maternity care, voluntary abortion, vaccinations and infectious disease care.

Considering that enrolment in the Romanian National Health Service is very expensive, many of the Roma interviewed for the pilot survey had no Romanian medical insurance. Considering also that these Roma often have no residency permit and no employment contracts, many of them are obliged to use the Code E.N.I. and accept all its limitations (for example, anyone suffering from some kind of chronic disease, such as diabetes, is not able to have regular check-ups in public medical facilities in Italy).

As far as the families living in the authorised camp in Bari are concerned, the local health institutions organise regular medical examinations and vaccinations for children, while for those families living in unauthorised camps (or in reception centres), access to care is through the assistance of voluntary medical associations or NGOs (e.g. NAGA in Milan).

3.9. Socio-political relations

3.9.1. Relations with institutions

3.9.2. Political organisation and participation

The experiences that the Roma we interviewed have had in terms of relations with gage institutions are very different depending on their knowledge of the Italian language, the length of time spent in Italy and the socio-political context of migration. They also differed in accordance with previous experiences in Romania or in other countries they may have migrated to.

In the pilot survey data, we generally observe that contact between Roma and institutions in Romania was much more direct than in Italy, where NGO or voluntary association mediation prevails. For example, some of those interviewed had experiences of direct participation in political parties to advocate Roma rights in Romania (see interviews *Brescia_01_21-09-2013*; *BA_01_29-11-2013*). In Italy, especially when individuals live in unauthorised camps or in reception centres, relationships with institutions are almost entirely through volunteer or social worker mediation. Politicians rely on the reports of local association representatives rather than listening to the actual voices of Roma, despite the fact that there are now many Roma cultural mediators in Italy (see, for example, the actions of the European Programme *ROMED*, <http://romed.coe-romact.org/>). We were only able to ascertain regular direct formal and informal exchanges between local authorities and some Roma from the community in Bari (which is what makes the case of Bari such a particularly interesting case study from the socio-political relations point of view).

9.3. Internal community politics

In general, we can observe an effort being made to recreate the same or similar family, friend or neighbour networks in Italy that the interviewed Roma had in Romania. As we already mentioned, one of the greatest desires of these Roma is to be together, stay close, and support one another in a difficult migration context.

Occasionally conflicts arise within small communities in Italy. Conflicts are usually avoided by trying not to meet other Roma that are considered too different (see, for example, how relations between Romanian Roma and Roma from ex-Yugoslavian countries are generally avoided). When a conflict occurs within a group, the Roma try to resolve it with the *kris*, but in the worst cases, they may resolve the question by the departure of one of the parties.

3.10. Religion, cosmology, beliefs and practices

3.10.1 Religious background of family

3.10.2 Religious experiences: changes in migration

Most of the interviewed Roma said they are Orthodox Christians, although they did not seem to practice regularly (many of them, for example, said they celebrate Christmas on December 25th even if they were Orthodox).

Some of those interviewed converted to the Jehovah's Witness denomination (*Martirii lui Iehova*) when they were in Romania: the high number of places of worship for Roma with Roma ministers in Romania seemed to encourage these conversions. In Italy, converted Roma are not able to practice as regularly as they could in Romania due to the lack or the distance of places of worship (see interviews *Gorgonzola(MI)_01_28-09-2013*; *Gessate(MI)_01_02-12-2013*). Other Roma, who either came to Italy as children or were born there, recently converted to the Jehovah's Witness denomination and regularly attend worship meetings in Italy (see interviews *BA_03_02-12-2013*; *BA_04_02-12-2013*).

In some cases, Orthodox parents decided to baptize their children following the Catholic Church ritual to facilitate their integration process in Italy (see interviews *Brescia_01_21-09-2013*; *Agnadello(CR)_01-29-10-2013*).

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