

STORIA MEMORIA



A guide for decision-makers

IT CAN BE DONE



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Knowing and understanding the histories of Sinti and Roma communities is the first step towards building an inclusive pathway, centered on the needs of the people belonging to these communities.

In the first part, this module briefly traces the ancient and more recent developments in the historical presence of Italian Roma and Sinti groups, the migration of Roma communities from Eastern Europe, and the policies adopted towards these people. This excursus aims to outline a general framework, which any policy-maker may find useful to place the life stories of the people present in the so-called 'nomad settlements', and to construct housing paths that know how to take them into account, enhance them, and make them the subject of interaction and enrichment of local community contexts.

An Italian and European story

Data from linguistics, cultural anthropology, historiography, and population genetics suggest that the Indian peninsula is the territory from where the first migration of Roma and Sinti communities originated. The reasons for and timing of this westward shift remain unclear, as the history of these human groups in the pre-European period is still being reconstructed.¹

As early as 1200, according to evidence gathered from traders of the time, there are scattered settlements in what is now part of Turkish and Greek territory.² Thanks to an increasing number of accounts compiled by chroniclers and travelers, the path of these groups could be traced from 1400 onwards; as early as the first half of the 15th century, caravans of 'gens cingara' had passed through numerous cities in Western Europe. 1422 is

¹ According to some scholars, a first migration began with the conquest of North India by the Persians during the reign of Ardashir (224-241 A.D.); according to various specialists in Indian languages, the first groups of Roma should have left India around 1000 A.D., since Romanès does not show those changes that occurred in Indian languages after that date (Donald Kenrick, *Zingari, dall'India al Mediterraneo*, Roma, 1995).

² After the fall of Jerusalem in 1244 and the end of the crusader ideal, the friar Nicolò da Poggibonsi, on his way to the holy city, was enchanted by some foreigners who like to move around all the time. The following year, he notes in his diary: 'When they are near the cities, they put a paolo there, and there they hang their household goods and their beasts. And then they go about the cities procuring those who do them good, and then they mock those who have done them good; and they go saying, when they are asked, what should be done of the person'.

(Nicolò Da Poggibonsi, *Libro d'Oltremare*, vol. II, Bologna 1881).



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the year in which chroniclers begin to speak of 'cingari' being present on present-day Italian territory.

The chronicles tell us how the attitude of the local populations is initially curious and welcoming, motivated by a strong Christian background, since the first caravans of 'gens cingara' are associated with those of pilgrims on the move to atone for ancient sins. Soon, however, a climate of rejection and unease was generated, which at the beginning of the 15th century resulted in drastic repressive bans that would mark the relationship between the local populations and the passing communities in the following centuries.

Studies explain this decisive change in perspective precisely by reading the Bible, the source to rely on - at the time - for any need for elucidation. The rising wave of persecution against the so-called 'gypsies' would have its roots in the stories of Cain and his sons, condemned to perpetual nomadism: in the first nomadic groups that arrived from the East, living under tents, working iron or performing dances and music, one is quick to recognise the sons of Cain, and in particular 'Iabal, the father of those who live under tents by the cattle, Iabal the father of all the zither and flute players, Tubalkaim the father of those who work copper and iron'.³ Rooted in this period is the famous legend, still the subject of symbolic representations with a religious background, which focuses on the 'gypsy' as the blacksmith who prepared the nails for the crucifixion of Christ.

In the centuries that followed, the idea of a 'cursed gypsy race' from the time of Cain disappeared, making way for biologically-based racialism, which in the 19th century merged with evolutionism. Thus was born the idea of savage races, inferior because biologically limited.

In 'L'uomo delinquente', Cesare Lombroso explains well why 'Gypsies' - along with Jews - share a similar condition: 'Where the influences of race on criminality stand out clearly is in the study of Jews and Gypsies. [...] The Gypsies, dedicated to wrath, in the heat of anger were seen to throw their children, almost like a sling stone, at the adversary, they are, indeed, like thugs, vain, yet without any fear of infamy. They consume in alcohol and clothes as much as they earn; so that one sees them walking barefoot, but in a gallant or coloured dress, and without stockings, but in yellow boots. They have the recklessness of the savage

³ Genesis 4:22.



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and the delinquent [...]. The Gypsies could be called, in general, like the Bedouins, a race of associated malefactors'.⁴

Lombroso and many of his colleagues, in exploring the association between skull shape and homicide frequency, arrived at the scientific demonstration that the 'gypsies', in the company of the Sardinians, were the tip of the iceberg of the 'peoples-delinquents', whose atavism was linked to race. The development of this interpretation, writes historian Luca Bravi, 'led to only one consequential solution: the "gypsy plague" could not be solved by educational intervention; it could only be prevented, and sterilisation and the death penalty could be the only means to nip it in the bud. The 'gypsy asociality' was thus beginning to be bent towards hereditary interpretations'.⁵

The German decree of 8 December 1938 on the 'Struggle against the Gypsy Plague' argued that the 'Gypsy question' should be addressed by focusing on the intrinsic characteristics of this 'race'. The 'gypsies' are Aryans, it is true, but contaminated with peoples of 'inferior races', which makes them subjects to be ghettoised, sterilised, deported and finally eliminated, in that genocide that the Roma and Sinti communities call *Porrajmos* (Devouring) or *Samudaripen* (All Dead).⁶

In Italy, the concept of the racial inferiority of the 'gypsies' was elaborated by race science linked to the figures of the physician and scientist Renato Semizzi and the anthropologist Guido Landra. For the former, 'Gypsies' are 'vagabonds par excellence, devoted to begging, scrounging, fraud, theft, lying and deceit. [...] They are easy-going, unfaithful, fearful, cunning in danger, vindictive, cynical, arrogant, shameless with the weak, weak but

⁴ Lombroso C., 1896, *L'uomo delinquente studiato in rapporto all'antropologia, alla medicina legale ed alle discipline carcerarie*, Il Mulino, Bologna.

⁵ Bravi L., 2009, *Tra inclusione ed esclusione. Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia*, Unicopli, Trezzano sul Naviglio (MI).

⁶ In international institutions, the term used to refer to the extermination of Roma and Sinti people is 'Porrajmos' or 'Porajmos', a word that means 'devouring' in Romanés and refers to the desecration of life. The term was proposed by Ian Hancock, a Roma professor at the University of Austin, Texas, precisely to refer to persecution and extermination during Nazi-fascism.

A few years after the introduction of the term Porrajmos, an intense debate has developed in the Roma and Sinti communities on the use of this term and on the most correct choice of words on the subject of extermination. Porrajmos is not used by all communities, as for some it also has the meaning of 'rape' and is considered a vulgar word that should not be uttered.

Other terms used in communities to refer to genocide are: *Samudaripen* (all dead), *Baro Merape* (great extermination), *Sintegre Laidi* (suffering of the Sinti) or *KaliTraš* (black terror).



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intelligent'. Addressing the issue of crossbreeding between Roma and non-Roma people, Renato Semizzi argues that 'fusion would produce somatically homogeneous, but psychically impaired elements, since the quality of the European Aryan parent could not attenuate or even less annul the quality of the Aryan Gypsy parent, even if these should, by fortunate combinations of genes or chromometers, remain recessive'.⁷

Semizzi's analysis is underpinned by the reflections of Guido Landra, a leading figure in the construction of race policy by Fascism and material extender of the 'Manifesto of Racist Scientists', which was prodromal to anti-Semitic legislation. Observing the 'gypsies', Landra argues that 'they are asocial individuals very different psychologically from European populations. Given the absolute lack of moral sense of these eternal strays, one can understand how they can easily unite with the lower strata of the populations they encounter, worsening their psychic and physical qualities in every respect'.⁸

The genocide of Roma and Sinti people in Nazi-Fascist Europe, which claimed the lives of at least 500,000 people belonging to these communities, rested on this theoretical basis.

Boiano, in the province of Campobasso; Agnone, in the province of Isernia; Tossicà, in the province of Teramo; Gonars, in the province of Udine; Prignano sulla Secchia, in the province of Modena; Berra, in the province of Ferrara. Little-known places but with tragic names for so many Roma and Sinti families who in Italy, from 11 September 1940, were to be 'rounded up as quickly as possible and concentrated under strict surveillance in the most suitable locations in each province'.⁹

Italy's Sinti and Roma communities after the Second World War

The lives of Italian Sinti and Roma families resumed with the end of the Second World War. Giacomo 'Gnugo' De Bar writes: 'Grandpa decided that he needed to regain his courage and start working with the postone [ed. open-air circus enclosed with gates] again. He went to Reggio Emilia to the Liberation Command to ask to get back the animals that had been taken

⁷ Semizzi R., 1939, 'Gli zingari', in 'La Rassegna di clinica, terapia e scienze affini', fasc.1, January-February.

⁸ Landra G., 1940, 'Il problema dei meticci in Europa', La Difesa della razza, year IV, no. 1.

⁹ This is the order for internment in special concentration camps by the Chief of Police, Arturo Bocchini, reported in Ibid.



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away from him in '39 in Prignano [ndr. concentration camp for Italian Sinti in Prignano Sulla Secchia]. The Command gave him a mule, a horse and a donkey'. .¹⁰

Silence falls on the racially motivated persecution suffered during fascism, just as the participation of Sinti and Roma people in the war of liberation is forgotten. Present in several partisan formations,¹¹ only a few people receive official recognition, many years after the end of the war. This is the case of Amilcare "Taro" Debar - a partisan fighting under the name of "Corsaro" in the 48th Bgt. Garibaldi 'Dante Di Nanni' - who received the Diploma of Honour certifying his qualification as a 1943-1945 Italian Freedom Fighter only in the 1980s, when Sandro Pertini became President of the Republic.

In Northern Italy, inhabited mainly by Italian Sinti, families until the 1970s continued to carry out an itinerant work activity, that of travelling show business, as circus performers, carnies and musicians. In Central and Southern Italy, inhabited mainly by Italian Roma, families progressively abandoned itinerant work activities, such as metal working, horse breeding and selling, and became part of the local working fabric.

Since the end of the 1960s, the Italian state has delegated the resolution of the problems experienced by Sinti and Roma families to an association - Opera Nomadi - founded in Bolzano in 1963, which assigned itself the function of representing the communities. Particularly on the issue of schools, the association's activities create the conditions for increasing marginalisation and discrimination of people belonging to the Sinti and Roma linguistic minority.

The economic crisis of the 1970s hit travelling show business particularly hard, causing families to lose their source of income and creating situations of refusal by the municipalities, which no longer allowed mobile homes to park in public spaces and denied registration, limiting the enforceability of constitutional rights, such as the right to vote. The Italian state's response to the economic crisis centred on social assistance and the creation of parking areas in provincial capitals, which were institutionalised by regional laws in the 1980s.

This is the beginning of increasingly blatant - even institutional - discrimination, which leads to criminal incidents in large cities. In 1974, for example, in the Roman district of San Basilio,

¹⁰ De Bar G., 1998, *Strada, patria Sinti*, Fatatrac, Modena.

¹¹ Berini C., '25 April, Sinti and Roma partisans', U Velto
<http://sucardrom.blogspot.com/2021/04/25-aprile-partigiani-sinti-e-rom.html>



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the mobile homes of some families were set on fire. Moreover, the Opera Nomadi, together with the majority of scholars and scholars, conveyed in Italy a false idea of the culture expressed by Sinti and Roma, described as being in profound crisis of values and in some cases as deviant; in this framework, in the early 1980s, the complete assimilation of Sinti and Roma communities into the urban underclass was mistakenly imagined.¹²

In the 1980s and early 1990s, forms of institutional rejection and discrimination became pervasive in Italian society, particularly in northern Italy and metropolitan cities. Italian Sinti and Roma families became increasingly involved in commerce and catering, while many traditional activities remained active, such as travelling shows, metalworking, animal breeding and buying and selling. These were the years in which the Evangelical Zigana Mission became increasingly present in Italy, following the evangelisation of Sinti and Roma communities by pastors belonging to the French Mission. The MEZ is part of the Assemblies of God in Italy, recognised by the Italian state with Law 517/1988; it is run exclusively by community members, who claim their own cultural belonging, and has been firmly led by Italian Sinti for about thirty years.

International institutions since the 1970s, starting with the United Nations and the Council of Europe and finally the European Union, have repeatedly called on Italy to recognise the status of linguistic minorities for Italian Sinti and Roma people, and to combat anti-Gypsyism.¹³ The dozens of resolutions and pronouncements, however, have gone unheeded by the Italian Parliament and various governments.¹⁴

In the 1990s in Northern Italy, Sinti families began to move out of the so-called 'nomad camps', buying small properties where they could live together with their extended family. This movement suffered a setback in January 2005, with the entry into force of the Consolidation Act 380/2001, which sanctions these properties as building abuses and does not provide for the possibility of regularising existing positions. Only the Emilia Romagna region issued a provision in 2015 to regularise the homes of sinte families.

¹² edited by Marcolungo E. and Karpati M., 1985, *Chi sono gli zingari*, Edizioni Gruppo Abele, Turin.

¹³ Anti-Gypsyism is prejudice on racial or cultural grounds against Sinti and Roma, expressed in stigmatisation, hate speech, segregation, violence and various forms of discrimination, including institutional discrimination such as censuses.

¹⁴ See, for example, Council of Europe Recommendation 1557/2002
<https://file.asgi.it/raccomandazione.n.1557.2002.pdf>



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In the 2000s, anti-Gypsyism became radicalised in Italy, leading communities to suffer hate campaigns and increasingly violent attacks, such as the pogroms against immigrant Roma families that occurred in Opera (MI) in December 2006, in Naples in May 2008 and in Turin in December 2011. In the meantime, the Italian Sinti and Roma communities themselves have been trying to organise themselves with associations and federations since 2007, in order to be increasingly protagonists of Italian social and political life.

The 'Land of camps'

The use of 'nomad camps' reached its peak with the implementation of regional laws, through the creation of new formal settlements or the transformation of *favela-like* housing solutions, which were supposed to be temporary, into 'permanent' ones. Contrasts and conflicts led administrations to isolate these areas more and more from the rest of the city, employing fences and guards, and relocating them to the fringes of urban areas.

Within this framework, the creation of 'gypsy camps' is configured and justified as an attempt to respect a supposed cultural specificity of 'gypsies/nomads' and, at the same time, to 'educate' families in civic life, favouring the schooling of boys and girls, and the start-up of new jobs for adults.

In Bergamo in 1993, a new 'nomad camp' with services and fencing was built with funding from the Lombardy Region. In the same year, the Municipality of Brescia built two 'nomad camps', capable of accommodating almost 400 people. In the following years, it was the turn of Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Rome and Turin.

The construction of such spaces - all characterised by their remoteness from the urban fabric, fencing, lack of services, and a policy of control - necessitates the creation of municipal structures and ad hoc offices to manage them. In some Italian metropolises, Nomad Offices and local policies parallel to those for the rest of the citizenry are being created.

In 2000, the European Roma Rights Centre published the report "Campland. The racial segregation of the Roma in Italy", where for the first time Italy is defined as the "country of the camps" because it is the one most involved, on a European scale, in the creation of mono-ethnic settlements. The report points out that "in Italy, stereotypes hostile to the Roma are widespread. Underlying the Italian government's actions towards the Roma is the



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influence that they are 'nomads'. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, ten Italian regions recommended laws for the 'protection of nomadic cultures' through the construction of segregated camps. These public actions reinforced the perception that all Roma and Sinti are nomads and can only live in camps isolated from the rest of Italian society. The result is that many Roma have actually been forced to live the romantic and repressive image of Italians; the Italian authorities claim that their desire to live in real homes is not genuine and thus relegate them to 'nomad camps'.¹⁵

The National Strategy for Roma and Sinti Inclusion

The serious condition of social exclusion of the Roma and Sinti communities in Italy and in Europe prompted the European Commission to request member states, in its Communication no. 173 of 4 April 2011, to draw up and implement national strategies aimed at their inclusion.

In view of the inactivity of the Italian government, the Roma and Sinti Together Federation organised the largest national demonstration ever held in Italy in Rome in October 2011, calling for the establishment of a technical table to define the Italian National Strategy¹⁶.

On 11 November 2011, the Italian government set up the National Contact Point (NCP) at the National Office for Anti-Racial Discrimination (UNAR), which is responsible for drafting the National Strategy, approved in February 2012. The ratified Strategy provides for a governance structure, system actions (both coordinated by the National Contact Point) and guidelines on four axes of intervention (education, work, health and housing), which constitute the proposals made to local authorities, as the entities responsible for the inclusion of Roma and Sinti people in the territories. As also noted by various international monitoring bodies, the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Travellers suffers from delays and does not always, at the local level, translate into tangible improvements for Roma and Sinti communities.¹⁷

¹⁵ From the preface by Leonardo Piasere in Stasolla C., 2012, *Sulla pelle dei rom*, Edizioni Alegre, Rome.

¹⁶ The Kroll Ketane event, <http://comitatoromsinti.blogspot.com/2011/11/tutti-uniti-aderisci-anche-tu.html>

¹⁷ On the positions taken by various international bodies with regard to the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti, see the various Annual Reports edited by Associazione 21 luglio from 2015 to 2021 at www.21luglio.org.



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After its natural expiry in 2020, in implementation of the recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 12 March 2021, in the spring of 2022 the Italian government presents the "National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Sinti (2021-2030)"¹⁸.

The new National Strategy consists of a series of interconnected sections. The first chapter, "A New Frame of Reference", is dedicated to identifying the main critical issues that emerged in the previous strategic framework, defining the principles and national priorities of the new Strategy, and presenting the current condition of Roma and Sinti people in Italy. The second chapter is dedicated to the new processes of "Governance and Participation", with particular attention to the role of the National Platform and the Community Forum. The third chapter, "Thematic Areas", illustrates the six main axes on which the framework of the new National Strategy is built (anti-Gypsyism, education, employment, housing, health, cultural promotion). For each axis, the objectives set by the EU Council Recommendation of 12 March 2021 on equality, inclusion and participation of Roma and Sinti people (2021/C 93/01) are presented, as well as a summary framework to highlight critical points and strengths, and the measures in reference to the topics covered, accompanied by appropriate indicators. The fourth chapter is devoted to cross-cutting 'Intervention Processes', such as empowerment and participation, on the legal recognition of minority status. A specific section is devoted to the topic of monitoring and evaluation.

Policies to overcome 'nomad camps'

The Sinti and Roma communities, the main Sinti and Roma associations and federations, and most of the associations working for their protection, have for years been calling for the overcoming of the logic of nomad camps, heterogeneous settlements of people often lacking any kinship or affinity, forced to live on the fringes of urban centres, in conditions of severe social degradation. It is estimated that around 40,000 people in our country reside in camps, sometimes equipped and regular areas but very often irregular settlements lacking any primary services, most of them located in large cities.

¹⁸ National Strategy approved
<https://www.unar.it/portale/-/strategia-nazionale-di-uguaglianza-inclusione-e-partecipazione-di-rom-e-sinti-2021-2030>



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Set up as an emergency and with the aim of temporarily accommodating people in transit, particularly for work needs, the camps soon proved to be inadequate for the needs of the families living there, and turned into a place of degradation and isolation from which people strongly desired to break free. The same need has increasingly matured in the local authorities themselves, who see in the nomad camp structure a condition of isolation that reduces the possibility of social and economic inclusion of the Sinti and Roma communities. There have been many successful cases in which families and individuals have been able to leave the nomad camps for relocation in alternative and dignified housing solutions, but these experiences still represent a non-systematic reality and are difficult to implement due to the complexity of the actions that allow this transition. In order to succeed in this direction, it is necessary to design interventions that involve institutional and non-institutional actors, guaranteeing the connection between project proposals and local policies while respecting the fundamental rights and dignity of the persons concerned. Experience has shown that it is only when these prerogatives are respected that the process of leaving the nomad camp is successfully completed.

There is a wide spectrum of different solutions that can be considered to achieve the general objective of overcoming nomadic camps: support for the purchase or rental of private homes, self-building accompanied by social integration projects, the rental of disused publicly-owned cottages/huts, the structuring of rest areas for itinerant groups, the regularisation of the presence of caravans in agricultural areas owned by Roma or Sinti families, or the creation of micro-areas.

Generally speaking, in order to strengthen the effectiveness of these solutions, which are all equally valid, a number of important conditions must however be considered: firstly, overcoming an 'emergency' approach, reaffirming the centrality of the individual and therefore a flexible approach that assesses the specificities and uniqueness of the various solutions, the provision of targeted interventions on the territory and the constant monitoring of interventions. Only with these assumptions in mind is it possible to guarantee the success of policies that lead to the gradual overcoming of nomad camps for successful alternative housing solutions.



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THE SIX STEPS TO A WAY OUT

The vast majority of people belonging to the Roma and Sinti linguistic minority currently living in Italy live in conventional dwellings. Only 13,400 have been living for decades in the 120 institutional settlements distributed throughout Italy: Roma/Sinti camps, collection centres, mono-ethnic residential areas. Approximately 5500 live in informal settlements that can be divided into private property owned by individual families and public or private property occupied without title.

Future planning should aim at a decisive **cultural repositioning of cities** towards those who, rightly or wrongly identified as Roma, inhabit slums in extreme suburbs. The out-of-the-ordinary nature of the current period, with the issue of poverty bursting into the public debate and the urgency of finding concrete answers that affect an ever-widening segment of the population, may represent an important opportunity to find a definitive answer to the housing and social emergency in which those living in shantytowns, particularly in large cities, have been caged for decades.

Analyses and studies with clear scientific evidence point to the need, in discontinuity with the past, to anchor ourselves to two pillars:

Abandonment to ghettoizing ethnic approach

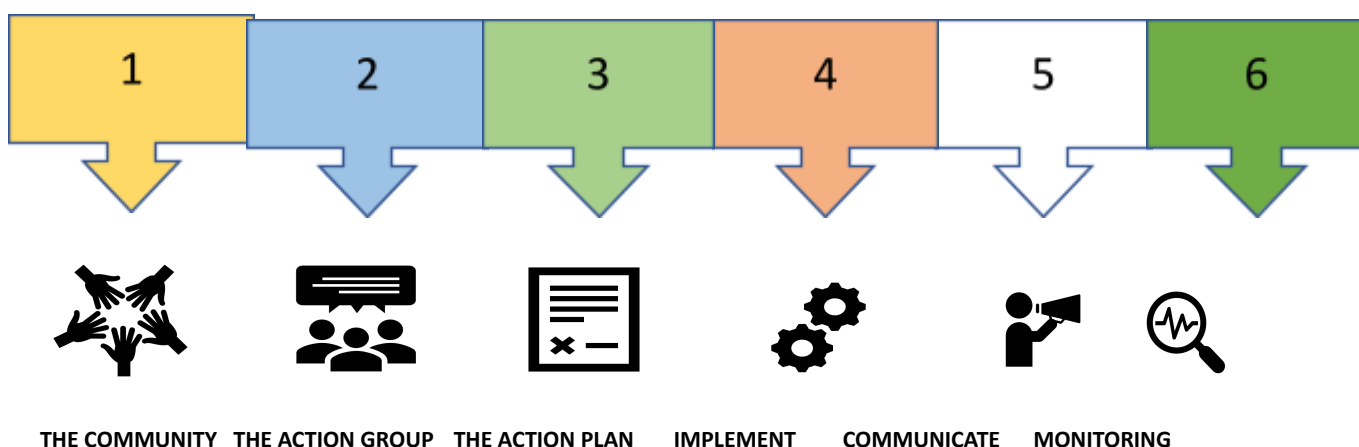
A shift from a centralized control room to spatial planning for each settlement to be passed according to a model that is as participatory as possible and allows for a flow of information, analysis, and solutions from the bottom upward



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The proposed intervention, **articulated in 6 phases and 16 actions**, will open up new horizons of political practice by drawing inspiration from various models of participatory planning, including the **'Romact methodology'**,¹⁹ development programme initiated by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in 2013.

THE SIX STEPS TO A WAY OUT



¹⁹ This European programme is aimed at strengthening the role and functions of local governments to promote inclusive actions on their territories. To date, it has involved more than 120 European cities in four different periods. Associazione 21 luglio worked in Italy with several municipalities for its implementation. See <https://www.coe-romact.org/>.

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Each phase involves a number of actions. The 6 phases involve 16 closely related actions.



1. Appointment of coordinator
2. Stakeholder mapping
3. Establishment of the local action group (GAC)
4. Recruitment of linguistic/cultural mediators depending on the number of people who will join the project
5. Identification of the facilitator/facilitator



6. The CAG meets
7. The CAG takes a picture of the existing
8. The CAG begins the drafting of the Local Action Plan (LAP)



9. The LAP is finalized
10. The LAP is discussed and approved in the council



11. Task force appointment
12. Task force implements the actions of the LAP
13. The CAG monitors the proper implementation of the LAP
14. A communication strategy is approved and implemented

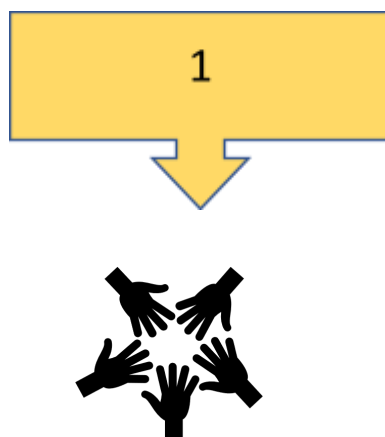


15. Appointment of monitoring agency
16. Impact assessment of the LAP
17. Remodeling actions of the LAP to correct critical issues

Implementation of the entire process takes about 4 years.



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THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The challenge is based on the awareness that every settlement, whether formal or informal, refers to local needs for which local solutions can be sought, which can be expressed by the community living in the settlement together, the wider community living and operating in its vicinity. Starting from this assumption and from the conviction that the guarantee for an effective social policy is offered by listening and dialogue, the basis for the construction of a bond based on mutual trust, a **Community Action Group (CAG)** is set up for each place in which there is a so-called 'nomad camp'²⁰ or a shantytown²¹ to be overcome, in which between 10 and 20 previously mapped subjects are present institutional representatives, *stakeholders* (parish priests, teachers, ASL representatives, activists from the associative world...), representative figures of the community living in the settlement. The first to be involved in the CAG's work will have to be the local authorities and the families living in the 'nomad camp' or shantytown, who will be called upon to express motivation and confidence in the action carried out. It will therefore be the public authority, through an appropriate resolution, that will formalise the decision to activate the CAG and the consequent process. Likewise, the families will have to decide on the activation of the project through an

²⁰ A 'nomad camp' is a municipal area managed directly or indirectly by the local administration and set up for an unspecified number of families who call themselves Sinti or Roma.

²¹ The term slum is understood as public or private real estate where families who call themselves Roma are domiciled without title.

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assembly process²² . In this phase it is indispensable to activate moments of confrontation with the Sinti and Roma associations present in the territory or in neighbouring territories.

The work of the CAG is promoted by a **coordinator**, delegated by the mayor for all the CAGs to be formed in the municipal territory, and animated by a **local facilitator** together with a **cultural-linguistic mediator**, for each CAG to be formed. Both provide the CAG with skills and working tools in policy design and project development.

²² This phase is delicate for both the local administration and the families as they have to formalise their adherence to the project consciously. The urges of anti-Gypsyism that may be activated both within the Administration and in the social partners are the main cause of the failure of such projects. At the same time, the mistrust that has developed in the Italian Sinti and Roma communities may feed centrifugal pushes in the implementation of the project.



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Actions Phase 1

A 1.1

The mayor appoints slum clearance coordinator

A 1.2

The coordinator conducts stakeholder mapping while the family assembly indicates the representative figures of the community within the settlement

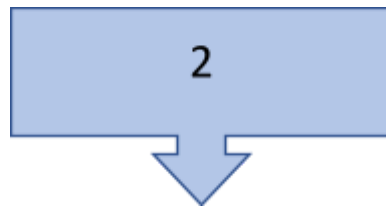
A 1.3

By resolution, the Community Action Group is established

A 1.4

The coordinator identifies local facilitator, and city government hires cultural language mediators

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THE COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP (CAG)

The GAC, the real protagonist of social intervention, becomes the privileged place where, in a non-hierarchical relationship, local institutions and local communities (residents inside and outside the settlement) can develop inclusive policies for communities experiencing extreme housing segregation within slums to be overcome. In the GAC, a systemic vision is taken that allows issues to be addressed in close connection with each other and in a relationship of interdependence. The local community, starting with that portion of it that lives within a settlement, is the first to recognise its needs, the obstacles that prevent access to rights, and the resources that can be deployed. Community involvement, moreover, is the strongest guarantee of the sustainability of the actions undertaken over time.

In its work, the CAG is called upon to assess the needs of the slum-dwelling community in the area by identifying explicit but not exclusive objectives; to decide on the priority of interventions with an integrated approach so that the actions undertaken are effective and sustainable, and by making the most of ordinary tools already in place; to assess the capacity of the institutions in providing answers to the problems identified.

In concrete terms, the work of the CAG is therefore divided, in its first phase, into 2 parts:

- a) Photographing the existing to plan a route



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This is a fundamental step in order to be able to plan a truly inclusive pathway, for which it is necessary to set up appropriate survey tools that collect, in compliance with personal data protection, information on

- socio-demographic characteristics of residents
- employment status
- course and qualification
- formal and informal skills
- legal status (residence permits, irregularities, etc.)
- personal aspirations and desires (especially for the younger component)
- needs, those already clearly expressed, but above all those *emerging*, becoming needs, of which the subject may not always be fully aware.

The last two items on the list (aspirations/desires and *emerging* needs) are important for working on agency and supporting empowerment pathways, especially for the youth and female component.

b) Drafting a strategic intervention plan with a view to drawing up a Local Action Plan.

From the very beginning of its work, the CAG will be called upon to set measurable objectives, timeframes, tools and procedures for the implementation of actions, criteria for determining possible autonomous exits for those who already have sufficient tools and means, and ways of adapting existing services within the administration to favour the process of overcoming settlement.

The Plan must be flexible and open to the possibility of redefining the intervention methods on the basis of any obstacles and/or problems that may arise during its implementation. To this end, it must establish procedures for monitoring in itinere the intermediate results achieved in order to envisage a possible rescheduling of activities or implementation procedures.

The responsibilities for implementing the actions must then be clearly identified and codified forms of coordination must be established between the various sectors of the administration involved in the actions (Registry Office, Housing Policies, Social Policies, Educational Policies, etc.) and between the administration and the other bodies on the territory directly or indirectly involved in the overcoming process (Prefecture, Consulates, Embassies, local employment centres, training bodies, schools, etc.).



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Finally, the modalities (memoranda of understanding, conventions, etc.) and activities (taking charge of families, identifying homes, mediation with landlords, etc.) in which it is possible to involve the third sector, which, as emerged from the experiences analysed, can play a role of fundamental importance in determining the success of the intervention, must be indicated.

Actions Phase 2

A 2.1

The CAG meets according to a work schedule prepared in advance by the coordinator, facilitator and facilitators

A 2.2

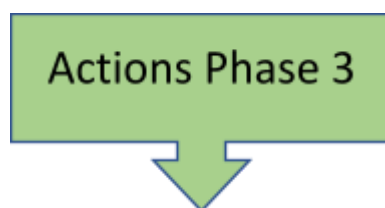
The CAG prepares a document in which the existing is photographed

A 2.3

The CAG works to draft a Local Action Plan by setting measurable goals, time, tools and procedures for implementing interventions



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THE LOCAL ACTION PLAN (LAP)

Through the work of the GAC, a **Local Action Plan (LAP)** will be finalised that foresees, as a function of overcoming the shantytown, three actions: in the short term, which can be carried out immediately by the beneficiary community and the territorial institution (where there is a division into districts or municipalities); in the medium term, which can be carried out by the municipal administration; in the long term, which could be covered by state or European funding. Special attention should be paid to gender equality. In the drafting of the LAP, the lens is not pointed only at the needs of the target group concerned, but more general political-cultural strategies must be combined. The issues posed within the LAP will have to be addressed in an integrated manner in order to identify and tackle the long list of causes that condition the lives of marginalised individuals.

The LAP should be based on four pillars:

1. Taking charge of all families: negotiating and sharing the intervention

The implementation of the intervention must cover all inhabitants in the settlement, with targeted interventions tailored to the specific characteristics and needs of the households detected. Involving all inhabitants of the settlement in the activities implemented to overcome the settlement is not only a matter of ethics, but is a parameter of effectiveness and a condition for reducing waste.



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All inclusion interventions must be shared and negotiated directly with families, avoiding the 'filter' of self-styled representatives. Indeed, there is no single instrument or intervention that can be considered uniquely suitable for complex and heterogeneous groups, in this case Roma people living in settlements. Dialogue with the families, nucleus by nucleus, presenting the possibilities put forward by the administration, listening to and accepting any suggestions or proposals from those directly concerned, and problematizing any doubts, is an indispensable step. In the same way, it is desirable to discuss with the beneficiaries the costs and reciprocal commitments relating to each instrument, taking care not to propose the signing of 'responsibility pacts' that have discriminatory profiles and approaches aimed at 're-education' that could be counterproductive and detrimental to the dignity of those involved.

2. Developing complex social inclusion interventions

In order to be effective and sustainable over time, the planning of social inclusion interventions requires the design of complex interventions involving actions aimed at

- o Regularisation of legal status and/or guaranteeing civil registration for those who need it. It is therefore appropriate to envisage the strengthening of a regularisation system through codified forms of coordination between the Prefecture, the Police Headquarters, Embassies and Consulates and to identify tools to adopt measures to regularise the individual administrative positions of those who, having been present in Italy for several decades, are, for various reasons, without a regular residence permit.
- o Support for school integration, especially when families have to enrol their children in new schools.
- o Support for job placement to provide effective support for people's autonomy, starting with the formulation of a skills assessment (formal and informal) and, on the basis of this, favouring vocational training, support for small entrepreneurship and, above all, access to stable and formal employment. Rather than creating ad hoc opportunities, it is useful to make use of the public and private employment channels already available (job centres, temporary agencies, projects aimed at vulnerable social groups). Actions aimed at job placement, in order to have a better chance of success, must be modulated over a long-term time frame. It is also very important to take into account the gender dimension, providing work support activities specifically



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dedicated to the female component, and to invest in the younger component. Women and young people, as several available studies highlight, are the two most dynamic and interested components in undertaking pathways out of the 'Roma camps'. It is therefore strategic to support their autonomy through labour inclusion in a targeted manner.

3. Providing a diverse range of housing offers

There is no housing solution that is an absolute solution, i.e. one that addresses all the needs expressed by families living in settlements in a homogeneous manner. Providing different types of dwellings - respecting housing standards, in which they can permanently reside - and access methods adapted and modelled on the needs of different families is an essential criterion for the effectiveness of intervention.

The minimum range of housing solutions to be envisaged should include, at least, the following:

- o Ordinary privately produced housing to be purchased with support instruments for access to mortgages and support for the reputational capital of households;
- o Orderly privately produced housing, to be rented on the private market, incorporating, where necessary, forms of support for beneficiaries in identifying houses and brokering their owners;
- o Access, without using 'fast lanes', to public housing;
- o Self-recovery of disused housing by direct beneficiaries following appropriate training courses;
- o Micro public residential areas²³.

Only if specific situations make it necessary, it is also possible to think of a gradual pathway to develop the housing autonomy of the subjects, foreseeing, for example, access to temporary emergency housing (both public and private), to forms of social housing, to structures managed by third sector realities. They must, however, be explicitly declined as intermediate solutions, in view of access to housing that can guarantee real stability to the nucleus. For this to happen, it is necessary to define the articulation of this pathway with a

²³ The micro-area - in respect of the Sinta culture in particular - is identified within the urban planning in an area served by all services and sub-services. It is built for a maximum number of six single-family units linked by family ties. The micro area consists of six housing units according to the needs of each family unit.



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plan that indicates: certain timeframes for the permanence of families or individuals in transitional solutions, activities to be launched to support the autonomy of individuals in terms of work, the final housing solution to which the individual or the beneficiary family must have access (with an indication of the period within which the individual or family must be placed in the home).

4. Identifying funds: the importance of securing resources and continuity of expenditure

Any attempt to plan and programme a pathway for the social inclusion of settlement inhabitants can only be initiated if there are sufficient economic resources to underpin the proposals. It is therefore necessary to define the cost of the intervention and identify possible funding channels to support it, planning measures and interventions over a medium- and long-term time horizon.

Fundamental are the securing of resources and the continuity of expenditure. One success factor, as seen in the previous chapter, may lie in the multiplication of funding channels that can be activated. Therefore, a study aimed at mapping and systematising funding channels and funds may be useful, identifying both resources to support interventions specifically aimed at Roma groups present in settlements, and resources intended to finance interventions aimed at vulnerable groups that may also include families and individuals present in settlements: women, neet, young people, victims of discrimination, long-term unemployed, third-country nationals. By pluralising the target definition, funding sources can also be pluralised to support the intervention by mobilising new resources through specific European, national and regional funding sources (EU 2021-2027 funds, structural funds with indirect access, PON Metro, PON Inclusion, ROP, ESF, ERDF) and by also envisaging ways to access private resources and funding from foundations and philanthropic institutions.

A further opportunity may lie in the reconversion of expenditure items. It is possible to allocate the resources the administration already spends on settlement management to bear the cost, or at least part of the cost, of social inclusion interventions.

Sharing the identified plans for social inclusion with families fosters ownership of the plan by families and individuals. If the intervention plan is negotiated with those directly concerned,



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it is more likely that the recipients will feel it as their own, as an activity that also depends on them and not as a mere supply of goods and services proposed by an external entity.

Each LAP developed will necessarily be different because identified needs and solutions may vary from community to community, territory to territory.

Once drafted, the LAP will have to be **discussed and approved by the council and/or the municipal council and the assembly of Sinti or Roma families.**



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Actions Phase 3

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A 3.1

The Local Action Plan is drafted with actions in the short, medium, and long term

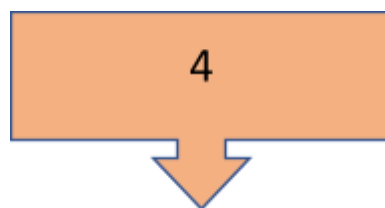
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A 3.2

The Local Action Plan is discussed and approved by the Council and/or the City Council and the assembly of Sinti or Roma families



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FINANCE AND IMPLEMENT

This brings us down to the concrete, where it is a matter of giving shape and substance to the LAP by finding the necessary funds (municipal, municipal, state and European) and promoting the actions aimed at achieving the set goals. During implementation, existing services should primarily be strengthened rather than new ones created. It makes more sense to break down the barriers that prevent access to a service than to plan newly implemented public services exclusively for population groups. If, for example, some households have difficulty following the procedures for accessing public housing, it becomes costly and unproductive to set up new rent support or self-help services for them. In this case, it is sufficient to promote support measures, through dedicated staff, for households wishing to apply for 'social housing'.

Implementation of the LAP is promoted by the **coordinator** delegated by the mayor and by a multidisciplinary **municipal task force** that will be composed of representatives of municipal departments, municipal institutions, and representatives of the GAC. It will work closely with the GAC, which will be called upon to verify its correct implementation. Especially at this stage, the **pro-active involvement of the beneficiaries** is indispensable to ensure the sustainability of the intervention.



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Actions Phase 4

10

A 4.1

The mayor appoints a municipal task force on which there must be a family representative (paid to the same extent as other members) to implement the Local Action Plan

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A 4.2

The task force, coordinated by the municipal coordinator and in close relationship with the CAG implements the actions of the Local Action Plan

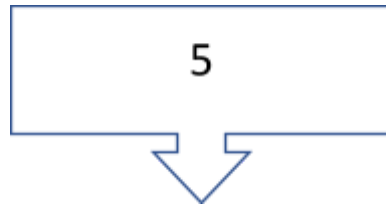
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A 4.3

Community Action Group monitors the proper implementation of the Local Action Plan by the municipal task force



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COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

In the public debate, overcoming slums has been an 'intractable issue' for years. When some administrations have decided to tackle it, they have done so by remaining on the level of empty slogans, maintaining a demagogic dimension and without any reference to data and analysis. There is a need to move towards a **rhetorical repositioning** that definitively abandons ethnic underlining and embraces reflections on the collective advantage to be had, in economic and social terms, from overcoming slums. Overcoming the shantytown of a periphery means first of all listening to and responding to a problem of the periphery itself, relieving it of an enclave of marginality within it.

Explaining to the city the value of the whole process of overcoming the slums from its inception to its completion will be an action to be taken with particular care. Just as it will be crucial to repeat how Rome's slums are places of exclusion in which, after the 2008 economic crisis and the crisis generated by Covid-19, not only the Roma live. Who in turn, only a small minority, live in the camps²⁴.

The definitive closure of formal and informal slums and its sharing with the citizenry is a challenge that must finally be taken seriously as a great civilisation challenge for the benefit of all. It is a matter of **building consensus** by favouring those who work in the media and civil

²⁴ According to the most recent data, out of 180,000 Roma and Sinti in Italy (Council of Europe data), only 20,000 live in so-called 'Roma camps' (data from Associazione 21 luglio). It is certainly striking to recall how in Italy out of every 9 Roma, only 1 lives in a caravan, in a shack, inside a container.

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society, in the awareness that degrading living conditions, such as those experienced by the inhabitants of the settlements, do not immediately arouse reactions of solidarity and empathy, but on the contrary produce mistrust, suspicion, hostility in public opinion. Negative attitudes that, if maintained, do not help in the understanding of any resolution process.

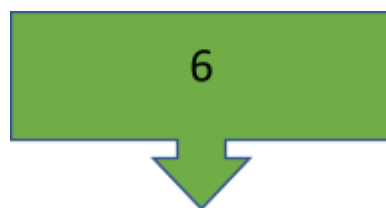
Actions Phase 5

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A 5.1

A communication strategy prepared by the municipal coordinator is approved by the task force, CAG and local authorities





MONITORING AND SUSTAINABILITY

This is a fundamental action to give continuity and sustainability to the intervention.

Closing a settlement and ensuring families' access to housing does not exhaust the efforts to overcome a settlement. It is necessary, with the support of an external agency, to envisage a monitoring system of the outcomes of the process, respecting the privacy of the recipients, which also takes into account the years after entering housing. The monitoring, to be carried out in a way that will be shared with the families, must gather information and data that will make it possible to assess the effective social integration and the extent to which the intervention has favoured it or not.

Specifically, providing for this monitoring activity is useful for achieving two objectives. The first, and most immediate, is to monitor the results achieved by the intervention in order to provide the administration with useful information for its evaluation.

The second objective is to guarantee, if necessary, forms of support for the autonomy and agency capacity of individuals and families. Careful monitoring activities can in fact help to highlight any critical issues that may arise once individuals or families have moved into their new homes. In these cases, acting in good time by devising, in consultation with the families, alternative strategies to those that were initially planned and that do not produce the desired results, can help support the path to social inclusion for those who have lived in a 'Roma camp' for a long time.

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Actions Phase 6

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A 6.1

Through a call for proposals, an agency is identified, which must have partnered with a Sinti or Roma association, charged with conducting a monitoring and impact assessment

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A 6.2

The Local Action Plan and its impact is evaluated

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A 6.3

Any critical issues are highlighted and specific actions are reshaped in order to improve outcomes

