

STORIA MEMORIA



Toolkit for teachers

SINTI AND ROMA IN SCHOOLS



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FORM 1

History and context

Knowing and understanding the stories of Roma and Sinti children is the first step towards building an inclusive pathway, centred on the needs of pupils belonging to these communities.

This module traces in summary form 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. The aim of this excursus is to outline a general framework, which every teacher may find useful in order to place the life stories of Roma and Sinti pupils in their classrooms, and to construct didactic and pedagogic paths that know how to take them into account, enhance them, and make them the subject of interaction and enrichment of all classroom contexts.



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1. A long journey. From India to the West

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 travellers, 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 the year in which chroniclers begin to speak of 'cingari' being present on today's 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

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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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.

Since the end of the 15th century, the principle of intolerance according to the 'scapegoat' scheme has also been taking root in society. While the individual poor person remains untouchable, because the 'poor Christ' continues to be concealed beneath his clothes, specific social groups are instead criminalised, accused of undermining the security and order of the city with their behaviour. A decisive shift will take place in the following decades, when, especially with the Council of Trent, the relationship with the poor person definitively loses its mystical sense. From being the 'representative of Christ', the poor, the wretched, the 'ragged', especially when vagrant and in a group dimension, becomes the culprit of his own and others' misery.

An infinite number of proclamations and edicts, promulgated throughout the peninsula but with greater intensity within the Papal States, forbade the 'gens cingara' from settling, decreed physical punishment for those found begging, going so far as to issue the formula that 'whoever kills a gypsy does not commit a crime'.⁴

From the beginning of the 16th century onwards, increasingly restrictive laws lead to explicit forms of public persecution, culminating in murders planned by the citizenry and tolerated, if not encouraged, by the institutions. On a European level, such persecution reached the peak of cruelty in the 18th century, both in Spain and in the Holy Roman Empire.

The repressive line alternated, outside our territory, with experimental attempts to trace trajectories, even violent ones, aimed at making 'good citizens' of those wandering the roads of Europe in search of fortune. As we shall see in the following pages, the social history of attempts to (re)educate Roma and Sinti communities is very long and complex, often obsessive, and always fits within the broader social history of European education. The history of those who were once referred to by the most diverse names, and whom we now identify as 'Roma and Sinti', could in fact be recounted as a linear path of attempted and failed re-educational projects all over Europe, alternating with expulsive and persecutory practices.

³ Genesis 4:22.

⁴ For an analysis of the proclamations and edicts see Carlo Stasolla, *Il figlio di Abele*, Rome, 2000.



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The moment when the process of re-educating 'gypsies' began in the various countries corresponds approximately to the period between the 17th and 19th centuries, a period in which nation states were defined and, with them, the need to frame those who could consider themselves 'useful citizens' in the service of each country's government. State education immediately reveals itself as one of the most appropriate tools to inculcate in the subject populations the sense of belonging to a national group.

The 're-educational paths' dedicated to the Roma and Sinti communities, however, are often confronted with failure, generating in the collective imagination the identification of 'gypsy' people as 'non-citizens', incapable of being part of any process aimed at a presumed normality. The stereotypes of the nomadic, sociopathic, rascal, cripple, deceiver 'gypsy' - categories that late 19th century positivist anthropology makes extremely ingrained pre-judgments, which will function as the basis for the tragic events of the 20th century - are reinforced in these years.

Reflection on the concept of 'gypsy asociality' led in the 19th and 20th centuries towards the conception and design of a more structured 'state re-education' to which subjects were to be subjected for rehabilitation in the civilised sphere.

2. The genocide of Roma and Sinti people under Nazi-fascism

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



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and the delinquent [...]. The Gypsies could be called, in general, like the Bedouins, a race of associated malefactors'.⁵

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'.⁶

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).⁷

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,

⁵ Lombroso C., 1896, L'uomo delinquente studiato in rapporto all'antropologia, alla medicina legale ed alle discipline carcerarie, Il Mulino, Bologna.

⁶ Bravi L., 2009, Tra inclusione ed esclusione. Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia, Unicopli, Trezzano sul Naviglio (MI).

⁷ 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 the 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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scrounging, fraud, theft, lying and deception. [...] They are easy-going, unfaithful, fearful, cunning in danger, vindictive, cynical, arrogant, shameless with the weak, weak but 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'.⁸

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'.⁹

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'.¹⁰

3. 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 it was necessary to regain courage and start working with the postone [editor's note: outdoor circus enclosed with gates] again. He went to Reggio Emilia to the Liberation Command to ask to get back the animals that had

⁸ Semizzi R., 1939, 'Gli zingari', in 'La Rassegna di clinica, terapia e scienze affini', fasc.1, January-February.

⁹ Landra G., 1940, 'Il problema dei meticci in Europa', La Difesa della razza, year IV, no. 1.

¹⁰ This is the order for internment in special concentration camps by the Chief of Police, Arturo Bocchini, reported in Ibid.



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been taken 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'. .¹¹

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,¹² 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.

¹¹ De Bar G., 1998, Strada, patria Sinti, Fatatrac, Modena.

¹² 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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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, 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.¹³

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 of Italian Sinti and Roma people, and to combat anti-Gypsyism.¹⁴ The dozens of resolutions and pronouncements, however, have gone unheeded by the Italian parliament and various governments.¹⁵

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

¹³ edited by Marcolungo E. and Karpati M., 1985, *Chi sono gli zingari*, Edizioni Gruppo Abele, Turin.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ See, for example, Council of Europe Recommendation 1557/2002
<https://file.asgi.it/raccomandazione.n.1557.2002.pdf>



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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.

In the 2000s, anti-Gypsyism became radicalised in Italy, leading communities to be subjected to increasingly violent hate campaigns and 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.

4. The three migrations from the Balkans to Italy. Refugees or nomads?

In post-World War II Italy, the tragic memories of the genocide are removed from collective memory. The facilities where Roma and Sinti families were imprisoned during Fascism are demolished or converted, while the survivors gather in the spontaneous areas of the urban periphery, or mingle among the slums of southern Italy. Quite different, however, is the situation in neighbouring Yugoslavia, starting in the 1960s.

After the Second World War, the Roma represented the largest minority in the Republic of the former Yugoslavia for centuries; the so-called 'Tito formula' ensured that all minorities could organise themselves politically and culturally. In the late 1950s, the regime became convinced of the need to open up Yugoslav society to the free market, in order to consolidate growth and improve the country's economic efficiency. In 1965, an economic and financial reform was launched that led to the closure of many 'political factories' built after the First World War, many of which were located in the interior, in depressed areas marked by the historical presence of Roma communities. Small groups of Bosnian Muslim and Serbian Orthodox Roma, who had been sedentary for centuries, deprived of work and fallen into a state of economic precariousness, left their villages for Italy, setting up small self-managed settlements, especially in Turin, Milan and Rome. This is a seasonal mobility involving a small number of people, mostly men.

With the death of Tito in 1980, the former Yugoslav Republic entered the tunnel of social tensions. The Roma communities realised that the protection of their rights was now seriously at risk: those who could set out for the West, and those who did not do so voluntarily were forced to leave by the numerous episodes of racism that spread throughout



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the country. The suburbs of many Italian cities are populated by Roma families, who have left their homes with the idea of one day being able to return. The increase in the number of families in housing emergency pushes the institutions, starting with those in Rome (the capital has been the epicentre of this second migratory wave in recent years) to a securitarian course of violent evictions and forced removals.

On 9 January 1992, the birth of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was proclaimed and a violent conflict began, which escalated on 29 February of the same year with the announcement of Bosnia-Herzegovina's independence. The siege of Sarajevo marked the beginning of a conflict that would last three years and lead to the coining of the sad term 'ethnic cleansing'. With the end of the conflict that also broke out in Kosovo, the fragmentation of the now former Yugoslavia was completed in 1999. Bosnian, Montenegrin, Kosovar and Serbian Roma people began their exodus to the West. They do not flee, as in the two previous migration flows, to seek better living conditions while waiting to return to their homeland, but to save their lives.

According to the most quoted estimates, the 'Yugoslav Roma' who arrived in Italy from the 1970s to 1992 would be 35,000; another 10,000 would arrive in the following years, during the war in Bosnia and Kosovo¹⁶. They are not perceived as foreign migrants or war refugees, but rather, in common parlance, as 'nomads'. Nomads by choice and by culture. They are 'almost outside the system', wrote the anthropologist Leonardo Piasere¹⁷.

5. Regional Laws

In the face of the migratory flows of Roma and Yugoslavian refugees, the 'nomad camp' increasingly became the main political administrative tool used by national and local governments in Italy to provide an immediate and emergency response to the dramatic housing conditions of these communities.

The first rest areas in Italy were created in the 1970s, mainly due to the will and intervention of the Opera Nomadi, which at the time promoted them on the basis of Circular No. 17 of the Ministry of the Interior of 11 October 1973, which asked the municipalities to register people belonging to the Sinta minority in the municipal registry office. The first

¹⁶ Brunello P. (ed.), 1996, 'L'urbanistica del disprezzo', Manifestolibri, Rome.

¹⁷ Piasere L., 1996, 'Stranieri (e) nomadi', in Piero Brunello (ed.), L'urbanistica del disprezzo, Manifestolibri, Rome.



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areas were established in Trento and Bolzano, but then quickly spread throughout the country, in cities such as Udine, Mestre, Reggio Emilia, Pistoia, Turin, Bologna, Verona, Cuneo and Lucca.

Since 1984, a number of regional legislators have been attempting to provide order and answers to the critical problems encountered with the presence of Roma and Sinti communities on their territory by issuing organic legislative texts on these minorities.¹⁸

The elements that unite the laws - and which also represent their structural limits in some cases - are: the need to safeguard the ethnic and cultural heritage of the Roma and Sinti; the improper linking of the problematic linked to the condition of recently immigrated Roma refugees with that of Sinti carry people, actresses of a seasonal commuting connected to the travelling show; the identification of the 'nomad camp' as the most suitable place to guarantee the identity of the Roma and Sinti communities, not - in the original intentions - a means of segregation, but a device for safeguarding the peculiarities of these ethnic groups. All these aspects are based on the assumption, which has never been proven, that being Roma or Sinto necessarily equates to the practice of voluntary nomadism, the foundation of a cultural identity.

¹⁸ The regions and autonomous provinces that over the years have formulated ad hoc legislation to address the issue are:

1. Lazio Regional Law, 24 May 1985, No. 82, "Norms in favour of the Roma";
2. Sardinian Regional Law, 14 March 1988, No. 9, 'Protection of the ethnicity and culture of nomads';
3. Emilia Romagna Regional Law, 23 November 1988, No. 47, "Norms for nomadic minorities in Emilia Romagna";
4. Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Law, 14 March 1988, No. 11, "Norms for the Protection of Roma Culture within the Territory of the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia";
5. Lombardy Regional Law, 22 December 1989, No. 77, 'Action for the protection of populations belonging to traditionally nomadic and semi-nomadic ethnic groups';
6. Veneto Regional Law, 22 December 1989, No. 54, "Interventions to protect the culture of Roma and Sinti";
7. Umbria Regional Law, 27 April 1990, No. 32, 'Measures to encourage the integration of nomads into society and to protect their identity and cultural heritage';
8. Piedmont Regional Law, 10 June 1993, No. 26, "Interventions in favour of the gypsy population";
9. Regional Law of Tuscany, 12 January 2000, No. 2, "Interventions for the Roma and Sinti peoples";
10. Provincial Law Autonomous Province of Trento, 29 October 2009, No. 12, 'Measures for promote the integration of Sinti and Roma groups residing in the province of Trento'.



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6. The 'Land of Fields'

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', able to accommodate 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 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'.¹⁹

¹⁹ From the preface by Leonardo Piasere in Stasolla C., 2012, *Sulla pelle dei rom*, Edizioni Alegre, Rome.



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7. Migration from post-Ceausescu Romania

As had happened in Yugoslavia, in Romania too, after the death of Ceausescu in 1989, Roma people became the 'scapegoats' of a collapsing economic and social situation. From 1990 onwards, violent attacks against Roma communities were recorded in various parts of the country, an unmistakable sign of growing anti-Gypsyism, with house fires and people fleeing the villages; many observers would describe these attacks as 'pogrom-style'.²⁰

In 1991, the Land Fund Law (*Legea Fondului Funciar* no. 18/1991) was passed, dismantling the large state-owned agricultural enterprises. Agricultural land is allocated, mostly in small plots, to the descendants of those who had owned it before collectivisation. The law, however, penalises the Roma minority, who historically have never owned land, and who therefore cannot now benefit from the 'restitution'. Among other things, many Roma, who in the past were employed in state-owned farms, with the closure of these farms become victims of a wave of redundancies that *primarily* affects the socially weaker and minority groups.

The tolerance of local institutions towards these repeated episodes, repeatedly denounced by international institutions, ended up isolating the Roma communities; from the 1990s onwards, some of them began a migratory movement towards large European cities.

This flow is facilitated by Romania's entry into the European Union on 1 January 2007, coinciding with cuts in social security contributions and the severe crisis in the industrial and service sectors. Numerous Roma communities are pouring into the 'nomad camps' of the Italian suburbs, already populated by Bosnian, Montenegrin, Kosovar and Macedonian refugees.

In the Italian metropolises - starting with Turin, Milan, Rome and Naples - the 'nomad camp', increasingly populous and similar to the *favelas* overseas, appears as the stratification of Roma migratory poverty, where the lowest rung is always guaranteed by the last to arrive.

²⁰ Exemplary in this respect, and now infamous, is the Hadareni riot in 1993, during which three Roma were killed, 19 houses burnt down and five completely destroyed.



APPENDIX - Girls and children in Roma slums. A case study

There are several studies investigating the psychological and social repercussions of living in a Roma slum marked by degradation, marginality and exclusion. Inner discomfort is constructed due to numerous factors, including the social context and the so-called social determinants of health: lack of income, discrimination, social exclusion, cultural deprivation and inadequate living space are all factors that impact on psychological well-being. They are all part of the lives of Roma people in housing emergency placed in camps.

According to various researches conducted within Italian Roma shantytowns,²¹ the living conditions of the and approximately 7,000 Roma minors living in poverty in Italy in a formal (planned and managed by institutions) or informal (spontaneously created) settlement not only strongly marks their present, but also irreparably compromises their future. One or one Roma child born today in a 'nomad camp' will have close to a 0 chance of entering university, while the chances of attending high school will not exceed 1%. In 1 in 5 cases, they will never start school. Their life expectancy will be on average about 10 years lower than the rest of the population, while when they grow up they will have a 7 in 10 chance of feeling discriminated against because of their ethnicity.

8. The participation processes of the Roma and Sinti communities

In Europe, Roma and Sinti movements and organisations have been present since the 1600s, but took an international form in the early 20th century, culminating in the first World Congress on 8 April 1971, in London, with the birth of the Romani Union.²²

In Italy, the participation of Roma and Sinti people in social and political life has been hindered since the 1960s by pro-Roma and Sinti associations, in particular by the Opera Nomadi, which assigned itself the function of representing and mediating between communities and institutions. This situation lasted until the 2000s, delaying the emergence of Sinti and Roma organisations and claimant movements by decades, compared to what happened for example in Spain, Germany and former Yugoslavia.

²¹ 21 July Association, *Going out to dream*, Rome, 2016.

²² Santino Spinelli, *L'associazionismo e le Istituzioni in Le verità negate*, Meltemi Linee, Milan 2021.

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In 1990, Santino Spinelli, in open contrast to the Opera Nomadi and other pro-Roma and Sinti associations, founded the Thèm Romanò association in Lanciano (CH), claiming the direct participation of the Romani people in Italian social and political life. The birth of Thèm Romanò did not in fact create any outflow of Sinti and Roma from the Opera Nomadi, where they played a marginal role.

In 1992, the assembly of the Opera Nomadi, Mantua section, elected a sinto, Bernardino Torsi, as president for the first time in Italy. The election is strongly criticised and opposed by the national leadership of Opera Nomadi. In 1996, the Mantua Sinta community founded the Sucar Drom association, claiming the same themes launched by the Thèm Romanò association and adding new ones: anti-discrimination and cultural mediation.

The situation continued for about a decade, until, in 2006, the Opera Nomadi section of Mantua presented the document Nove Tesi (Nine Theses) to the national assembly of Opera Nomadi, effectively calling for the dissolution of the association and the promotion of direct participation by Sinti and Roma people. The document is rejected by a few votes in an assembly that effectively sanctions the dissolution of the national Opera Nomadi.

In 2005, Yuri Del Bar was elected to the municipal council in Mantua. He was the first person from the minority elected in Italy to become a protagonist in the decisions of his city. The work carried out by the Sucar Drom association had set itself the goal in the 1990s of implementing participation in the social, political and economic life of the province of Mantua and not only in matters pertaining to the community itself. The election of Yuri Del Bar was disruptive in the Sinti and Roma communities.

In April 2007, the Sucar Drom association, together with the Nevo Drom and Roma and Sinti and Politica associations - recently formed in Bolzano and Pescara - called for an assembly in Mantua of all Sinti and Roma leaders. The Roma and Sinti Together Committee was born, which launched the first bill for the recognition of linguistic minority status and promoted the establishment of Sinti and Roma associations throughout Italy. In 2009, in Mantua, the Committee became the Roma and Sinti Together Federation, and its members included around forty Sinti and Roma associations that had formed in the meantime throughout the country²³.

²³ Roma and Sinti Federation Together <http://comitatoromsinti.blogspot.com/>



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The Sinti and Roma association movement was not and still is not supported in any way by the Italian government but is supported by some local authorities. The UNAR in 2017 established the National Roma, Sinti and Walking Platform and later the Roma and Sinti Forum. In the former, pro-Roma and Sinti associations participate, while in the latter only Sinti and Roma associations participate. They are consultative bodies with respect to the actions envisaged by the National Roma, Sinti and Travellers Strategy. To date, the Italian government has not financed the Sinti and Roma associations in order to support their operating costs (rent for their headquarters, utilities, management expenses) and the costs of implementing participation on a territorial basis. Moreover, public selections for the recruitment of Sinti and Romani speakers for permanent positions have never been announced in Italy. Only recently has UNAR hired people belonging to the minority for short periods. The situation is different in the European Union where, for example, in Germany Sinti and Roma associations are adequately subsidised. In Italy, prejudice against persons belonging to the minority remains deep and for this reason, pro-synte and Roma associations are still delegated in the planning and implementation of projects. People belonging to the minority are used, at best, instrumentally for the realisation of specific project actions.

9. 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 about 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.

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.



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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 relevant conditions must however be considered: firstly, the overcoming of an 'emergency' approach, the reaffirmation of 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.

10. The fight against decay and the State of Emergency

Since the second half of the 1990s, the issue of urban security - with the consequent fight against degradation - has become one of the prevailing themes in the Italian public debate. Once again, the urban poor are pointed at as the culprit of their poverty, which makes their persecution by the institutions less scandalous. An exemplary example is the project launched in 1994 by the Emilia-Romagna Region, 'Safe Cities', headed by criminologist Massimo Pavarini, which envisages the combination of three crime prevention strategies: 'institutional' (surveillance, video-surveillance, fences, alarm systems); 'community



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prevention', to make neighbourhoods safer by activating social control; and 'social prevention', in the hands of welfare. In various Italian cities, union ordinances are being signed against window washers, illegal vendors, and people bivouacking near stations.

In the autumn of 2007, following the brutal assault, rape and murder of Giovanna Reggiani, in Tor di Quinto, the Mayor of Rome pointed the finger at the uncontrolled entry of Romanian Roma into the capital, and a few months later the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, following the attacks on the inhabitants of some Roma settlements in Ponticelli (Naples), issued the Prime Ministerial Decree 'Declaration of the state of emergency in relation to the settlements of nomadic communities in the territory of the regions of Campania, Lazio and Lombardy'. On 30 May 2008, three ordinances are issued for the implementation of the decree in Lombardy, Lazio and Campania, with which the prefects of Milan, Rome and Naples are appointed 'Commissari delegati per la realizzazione di tutti gli interventi necessari al superamento dello stato di emergenza'.

The Prime Ministerial Decree set 31 May 2009 as the end of the state of emergency. But on 28 May 2009, a new decree is issued, extending the state of emergency to 31 December 2010, also extending it to Piedmont and Veneto. In addition, on 1 June 2009, two other implementing ordinances were issued, with which the prefects of Turin and Venice were appointed 'delegated commissioners for the implementation of all the interventions necessary to overcome the state of emergency' for Piedmont and Veneto.

According to the text of the decree,²⁴ the declaration of a state of emergency became necessary due to the *extreme critical situation caused by the* 'presence of numerous irregular non-EU citizens and nomads who have permanently settled in urban areas [and] considering that these settlements, due to their extreme precariousness, have led to a situation of serious social alarm, with possible serious repercussions in terms of public order and security for the local populations [...] that seriously endanger public order and security'. According to the text of the declaration, 'the aforementioned situation, which involves various levels of territorial government, in terms of intensity and extension, cannot be tackled with the instruments provided by ordinary legislation'.

The ordinances indicate the areas of intervention and the tasks of the extraordinary commissioners: "a) definition of action programmes to overcome the emergency; b)

²⁴ On 30 May 2008, the former Prime Minister signed three ordinances, 'Urgent civil protection provisions to deal with the state of emergency in relation to nomadic community settlements', for Lombardy, Lazio and Campania



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monitoring of authorised camps where nomadic communities are present and identification of unauthorised settlements; c) identification and census of persons, including minors of age, and family units present in the places referred to in point b), by means of signal surveys d) adoption of the necessary measures, with the assistance of the Police Forces, with regard to the persons referred to in point c) who are or may be the recipients of administrative or judicial orders of removal or expulsion; e) planning, should the existing ones fail to meet the housing needs, of the identification of other suitable sites for the establishment of authorised camps f) adoption of measures aimed at clearing and restoring the areas occupied by the unauthorised settlements; g) implementation of the first appropriate actions to restore the minimum levels of social and health services; h) implementation of actions aimed at fostering the social inclusion and integration of the persons transferred to the authorised camps, with particular reference to support measures and integrated projects for minors, as well as actions aimed at combating the phenomena of illegal trade, begging and prostitution i) monitoring and promoting the initiatives implemented in the authorised camps to encourage schooling and vocational training and involvement in housing construction or rehabilitation activities; l) adopting any useful and necessary measures to overcome the emergency"²⁵ .

The first action organised following the declaration of the state of emergency is the census conducted during 2008, involving Roma and Sinti inhabitants of formal and informal settlements in Naples, Rome and Milan. The census and the collection of the fingerprints of some camp inhabitants provoked criticism from the European Parliament which, in July 2008, adopted a resolution on the ethnically-based census of Roma in Italy, in which it expressed apprehension about the claims contained in the government decrees²⁶ .

²⁵ Prime Ministerial Ordinances n. 3676, n. 3677 and n. 3678 of 30 May 2008: Urgent civil protection provisions to deal with the state of emergency in relation to the settlements of nomadic communities in the territory of the region of Lazio, the region of Lombardy and the region of Campania

²⁶ European Parliament, European Parliament resolution on the census of the Roma on the basis of ethnicity in Italy, 7 July 2008:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+B6-20080348+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>



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The 'nomad emergency' intervenes in a framework of great social fragility, actually worsening the conditions of those already living in a precarious situation and fuelling in the imagination the vision of the 'nomad issue' as an administrative and security problem.

On 16 November 2011, the Council of State, in ruling no. 6050, declared the 'nomad emergency' decree and its further measures illegitimate.

APPENDIX - Does the 'Roma camp' represent a total institution? Results of a research

The 'Asylum' research²⁷ aims to read and analyse the policies implemented for the 'friendly segregation' of Roma communities in Rome between 1994 and 2019, and to understand whether and how the Roman 'Roma camp' stands as a total institution, as considered by Erving Goffman, the Canadian sociologist who died in the 1980s.

The report illustrates the extent to which the history of social and housing segregation suffered by Roma families in the capital has led to their isolation, if not in closed regimes, at least in formally administered spaces of confinement. The words of the interviewed families tell of the power of such spaces on their life choices, identity models, aspirations and self-perception. For them, the Roman 'Roma camps' represent spaces that evoke the characteristics of total institutions described by Erving Goffman: the sense of confinement due to the physical isolation of the settlement in relation to the city; the absence of relations and stimuli from outside; the paucity of private spaces; the difficulty of preserving and protecting one's personal belongings; promiscuity; overcrowding; the mortification felt in declaring or hiding one's place of residence; the involvement in insignificant work activities by the settlement management bodies; the overlapping in the same place of the three basic spheres of life such as entertainment, work and living; the period spent in the "Roma camp" perceived as a long, interminable waste of time²⁸.

However, the totalising effect of the 'Roma camp', the research concludes, does not only have an impact when one enters such a circuit, but also when one attempts to leave it. Just

²⁷ Association 21 July, 2020, Asy(s)lum. From 'Total Institutions' to the 'Roma camps' in the city of Rome.

²⁸ Goffman E., 2010, Asylums. Le istituzioni totali: i meccanismi dell'esclusione e della violenza, Piccola biblioteca Einaudi, Bologna.



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as with the total institutions described by Goffman, Roma people who leave the reality of mono-ethnic settlements often experience feelings of anxiety, worry, a sense of inadequacy and phenomena such as disculturation and stigmatisation. "The camp," says one person interviewed who has been out of the settlement for years, "you take it with you!"²⁹ .

11. 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 Strategy³⁰ .

On 11 November 2011, the Italian government set up the National Contact Point (NCP), at the National Anti-Racial Discrimination Office (UNAR), to draft the National Strategy, which was 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.³¹

When it expires in 2020, implementing 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)'.

²⁹ <https://www.21luglio.org/2018/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/asylum-web.pdf>

³⁰ The Kroll Ketane event, <http://comitatoromsinti.blogspot.com/2011/11/tutti-uniti-aderisci-anche-tu.html>

³¹ 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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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.

APPENDIX - Recognition of the minority

When the Sinti and Roma associations set up the Roma and Sinti Insieme Committee in April 2007, which later became a federation, they supported the inclusion of the Sinti and Roma linguistic minority in Law 482/1999³². Subsequently, a reflection on the structure of the law, tailored to the linguistic minorities present in a given territory, led the Federazione Rom e Sinti Insieme to draft the bill "Norms for the protection and equal opportunities of the historical-linguistic minority of Roma and Sinti"³³. Almost all Italian Sinti and Roma associations³⁴ joined the bill with the support of individual intellectuals and politicians³⁵.

³² Food for thought for the Roma and Sinti Identity Conference in Italy

<http://sucardrom.blogspot.com/2007/07/cecina-il-comitato-rom-e-sinti-insieme.html>

³³ Popular initiative bill <http://lexsintirom.blogspot.com/p/la-legge.html>

³⁴ Proposing associations <http://lexsintirom.blogspot.com/p/proponenti.html>

³⁵ National Committee for the popular initiative law for the recognition of the status of Roma and Sinti as historical-linguistic minorities <http://lexsintirom.blogspot.com/p/comitato.html>



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The draft law has set itself the goal of achieving for Sinti and Roma the right to recognition as a historical-linguistic minority in accordance with Articles 3 and 6 of the Constitution, which provide for: equal social dignity and equality before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions; the protection of all linguistic minorities with special regulations. This creates the conditions to counter discrimination and prejudice against Roma and Sinti communities, which are the cause of their poor integration into society and their social and economic marginalisation.

According to the recent "National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Sinti (2021-2030)", "[o]ne of the central nodes related to the full inclusion of Roma and Sinti people in our country remains that of the lack of recognition as a minority. In the Italian legal system, the concept of minority is linked to linguistic specificity and finds its foundation in the Constitution, which states in Article 6: "The Republic protects linguistic minorities with appropriate regulations"". At the end of the 1990s, Law No. 482 (of 15 December 1999), 'Norms on the protection of linguistic and historical minorities', was passed, recognising twelve historical ethno-linguistic minorities (Albanian, Catalan, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian), ignoring the specificity of the Romani language. The protection of the Roma and Sinti minority is therefore today left to a further legislative definition.

"The goal of achieving minority status," the text of the 'National Strategy' continues, "whether it is linked to cultural or linguistic specificities of the Romani community, would contribute on a historical level to the recognition of the persecution and extermination suffered, ensuring a rapprochement between institutions, society and the Roma and Sinti communities, in the common effort to overcome the conditions of social and economic hardship that specifically affect a section of the Roma and Sinti"³⁶.

12. Current picture of the presence of Roma and Sinti people in Italy

The current demographic situation of the Roma and Sinti communities in Italy is the direct consequence of the first arrivals in the 15th century and of migratory flows that affected our country from the late 19th century until the early 2000s.

³⁶ UNAR, to the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti, Rome, 2012



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As we have seen, the first documented appearance of communities identified as 'gens cingara' dates back to the 15th century, when the chronicles of the time report the presence in Bologna, Fermo and Jesi of groups heading for Rome in order to obtain papal indulgence. At the same time, other groups from Greece reached the coasts of southern Italy by sea. The initial curiosity about caravans from the East was soon replaced by an attitude of open hostility that would result in bans and expulsions reported until the 18th century.

The first migration to Italy took place at the end of the 19th century and above all between the first and second post-war period, when around 7,000 Harvati, Kalderasha, Istrian and Slovenian Roma arrived from Eastern Europe and settled in various areas of the country, managing to acquire Italian citizenship thanks to the Treaty of Osimo of 1975. This period also saw the arrival in Italy of Sinti communities fleeing Nazi Germany.

The second major migration flow involves around 40,000 Roma from the former Yugoslavia. It began in the second half of the 1960s with the economic crisis in the former Yugoslavia caused by the financial reform promoted by Tito, which led to the closure of historic factories located in the most depressed areas of the country; it spread after 1980 with the death of Tito, which marked the end of peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence in Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia; it amplified with the war that began in Bosnia in 1992 and the Kosovo conflict at the end of the century.

The third and most recent migration flow, which occurred at the turn of the millennium, concerns Roma communities of Romanian nationality. It peaked with the end of Ceausescu's regime and was the direct consequence, as had happened in the former Yugoslavia, of Romania's profound instability and a severe economic crisis that affected the country's poorest and most discriminated sections, who were forced to flee to the West.

Conventionally, historians indicate twenty-two Roma and Sinti communities in Italy: the Italian Roma, subdivided into five groups (Roma from Abruzzo, Roma from Celento, Roma from Basilicata, Roma from Apulia, Roma from Calabria); the Italian Sinti, comprising nine macro groups (Sinti from Piedmont, Sinti from Lombardy, Sinti from Mucina, Sinti from Emilia, Sinti from Veneto, Sinti from Marche, Sinti from Gàckanè, Sinti from Extremistria, Sinti from Kranària) the Balkan Roma of recent immigration, comprising at least 5 macro-groups and subdivided into those who arrived in our country at the turn of the two wars and those who arrived between 1960 and the second half of 1990 (Roma harvati, Roma



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kalderasha, Roma xoraxanè, Roma sikhanè, Roma arlija/shiptaira); the EU Roma of recent immigration, within which it is possible to identify the Romanian Roma and Bulgarian Roma. The limited availability of scientifically reliable socio-demographic and economic statistical information on the various Roma and Sinti communities is an obvious limitation in identifying specific problems and the most appropriate measures to take. By contrast, the picture is clearer in relation to those communities living in housing emergencies or in ethnically assigned spaces.

In this regard, we can identify three housing macro-types: open-air settlements; community centres; mono-ethnic Public Housing areas.

12.1. Outdoor settlements

Formal settlements

These are settlements designed, built and managed by public institutions. Referred to in common parlance as 'nomad camps' or 'rest areas', they are almost always built outside the urban fabric, fenced off, with often inadequate primary services. They consist of containers, caravans or shacks. They exist in 74 municipalities and 14 regions. There are 111 of them, inhabited by 12,200 people. In many cases, these settlements can be defined as real 'shantytowns'.

Informal settlements

These are spontaneous settlements, inhabited mainly by EU citizens. Given their fragmentation and the transience of those living in them, it is impossible to define their number. The estimated number of inhabitants is around 5,000.

Microareas

Inhabited almost entirely by sinte Italians, they are small public or private areas where one or more extended families reside. The approximately 50 micro-areas on public areas in Italy are located in 7 Italian regions, geographically located in the Centre-North. Emilia-Romagna is the Region with the highest number of them (about 30 microareas, inhabited by about 720 persons).



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12.2. Collection centres

These are indoor shelters reserved exclusively for people identified as Roma. In the past, this type of housing was particularly used in the city of Rome. They exist today in the municipalities of Brescia and Naples, and are inhabited by more than 300 people.

12.3. Single-ethnic Public Housing Areas

They are neighbourhoods located in peripheral areas with a strong mono-ethnic character, sometimes real Public Residential Buildings built specifically to be reserved for people identified as Roma and Sinti. They are located in 6 municipalities and 4 regions, and are inhabited by approximately 1,000 people.

APPENDIX - Micro-areas

Micro-areas represent, especially for people belonging to the Sinta minority, a viable alternative housing solution to the nomad camp or other types of housing. It is a solution that makes it possible to overcome the problems that have arisen with the recent town planning regulations, which also consider mobile homes or caravans to be real estate for all intents and purposes, effectively prohibiting their location on agricultural land, which, due to their affordability, were hitherto the preferred choice of Sinti families wishing to own their own land.

The micro-area allows residents to maintain a community lifestyle in relation to the extended family, and meets the needs of those who have travelling shows as a job. Single-family houses are built on it that can accommodate no more than five/six nuclei, eliminating the situations of extreme degradation and forced cohabitation of the camps and providing larger and more liveable living spaces.

However, micro-areas need constant and careful monitoring, as within a few years they may turn out to be no longer adequate structures for acceptable living standards, due to the growth of resident families or the exhaustion of traditional work activities.

Emilia Romagna is the region that in recent years has mostly followed the suggestions of the 2012-2020 National Strategy in relation to the creation of micro-areas, and favoured the



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development of this housing solution on its territory by passing Regional Law no. 11/2015 (which recognises micro-areas as being in the 'public interest') and issuing a Directive on the technical requirements to be provided for.

APPENDIX - Towards overcoming Roma slums

It is certainly not easy to overcome a Roma slum through inclusive pathways. There are many reasons why this type of process is difficult to initiate: the lack of awareness of the issue within the administrative machine, the lack of adequate funds, the potential conflicts that certain interventions can trigger, prejudices against Roma people, and the problems linked to the social fragility of the majority of families living in them.

Despite these difficulties, in recent years more and more Italian municipalities have begun to reflect internally on the need to overcome the Roma settlements on their territory, and to measure themselves with interventions implemented for this purpose. Out of 111 mono-ethnic settlements still present on the territory, in 2022 as many as 26 were at an advanced stage of overcoming them through inclusive paths.



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FORM 2

Genesis and development of 'Gypsy pedagogy

In the collective imagination of the Roma and Sinti communities, representations of the educational institution have settled in various ways, the roots of which are to be found in the countless attempts at 'education' and 're-education' carried out throughout history in the Italian and European contexts - attempts that are united by a standardisation based on the stereotype of the 'nomadic gypsy', a subject with an amputated citizenship, the bearer of a pre-modern culture, to be re-educated.

In recent decades, an oppositional attitude towards schools has prevailed within many communities, frequently seen as a place of stigma amplification and lack of trust.

There remains today the great and complex issue of a school that is hyper-standardised and therefore struggles to 'keep in'. It is an anthropological, civil, educational and political issue, which questions not only the going to school of girls and boys, Roma and Sinti boys and girls, but also of all those who, for whatever reason beyond their control, are weak and need to 'have more'.



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1. From re-education to Nazi extermination

From the mid-19th century in Europe, with the spread of Positivism, the practice of measuring the skull and, in general, the association of somatic traits with culturally defined characteristics began to take hold. Each attitude - often purely individual but considered typical of an entire culture - is given a shape through physiognomy.

In the 19th century, it is possible to read and interpret the policy towards the so-called 'gypsies' as a complex and perennial oscillation between 're-educational design' and the implementation of racial theories that deny any possibility of 'civilisation'. A horrifying conceptual ballet was staged, interpreted by anthropological theories, positivist neo-philosophies and racial theories, which established among many thinkers of the time the notion that cultural belonging is directly connected to ontological and genetic belonging and that, from this, it is possible to clearly and unequivocally predict people's character and behavioural traits.

This is why Lombroso was not slow to state that '[t]he gypsy plague could not be solved by any educational intervention. It could only be prevented and sterilisation and the death penalty could be the only means of nipping it in the bud'.³⁷ Gypsy 'asociality' is transmitted, inherited. And the 'gypsy' is nothing more than a 'predestined sick person' with no possibility of cure. The only path left to cure the condition is sterilisation or annihilation.

According to the thesis put forward by historian Luca Bravi, this racist perspective finds its foundation in the definition of the 'gypsy' as a subject to be 're-educated', dear to the Age of Enlightenment and absolute states. It is an idea that will return in the theoretical foundations underlying the persecution of Roma and Sinti people during both Nazism and Fascism.

The double and ambiguous line of 're-education' and extermination was taken up during the long Nazi-fascist period that swept through Europe in general, and Germany and Italy in particular.

In Germany, 1936, the year of the 'Decree for the fight against the gypsy plague' signed by Enrich Himmler, marks the beginning of the mass internment of Roma and Sinti people in forced labour camps. The decree provides for the preventive arrest of any person belonging to this ethnic group. Holocaust survivor Otto Rosenberg, author of 'A Gypsy in Auschwitz',

³⁷ Cesare Lombroso, *L'uomo delinquente* [...], op.cit.



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testifies about the school for Sinti boys and girls in the Berlin-Marzahn camp, where they were taught lessons on discipline, love of the Führer and love of country.³⁸

The above double line returns: re-education and then marginalisation and segregation. The new element is the extensive use of what is then identified as scientific knowledge in the search for genetic elements in 'gypsy asociality'.

A few years later, a racial research team consisting of psychiatrists and anthropologists under the orders of Dr. Robert Ritter, a child psychiatrist, operates within those places of marginalisation and extermination with the task of showing how the inferiority of 'Gypsies' is implicit in race. Together with his assistants, including the young Eva Justin, Ritter carried out anthropometric measurements on the entire population of 'gypsies' in Germany, to arrive at the result that the 'gypsy asociality', which had been debated at length since the previous century, has an obvious hereditary cause inherent in the blood of this people.

In 1937, Adolf Würth, an anthropologist and Ritter's collaborator, pointed out the similarity of the two strands of persecution carried out during the Reich: "Today the 'Gypsy question' is primarily a racial question for us. Consequently, the National Socialist state will have to solve the Gypsy Question just as it is solving the Jewish Question. We have already begun. Jews and gypsies have already been placed on an identical footing with regard to marriage bans and the regulation of the Nuremberg Laws for the defence of German blood. Gypsies are not of German blood nor can they be considered to be related to German blood".³⁹

The hereditary-deterministic factor identified in the 'instinct to nomadism' offers a legitimate explanation for the previously failed attempts at re-education. The focus of the research carried out on Roma and Sinti people by the Reich's scientists is kept within the framework of the accusation of asociality, which is also imputed to the racial condition. The reference to the inherent heredity of race soon becomes the justification for extermination, which must be resorted to in order to solve the 'Gypsy question', since re-education cannot change what is predefined by the genetic character of the group.

In 1943, Eva Justin concluded her research on 'gypsy children', a racial analysis that formed the basis for her doctoral thesis. A sample of 148 'gypsy children' abandoned in orphanages shows how socially unfeasible a recovery is: even if they are included and educated in a

³⁸ Bravi L., 2009, *Tra inclusione ed esclusione, Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia*, Edizioni Unicopli, Milan.

³⁹ Ibid.



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civilised society, the 'hereditary impurities' make it impossible to overcome their innate asociality. It becomes necessary, Justin concludes, to stop the spread of the 'gypsy plague' by resorting to sterilisation at an early age, given the certain failure of any re-educational practice.

All pseudo-scientific reflections and analyses lead inexorably to the conclusion that annihilation is the only possible solution to the 'gypsy question'. "Since it would be absurd to continue the attempts that have been made for centuries to transform the gypsies by hook or crook into useful members of the state, the state has the right and the duty to get rid of them as soon as possible by the most appropriate method. They live as parasites, almost like a state within the state, within the host population and, like the Jews, they reap where they have not sown, therefore they are unwelcome guests, whom no one has called, who do not fit into the state order and cannot do so because of their racial predispositions. In a word, as long as their lineages and tribes live, they are only an asocial and criminal problem".⁴⁰

On a scientific level, however, it is the studies of Ritter and his collaborator Eva Justin that formalise that sterilisation, a solution inaugurated within the camps, is a valid answer.

2. Fascist re-education

As mentioned in the previous module, Roma and Sinti people are rightfully among the victims of fascist persecution in Italy.

There is extensive documentation, found in the Central State Archive in Rome, which testifies to a school for 'gypsies' inside the fascist concentration camp in Agnone, Molise. A document dated 23 April 1943 testifies: 'Everything is proceeding well, including the school for the weaning of their vagabond and amoral customs. The school to re-educate the children of the 'gypsies', in the Agnone concentration camp, in discipline and faith in the Duce was the result of the plans of Guglielmo Casale, director of the camp. Having obtained the authorisation from the Royal Education Directorate, on 9 January 1943 teacher Carola Bonanni, a teacher in the rural school in the Collemarino hamlet, began to give lessons on

⁴⁰ F. Franz, Centre for Scientific Research on Heredity



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discipline and the history of Fascism, in order to transform those 'gypsies' into citizens useful to the regime. In the afternoon, a priest is in charge of teaching Christian precepts.

The report written on 3 July 1943 by the headmaster provides a description of the school activities of the internees in Agnone. "On 9 January there was the inauguration of the school in the presence of the local authorities. I admired the beautiful classroom adorned with little flags, the Crucifix, the portraits of HM the Emperor King and the Duce, the map of Italy and other papers from the theatre of war, as well as the little boys wearing black aprons and all neatly cleaned. The lessons began on a historic date and with a vibrant salute to the King and the Duce. I noticed on several visits, that the lessons took place punctually and that the Teacher was never absent, going to the Concentration Camp, quite far away, even on cold days and in bad weather, showing passion for the school and fully feeling her noble apostolate. In fact, invited by you, kindly, for the closing of the lessons and then for a final rehearsal, I was able to witness the patient and intelligent work of the teacher who managed to make the children, who spoke our beautiful idiom in their 'Gypsy' dialect, learn many and varied notions of general culture, instilling in them a love for our Fatherland, for the Head of the Nation and the Government, respect for all Authorities, a sense of discipline in their duties, and to somehow get to know the grandeur and beauty of Fascist Italy and the loving work that the government also does for the internees. Of the twenty-one pupils who attended the first class, and not all of them from the day classes began, eight were promoted, but all were able to calculate, answer questions with some precision, showing discipline and attachment to the school'.

3. Alfred Siegfried and the rescue work *Les enfants de la grande route*

Another story to be analysed is the one that starts in the first two decades of the 20th century and continues through the 'post-Auschwitz' period. Since 1926 and for more than fifty years, Dr Alfred Siegfried has directed the relief work *Les enfants de la grande route* in Switzerland, through a charitable association with financial support from the state, *Pro Juventute*: the doctor has long been director of the *Schule und kind* (School and Child) section. The operation called *Hilfswerk für die Kinder der Landstrasse* (Help for the Children of the Street) is part of the Swiss 'social welfare and welfare policy' and aims at the forced permanent settlement of the *Jenische* boys and girls, Swiss nomadic groups.



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The intervention is totally inspired by racist ideas. For Siegfried, the 'nomads' were 'inferior, psychopathic, mentally retarded and deficient because they led a lifestyle which, according to eugenic and racial theories, was 'hereditary-criminal' behaviour. Every time that because of our benevolence, or because of an unfortunate encounter, some unadapted child, or child of unstable character, comes into contact with their parents, our work is reset".⁴¹

Until 1973, Switzerland carried out a veritable ethnic cleansing of at least 620 girls and boys through the issuing of public funds: the girls and boys were forcibly torn from their families and their communities to be placed in orphanages, psychiatric institutions, settled families and convents, while the mothers frequently suffered forced sterilisation. During their re-educational stay, the *Jenisch* children suffer abuse, sexual violence, electroshock and, in some cases, unconscious sterilisation.

APPENDIX - Mariella Mehr

Mariella Mehr⁴² was the most important poet and writer of the 20th century, belonging to the *Jenisch*⁴³ minority.

Mariella was a victim of the *Kinder der Landstrasse* (Street Children) programme implemented by Pro Juventute: torn away from her mother at an early age, she lived until the age of 17 in sixteen different foster homes and three educational institutions. She was subjected from the age of nine to electroshock and was used in universities as an example of a 'calibrated race'.

At seventeen, she suffered the same treatment as her mother, Maria Emma Mehr: her newborn child was taken from her, she was locked up in prison and subjected to forced sterilisation.

⁴¹ Bravi L., 2009, Tra inclusione ed esclusione, Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia, Edizioni Unicopli, Milan.

⁴² Teche RAI, Mariella Mehr: tutto il Mondo è un esilio, <https://www.teche.rai.it/2022/09/mariella-mehr-tutto-il-mondo-e-un-esilio/>

⁴³ In Europe, in addition to Sinti and Roma, there are the *Jenisch* (Switzerland), *Manouche* (France) and *Romanichals* (Great Britain) minorities



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It was not until 1973 that a journalist from 'Der Schweizerische Beobachter' picked up her story. The scandal that followed the publication of the report on the unprecedented violence suffered by the Jenisch girls and boys led to the closure of the Kinder der Landstrasse programme.

Mariella began publishing in 1981, her most important works in prose, translated into Italian, are "Labambina"⁴⁴, "Il Marchio"⁴⁵ and "Accusata"⁴⁶, which make up the Trilogia della paura. In 2014, Einaudi published the poetry collection 'Ognuno incatenato alla sua ora'⁴⁷. , writes Anna RaCHAT⁴⁸ in the preface: "his poetic quest sometimes arrives at a cruel magic ("A modest gaze | full of noisy magic, more terrible than any wrath"), other times at a meticulous speleological exercise among the "caves where | men of ice live", others in an explosion that shakes everything in the 'crevasses of time', still others in alchemic formulas addressed to the flesh and its pauses of frost ('in love | let us remove the frost | from our hair') all wrapped up and swept away by a night that swallows, returns and subtracts: creeps everywhere'.

APPENDIX - Do the Roma steal children? Or are their children illegitimately stolen?

In 2008, researcher Sabrina Tosi Cambini published 'La zingara rapitrice', a text that investigates alleged attempted kidnappings in Italy by ethnic Roma women between 1986 and 2007.⁴⁹ The cases are identified and analysed starting from the Ansa archive and arriving at the consultation of court files, adopting other perspectives (ethnographic, legal anthropology and ethnomethodology) in addition to the legal one. In view of the numerous cases reported by the press agencies, the results are surprising: in the period under consideration, none of the results of Cambini's investigation corresponds to an abduction of the child that actually took place; always we are faced with an alleged attempted abduction,

⁴⁴ Effigie Edizioni, <https://effigiedizioni.wordpress.com/>

⁴⁵ Tufani Editrice, <https://www.leggeredonna.it/>

⁴⁶ Effigie Edizioni, <https://effigiedizioni.wordpress.com/>

⁴⁷ Giulio Einaudi Editore, <https://www.einaudi.it/autori/mariella-mehr/>

⁴⁸ Translator of all works by Mariella Mehr

⁴⁹ Tosi Cambini S., 2008, *La zingara rapitrice. Tales, denunciations, sentences (1986-2007)*, CISU, Rome.



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or rather, an account of an attempted abduction. 'Yet,' concludes the researcher, 'the stereotype "Gypsies steal children" is much more powerful than any other'.⁵⁰

Two years later, in 2010, Carlotta Saletti Salza's work "From protection to genocide? The adoption of Roma and Sinti minors in Italy", which tackles the issue of child abduction in a mirror-image manner, starting from a question: "How true is the perception among Roma communities that their children are victims of removal by institutions?". The period considered is similar to that of the previous research: 1985-2005. Overall, there are 258 Roma and Sinti children declared adoptable registered in the seven Juvenile Courts where the research was carried out. Overall, the text highlights the ease with which Roma children living in a settlement are considered deprived and mistreated by inadequate parents. Many social workers interviewed also believe that the 'Roma culture' is in itself detrimental to the child's development. As a consequence, the protective intervention carried out in many contexts coincides with the removal of the child from the family as the only possible condition for bringing him or her up.⁵¹

4. The first 'Gypsy pedagogy' in Italy

In Italy, the basic text of what we have called 'gypsy pedagogy' is the 1963 text *Romanò Them*, by the pedagogist Mirella Karpati. It stands out as the first strictly pedagogical study, aimed exclusively at the 'gypsy question', which aims to create educational practices for 'nomadic' minors. The spirit is primarily that of civilisation.

Karpati's study is strongly influenced by the work of Hermann Arnold. The latter, known as one of the foremost experts on the 'gypsy world' in Germany, is above all - it is worth remembering - a friend of Eva Justin, conceptual heir and collaborator of Robert Ritter, who also continued in post-war Germany her own path of demonstrating the racial inferiority of 'gypsies'.

Mirella Karpati confides: 'I myself have observed that theirs is an intuitive intelligence, incapable of abstraction, strongly influenced by the affective sphere, guided more by instinctive tendency than by reflection. It is an intelligence that I would call 'primitive',

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Saletti Salza C., *Dalla tutela al genocidio? Le adozioni dei minori rom e sinti in Italia*, CISU, Rome.



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indifferent to contradictions and the principle of causality, dominated by a representation of the world in which there are no boundaries between the real and the unreal, between the factual and the desired. Precisely because they are primitive and infantile, their intelligence should be susceptible to further development, a development that can only be stimulated by a suitable education'.⁵²

Karpati's pedagogical vision rests on certain pillars:

- the difficulties encountered in the educational practice aimed at Roma and Sinti children can be attributed to the 'gypsy' family, which is unable to guarantee education and instruction for its sons and daughters;
- Gypsy' girls and boys explore like everyone else and have experiences, but are unable to process and systematise the learning, because no adult provides such a transition;
- Gypsy' girls and boys are incapable of socialisation;
- the intelligence of the 'gypsies' is only intuitive and devoid of abstraction, since they are dominated by instinct.

5. The 'Lacio Drom' classes

In 1963, the Opera Nomadi was established in Bolzano, a non-profit organisation from 1970 (Presidential Decree no. 347 of 1970), which, under the supervision of Mirella Karpati, began to deal with the process of schooling Roma and Sinti children in Italy.

From these years onwards, the schooling of Roma and Sinti children is contracted out to external associations, thus relieving the central bodies of all responsibility. The process of schooling Roma and Sinti in the "post-Auschwitz" period begins in this period, when the admission of boys and girls to schools is linked to a sort of compromise between the Roma and Sinti communities and the local authorities: it is necessary to get closer to the school institution if one wants to count on the issuance of residence permits. All this in the name of a necessary 'civilisation' that must manifest itself mainly in the educational sphere.

Karpati's pedagogical reflection, taken as a reference model by Italian institutions, is integrated with didactic practice, becoming the specific theoretical reference for the education of Roma and Sinti children in Italy.

⁵² Karpati M., 1963, Romano them, Catholic Gypsy Mission, Rome.



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Institutions gradually made the pedagogist's considerations on the 'gypsy question' their own: the theories she proposed ended up conditioning the training of an entire generation of teachers, prepared to work specifically on the schooling of Roma and Sinti children.

The issue is not limited to formalising the difficulty of creating educational and didactic paths for these minors, but to institutionalising the idea of an innate educational inadequacy of their parents, making them bear the full responsibility for school failure: Roma and Sinti adults are not able to look after their sons and daughters, to educate them and socialise them in accordance with the criteria and methods of Italian culture.

In 1965, an agreement between the Ministry of Education, the Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Padua and the Opera Nomadi assigned the latter specific tasks in the educational field: raising the awareness of Roma and Sinti families about the education of their sons and daughters, and ensuring the transport of the pupils, who were placed in eleven special classes within the common schools.

Thus, the 'Lacio Drom' (Good Trip) classes came into being as special state classes, with a *modus operandi* quite different from the standards of normal school life.

At the same time, at the University of Padua and in connection with the Opera Nomadi, the Centro Studi Zingari (Gypsy Study Centre) was founded as an autonomous body in Rome in 1970. One of its objectives is the creation of studies and research on the 'Gypsy world', an aim also pursued through the publication, until 1999, of the magazine 'Lacio Drom'.

The first 'Lacio Drom' classes are experimented in Rome, Pescara, Giulianova, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Lucca, Milan, Trento and Bolzano. They have to carry out specific programmes and live an autonomous school life, within the state institutes in which they are housed, often in basements or warehouses. There are not only special classes, but also two-year training courses for the teaching staff working in them, also designed and managed by the Opera Nomadi.

The pedagogical procedure conceived by the Opera Nomadi starts from the basic assumption of educating boys and girls to 'stimulate the maturation of the gypsy at the social level', because 'because of his culture, the gypsy is lagging behind, he is a child who must be educated to grow up, to catch up'.⁵³

⁵³ Bravi L., Sigona N., 2009, Roma and Sinti in Italy. Permanenze e migrazioni, in Matteo Sanfilippo, Paola Corti (eds.), Storia d'Italia, Annali 24. Migrazioni, Einaudi, Turin.



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As would be confirmed by the research of the Centre for Gypsy Studies, education is transformed into an explicit form of 're-education'. The special classes, consisting of pupils between the ages of six and fourteen, are made up of children who are completely illiterate; in order to enter, they must undergo intelligence tests.

The research conducted by Mirella Karpati and another pedagogist, Renza Sasso, and the conclusions that are published, become training material for teaching staff, with important consequences for the development of the motivations and objectives identified for the 'Lacio Drom' classes. The main objective to be achieved is not literacy, but, starting from the principle of parental inadequacy, that of filling the 'educational gap' left by the family context. It is, in essence, a re-educational process, aimed at transmitting the concepts of order and rule coined by the majority society.

APPENDIX - The 'Lacio Drom' classes. The stories

In 2005, Eva Rizzin, a young Italian Sinti from Friuli who has a PhD and is now actively engaged in denouncing the denial of rights suffered by Roma and Sinti people in Italy, published an enlightening interview with her own mother in German, highlighting, among other things, her experience in the 'Lacio Drom' classes.

"It was school that was the den of racism and prejudice, it created strong psychological shocks in us Sinti children because not only did we receive a different education from our family, but also because we became different at school.

At school, unfortunately, you were no longer a sinto but became a 'gypsy' from whom it was better to stay away. Why didn't I go to school? Why am I illiterate? We were so different in the eyes of the 'gagi' [non-Gypsy] children, they only saw us negatively, at school we felt despised, we were uncomfortable, so it was easier for us to take the way home where we could find our familiar warmth.

I remember as if it happened now that time your uncle Lavio got angry in class with the teacher. And why did Uncle get angry? We could only go to school in the afternoon, to the 'gypsy' classroom. To make no mistake, they put a huge sign above the door saying: 'gypsy classroom only'. I still remember with sadness the first time my uncles and I saw that sign: believe me, we felt like lepers, we were in a lager not at school. Uncle got so angry with the teacher that he stuck his finger in her door, afterwards they sent him to the headmaster and



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Uncle asked him to remove the sign, he didn't do it, so the next day none of us went to school any more. I remember that the teachers often thought we were children with mental problems, just because we perhaps had a different culture and spoke an unfamiliar language, their basic aim was to turn us, the savage children".⁵⁴

In 1971, the 'Lacio Drom' classes were increased from 11 to 60, envisaging, only on paper, the accompanied inclusion of Roma and Sinti children in mainstream classes. Four years later they only functioned for the rehabilitation of those 'nomadic children' with serious ascertained problems. The recommendation of 14 April 1981 by the Ministry of Education acknowledges the difficulties and obstacles that make these school courses extremely complex and allocates funds for courses to train support teachers specifically for 'gypsy children'.

It would have to wait until 1982 to see the abolition of the 'special classes', when, by agreement, the pupils of the 'Lacio Drom' classes were placed, not without problems, in ordinary classes.

6. Interpretations of 'Gypsy culture' for educational design

According to Luca Bravi, in recent decades we have been confronted with two pedagogical theses. Both have a 're-educational' characteristic that still connotes many of the practices found in schools today.⁵⁵

The first is the 'gypsy deculturation' thesis. According to this thesis, there is an assumption to work with in any socialisation of the 'gypsies' (which also includes the aspect of schooling). This presupposition is contained in the idea that, centuries ago, within the European states, there were movements of 'good gypsies' who carried out trades through which they could preserve an 'uncorrupted' nature, connected to their ancestral rituality. These 'gypsies' were 'good' because they knew how to live in relationship with non-gypsies,

⁵⁴ Bravi L., 2009, Tra inclusione ed esclusione, Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia, Edizioni Unicopli, Milan.

⁵⁵ ibid.



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and this was because they had a role in the social system. This idyllic dimension would later be razed to the ground by the process of industrialisation, as the traditional trades of the 'gypsies' were no longer useful to society and their survival was thus put to the test. Industrialisation is, according to this thesis, the moment when the social divide between Roma and non-Roma is created, with the consequence that the former plummet down the social ladder, ending up among those who live by their wits.

Adhering to this thesis means working towards the recovery of an 'original gypsy culture' in the name of its survival. The focus of educational action thus becomes that of changing a trend, of returning to a mythical tradition in order to set the subjects 'taken in charge' on a path that leads back to the 'gypsy archetype of the good old days'.

The second thesis is that of the 'negative acculturation' of the 'gypsies'. This is an opposite reading, which, however, starts from the same arguments; it leads to postulate an 'acculturation' undergone by the 'gypsies' since the period of industrialisation, which would have triggered a path of corruption and decay of the community 'lacking its own specific culture'.

There is therefore no good 'gypsy' and it is revealed that the Roma people know the dominant cultures, relate to them as they please, reinterpret them, deconstruct them: they exist as a distinct group, albeit immersed in and surrounded by the world of non-Roma. All this reveals that the utopian return to the 'good gypsy' of yesteryear has no validity, indeed it falsifies this idea of being faced with a group to be defended insofar as it would be on the verge of extinction. However, one is dealing with a group that clearly perceives the danger inherent in the instrument of training and education designed by the majority society. This is perceived as a factor capable of dissolving a minority culture by forcibly integrating it.

Therefore, a further interpretation of the break between Roma and non-Roma people is needed, a third thesis that can be identified through participation in the design of school pathways, and which will be illustrated in the following module.



APPENDIX - Last bench

"Ultimo banco" (Last Stand) is a research conducted by the 21 July Association, aimed at analysing the schooling projects addressed to Roma and Roma minors in the city of Rome from 1993 to 2015. The research analyses the results of the reflections expressed on the subject by parents, adolescents and pre-adolescents living in the Roman slums, the teaching staff and non-Roma classmates who share classrooms with the recipients of the 'Schooling Projects': all useful voices to understand the reason why, despite the huge human and economic resources allocated, the schooling policy implemented by the Rome municipality is struggling to take off.

The common thread that accompanies the classroom experience of Roma girls and boys from the camps is the sense of inadequacy: for the gaps in their education; for the housing exclusion experienced and perceived; for the impression of being irreducibly 'different'. "We are not the same. We are gypsies, you are not. Why? Because you live in a nice house, we live in a container. You don't have people fighting, you live beautifully. We are always here. Sometimes we go out but then we always come back here, where everything is dirty".⁵⁶

7. An evaluation of current pedagogies

Training on possible pathways for the inclusion of Roma and Sinti people in the majority society requires an in-depth study of the European context, both because these communities are a large minority and because the European Union is paying increasing attention to inclusion policies.

In 1984, the European Parliament decided to entrust Professor Jean-Pierre Liégeois of the *Centre de recherches tsiganes de Paris* with a study on the schooling of "children whose parents have no fixed abode", in order to understand the situation of Roma and Sinti people in Europe. The research was carried out in 1986 in Belgium, West Germany, France, Italy,

⁵⁶ Ibid.

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Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Already in previous years, the scholar had denounced the lack of structural policies at the national level that could overcome the emergency actions of local policies and their difficulty in adopting a holistic approach integrating legal, sociological, anthropological, historical and pedagogical aspects to plan interventions.

Liégeois adds: 'The current resurgence of attitudes and behaviour of rejection, violence, racism, if it reinforces the vocation and duty of schools, of all schools, in their action of spreading knowledge that leads to recognition and respect, also implies considering the whole of the surrounding environment. The difficulties that hinder the implementation of intercultural education projects are not essentially of educational or cultural origin, but often have social, political, economic causes. [...] Consequently, one should not take the effects of a situation (lack of interest, absenteeism, refusal of schooling, etc.) as the causes of school failure. As long as the relations between the Gypsy communities and those around them remain conflictual, the relations of parents and children with the school will remain largely determined by the negative profile of these relations'.⁵⁷

The research shows that schooling is low and illiteracy, although with many differences from country to country, reaches a percentage of 90% within certain age groups and in some specific cities. In Bologna, Padua, Catanzaro and Cosenza, for example, the over-30 age group reached as high as 95% illiteracy, the 16-30 age group was close to 75% and in Padua and Catanzaro there were 80% illiterates.⁵⁸

Thanks to the numerical data that emerged from the research, the researcher is the first to open up a reflection on the crucial issues in the European context, in particular by dwelling on the fact that when one speaks of 'gypsies and travellers', one abstracts the culture of the child within the educational institution and separates it from its socio-political context. According to the research director, the schooling of any cultural group cannot be separated from the current political situation and has to be placed in a historical course.

The history of the majority society's educational policies towards the Roma and Sinti communities has always been under the sign of obligation and coercion. Religious, with their

⁵⁷ Liégeois J.P., 1999, *Minority and school: the Gypsy path*. Italian edition, Centro Studi Zingari, Anicia Rome pp. 16-17.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.66



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educational missions, remain the most assiduous "planners" of actions aimed at the schooling of "gypsies". Noteworthy examples in Italy have been, as noted, the Opera Nomadi and the theories of Mirella Karpati, also influenced by the Spanish priest Andrés Manjón's schooling of gypsies in the late 19th century. At European level, around the 1970s, it was common to equate 'gypsy' and 'handicapped', which led to the inclusion of Roma and Sinti children in the classes reserved for the 'socially handicapped' in Italy, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France and the Netherlands.⁵⁹

In order to trace and understand the conflict in the relationship between Roma and non-Roma, it is essential to know the historical context, as analysed by Liégeois in 1996⁶⁰. The scholar comes to outline a hundred final points, including evaluations and recommendations: "One should not take the effects of a global situation (conflicts, inhibitions, aggression, lack of interest, absenteeism, rejection) as the causes of school failure. As long as the relations between the Gypsy communities and their environment remain conflictual, the relations of Gypsy parents and children with the school will remain determined to a large extent by the negative profile of these relations. [...] The situation has deteriorated greatly after centuries of denial of Gypsy culture and after decades of assimilation policy towards them. [...] Prejudices and stereotypes inspire and justify attitudes and behaviour towards gypsies. [...] Parents are aware that this school can form, but by forming, also conform, reform and deform. [...] Considering, finally, that it is necessary to change the general situation indicated above, which generates conflict, so that the school, by becoming respectful, becomes welcoming [...], an intercultural policy must be implemented, [...] Gypsies must be guaranteed legal security in accordance with common law. [...] the regulations on compulsory schooling must be applied with caution and flexibility; [...] teaching materials must be produced based on elements of the culture, language, history and situation of the Gypsy communities; [...] there must be a concerted and continuous reflection on the teaching of the Gypsy language and in the Gypsy language; [...] the quality of the reception of pupils must be a priority in all types of classrooms".⁶¹

⁵⁹ Bravi L., 2009, *Tra inclusione ed esclusione, Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia*, Edizioni Unicopli, Milan.

⁶⁰ Liégeois J.P., 1996, *'Roma, Sinti, Kalè. Gypsies and Travellers in Europe'*, Centro Studi Zingari, Rome.

⁶¹ Ibid.



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Another important research that photographs the Italian situation with regard to the schooling of Roma girls and boys is that carried out between 2000 and 2003 by the Spanish Gypsy anthropologist Ana Gimenez Adelantado, who in her work *The Education of Gypsy Childhood in Europe* collected data from Portugal, Spain, France and (partially) Bosnia, Austria and Macedonia.

The six investigations lead to assessments that can also be applied to the general context, and as Luca Bravi states in the quarterly periodical 'Rassegna bibliografica Infanzia e Adolescenza', 'they deconstruct in particular the massifying category of "gypsies", currently in vogue in Italy, at least questioning the widespread conviction in the educational environment that makes the "gypsy" pupil necessarily a "problem".⁶²

The groups that the research examines with regard to the Italian case include the following.

- The Sinti *extraixaria* of South Tyrol, whose schooling experiences have evolved from the 'Lacio Drom' classes of the 1960s to today's ordinary classes with support teachers and specific activities 'for nomads'. In this context, there is a high drop-out rate in the middle school cycle, which is not considered by this community in the traditional educational sense, but a tool that allows the Sinti children to resist "the homologating pushes of the majority culture operated by the institution".⁶³
- The Sinti of Reggio Emilia, who show similar schooling to the Alto Adige people with regard to the departure of the 'Lacio Drom' classes in the 1960s and negative results with regard to their relationship with the institution. What emerges, however, is how in recent years an association of Sinti from Reggio Emilia has led to participation and the political assertion of their citizenship rights through the organisation of literacy courses to facilitate direct participation in local government.
- The *Xoraxané romà* in Turin, who emigrated from Bosnia around the 1960s and benefited from an 'intercultural' schooling in theory, but discriminatory in practice, since it was built on the group of 'nomadic pupils', in which attendance was lower than that of other pupils and the educational offer fed a more disguised type of discrimination, such as compulsory showers at school, or cases of support for 'certified' children.

⁶² Bravi, L., 2013 'Remote retention and inclusion of Roma and Sinti in Italy. Un percorso bibliografico', Supplement to the Bibliographical Review 2/2013 p. 12 3.

⁶³ Piasere, L., Saletti Salza, C., Tauber, E., 2003, 'The education of Sinti and Roma children: preliminary results of a European research', in P. Scarduelli, ed., *Antropologia dell'Occidente*, Roma, Meltemi, p. 132.



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- The Macedonian and Kosovar *Roma* in Pisa, who were literate and educated in their homeland, even with high school and university experience, lived until recently in nomadic camps. The city reality that has always opposed these communities was probably one of the causes of their return illiteracy, with very low school attendance and poor results.
- The Camminanti di Noto, also known as 'gypsies', subjected to a special school named after Don Milani (still active for this group), which while affirming equality and equal rights, applies differentiation on the basis of ethnicity, producing *drop-outs* and catastrophic results.
- The Roma in Melfi represent a reality in contrast to the perception of the 'gypsy' in Italy. In Melfi, in 1910, a primary school welcomed the first 'gypsy' without the elaboration of a targeted project for this minority. Thanks to the absence of an ethnically connoted reflection and the initiation of a natural meeting of two different communities, the Roma and the non-Roma, rigid ethnic images and the emergence of prejudices and stereotypes were not created. In Melfi, there is still a low level of conflict between the two communities, which shows how the school, as an educational institution, has a preponderant and influential weight in shaping social relations.

The various research studies make it possible to state that the more Roma and Sinti communities become the object of special interventions⁶⁴, the greater the level of problems associated with their schooling.

Since reality is more complex, however, an attitude in which Roma and Sinti communities become invisible does not allow for the deconstruction of negative stereotypes that characterise the dominant culture.

Instead of intervening on the individual, therefore, one should also and above all intervene on the institutions representing the majority culture, which perpetrate such stereotypes even today.

⁶⁴ When we speak of problems in relation to special interventions, it must be considered without prejudice to the provisions that would have to be provided for by a possible (and desirable) law protecting and recognising Roma and Sinti as a linguistic minority, for which special interventions would be envisaged.



APPENDIX - The School Axis in the National Strategy for Roma and Sinti

In implementation of the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 12 March 2021, Italy presented the "National Strategy for Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021-2030), a strategic, non-binding document to respond to the so-called "Roma and Sinti issue" in our country. An entire chapter of the document is dedicated to 'Access to quality inclusive general education and educational proposals'.

"School," reads the document, "is an instrument for public education aimed at everyone, but it is also the institution through which processes of building one's own identity and recognising one's own social role are activated; the conflict that has long been active towards the Roma and Sinti has preserved in communities the image of a school understood as 'the school of others'. The school institution remains, however, above all the place where Roma and Sinti children can meet their peers. It is therefore essential to consider the image of the school that has settled in the memory of the older generations and the condition of life at school that characterises the younger generations today, in order to identify the fundamental elements for building a positive experience, because it is inclusive and respectful of everyone's identity. From this point of view, knowing and recognising the painful aspects of schooling experienced by the Roma and Sinti can make it possible to deconstruct a negative memory of schooling and concretely support the current process of education at the community level and not only as a pathway for the success of an individual, ensuring the prevention and elimination of any form of segregation in education".⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid.

MODULE 3

Theories and methodologies

Not one step forward, nor one step back: one needs to step sideways, as one learns in the first lessons of cultural anthropology. It is necessary to step sideways in order to suspend judgement and meet the Other in its peculiarities, be they individual or cultural.

The American psychologist Urie Brofenbrenner developed the so-called 'ecological theory', which sees the child at the centre of a series of concentric circles, representing the systems that influence the individual's growth and development: from the microsystems (represented by the family, the school, peers), through the mesosystem (consisting of the relationship between microsystems), the exosystem (everything that relates to the microsystems but not directly to the child, such as parental work), to the macrosystem, consisting of symbols, beliefs, values, lifestyles and opportunities. Culture permeates all these levels, is generated and generative of the individual - who, in turn, reiterates and re-generates the culture to which he or she belongs: it is the principle of anthropopoiesis.

That is why when one encounters the other, especially if the other is a child, it is necessary to suspend judgement and place oneself in observation.

This module - from a theoretical and methodological point of view - and the following one - from a technical point of view - aim to provide some tools to take this step to the side and to listen.



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1. Anthropology and its 'step aside

It was not until 1998 that legislation legitimised an Italian school capable of taking into account different cultural realities, but already after 1980 the Council of Europe had drawn up guidelines for the development of a strategy to bring intercultural education into classrooms: the study of certain human sciences, including cultural anthropology; a revision of school curricula to free them from an overly Eurocentric imprint; knowledge of human rights; and the study of the media and the media, to ensure that pupils develop the critical capacity needed to understand how and to what extent flows of images and information help to shape ideas and opinions relating to otherness.⁶⁶

To date, in reality, the Italian school has not succeeded in becoming intercultural. Certainly, the principle that cultural diversity should be treated as something 'special' no longer applies, at least not always; however, the desire for intercultural pedagogy is still not being fully and efficiently implemented.

In short, it is necessary to invent 'multiculturalism in the Italian way',⁶⁷ as it can be observed in what Mara Benadusi calls *schooling*, a space of negotiation traversed by disjunctions and conjunctures, in which the various social actors orbiting around the education of boys and girls exercise their power on various levels of discussion, such as the goals to be achieved. *Schooling* is interesting from the point of view of the ethnography of educational contexts: Benadusi was actually interested in understanding how the identity construction implemented at school was then transposed to the sphere of relationships, both within and outside the school context.

Welcoming: this was the aim of the school in which Mara Benadusi carried out an ethnography of education between 2000 and 2001, a school in Rome (VI municipality) that she dubbed the 'Global Village', composed of three plexuses. Benadusi worked in the so-called 'plesso Arcobaleno' (Rainbow Plexus), the first to experiment with welcoming and intercultural methodologies, such as a modular school timetable to cater also for Roma

⁶⁶ Benadusi M., 2012, *Il segreto di Cybernella. Governance dell'accoglienza e pratiche locali di integrazione educativa*, Euno edizioni, Leonforte (EN).

⁶⁷ Grillo R., Pratt J., 2006, *Le politiche del riconoscimento delle differenze. Multiculturalism all'italiana*, Guaraldi editore, Rimini.



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pupils, mostly *xoraxanè* from the Via Gordiani settlement⁶⁸ and *rudari* residents in the Via Salviati settlement.⁶⁹

A school such as the 'Global Village', which is modular and has a non-Eurocentric curriculum, is able to meet the most diverse needs, as it pays attention to all those who populate it.

This is a 'third way', the one that will perhaps be the solution, which departs from both exclusion (that of the 'ghetto classes') and total assimilation. The first step is to accept that differences exist; the second is to understand that differences exist even within the same culture (what do an elderly woman who goes to mass on Sundays and her grandson, a big fan, who goes to the stadium on Sundays have in common?); the third is to understand how to respect and value them, offering everyone an effective teaching, rich in stimuli and points of view, relevant to the current reality of the world in which we live.

The American anthropologist Clifford Geertz stated that 'foreignness does not begin on the riverbank, but on the edge of the skin'.⁷⁰ Roma and Sinti people are well aware of how pervasive the system of prejudices underpinning the sometimes fierce intolerance towards them is. They are - again - the archetype of the different, of that which escapes all control. Roma and Sinti people are still accused of acts that represent the most atavistic fears of Western peoples.⁷¹ Preconceptions circulate with the value of absolute truths and dig the furrow of an already problematic difference in an ethnocentric cultural system based on a series of antithetical pairs: but cultures are *already born hybrid*.

Education should find its foundation in work that takes into account a collective relationship between all the actors involved in the ego-constitutive process. Some teachers, by training, struggle to consider the idea of using differentiated methods of approach and assessment, as Valeria Fabretti points out⁷², and the educational institution does not take into consideration the opinion of those directly concerned - the students - on what most directly

⁶⁸ The settlement of Gordiani was established by the Rutelli junta in 2002, to date it has 288 residents. The Xoraxanè are a group from the former Yugoslavia.

⁶⁹ The settlement in Via Salviati was established in 1994, has 379 residents and is currently overflowing. The rudars mostly come from Romania.

⁷⁰ Geertz C., 1985, Interpretation of Cultures, Il Mulino, Bologna.

⁷¹ Piasere L., 2012, Scenari dell'antiziganismo. Between Europe and Italy, between anthropology and politics, Seid Editori, Florence.

⁷² Fabretti V., 2011, A scuola di pluralismo. Identities and differences in the public school sphere, Aracne, Rome.



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involves them, i.e. schooling.⁷³

Families, teachers, male and female students should collaborate in building a school that, starting from a shared value base, represented by the universal values common to both religions and democracies (solidarity, respect, social justice), moves towards weaving relationships capable of building identities capable of interaction with otherness.

Rejecting these reflections, turning one's back on reception at school, means exercising violence.

APPENDIX - Why is Italy so far behind?

Historians and historians of educational institutions now agree that in order to find the origin of Italy's backwardness in the school issue, one has to go back to 1923, the year of the Gentile reform.

The Fascist reform was aimed at making school a real obstacle course for those who did not belong to the wealthy classes of the population. If for some reason the subordinate classes managed to gain access to education, they were to have a difficult life, characterised by a series of prerequisites necessary for entry to school and bar examinations.

Historiography considers this reform to have caused a twenty-year delay compared to the rest of Europe in terms of school inclusion; only a comprehensive and organic reform of the educational institution could have bridged this gap, which, however, never took place.

Italy also lags considerably behind in terms of educational content. The lack of reworking, in our country, of the events and ideologies of the Nazi-fascist era against Roma and Sinti people means that (unlike for the Jewish community) a healthy process of deconstruction of stereotypes, silences and denials has not been triggered - which is also reflected in the educational programming.

APPENDIX - The testimony of Mikich

Benadusi reports the testimony of a child who was asked by his teacher to recount his life through a reflection that took place the previous day on the theme of 'dwelling'.

⁷³ *ibid.*



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Mikich's classmates reported adjectives such as 'cosy', 'warm', 'safe', while he spoke of a cold shack, insufficient for shelter from the rain. Delighted to be the centre of attention in the class, the child charged his stories with emotional meaning, provoking admiration for his strength of character and compassion for the way he lived, so different from his classmates. Mikich confessed to being afraid at night, having to leave the hut to do his business: "Afraid of what?" the teacher asked. 'Of being kidnapped', he replied, overturning a pillar of anti-Gypsyism: a Roma child is afraid of being kidnapped, when the collective prejudice has for centuries described Roma people as child kidnappers.

Mikich also told of his fear of aggression, because his mother was attacked when she was pregnant. "Was she attacked because she was a nomad?" the teacher asked. "No, because he wanted to rob her," the child explained, overturning two other stereotypes: the teacher's prejudice, which made her assume a xenophobic aggression, and the stereotype that sees in the Roma person always the thief, never a potential victim.⁷⁴

What interested the child was pushing further for a rapprochement between the two worlds. Mikich, in fact, uses the school not so much as an educational tool; he chooses to use it as a meeting ground between his world and that of the *gagé*, measuring the actual distance by monitoring the reactions of the class to his words, overturning stereotypes and attempting to emphasise facts and events that would have affected the interlocutors.

If Leonardo Piasere elaborates on the idea of a 'third way' between assimilation and ghettoisation, Valeria Fabretti, a sociologist of education, poses the problem of a 'third way' between a school that takes into account cultural identities but necessarily penalises dialogue with the other, and a school that instead remains neutral but at the same time does not consider individual cultural specificities.⁷⁵

In a multicultural society, it is desirable that the developing individual encounters plurality *within* the school, so that during his or her personal growth he or she faces otherness and learns to develop the ability to relate to it, interpreting the other and reaching

⁷⁴ Benadusi M., 2012 *Il segreto di Cybernella. Governance dell'accoglienza e pratiche locali di integrazione educativa*, Euno edizioni, Leonforte (EN).

⁷⁵ Fabretti, 2011.



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compromises,⁷⁶ so as to acquire the ability to live in a society in which these tools are indispensable. For this to happen, education cannot disregard belonging - which will continue to persist outside school hours - but at the same time it will go beyond it, teaching the value of citizenship⁷⁷ in a heterogeneous atmosphere, with teachers capable of grasping and reproducing different points of view, in a continuous dialogue.

Fabretti thus defines the educational value that should be assumed in the educational institution:

A basic condition in which diversities are neither homologated - thus subtracting from the "educational worksite" a constitutive part of the very paths through which identities and processes of self and hetero-recognition are delineated - nor are "anaesthetised" in the name of a supposed single culture, but are placed in relation to a "super-ordinate level of equality"⁷⁸ and used to draw from it educational opportunities favourable to exploring and practising an articulated idea of identity and citizenship, centred on the reflexive exercise and the constant search for balances between autonomy and rootedness.

This would require the construction of a relational network made up of all the figures involved in the educational process: families, teachers, students, but also local realities - a true community also capable of decentralising the power of the state over schools according to democratic principles, through decision-making colleges capable of intervening in all aspects, including the content of teaching.

This is not a utopian wish, but a reality of which some examples already exist; think of Portugal, where these networks are multiple and each has its own competence.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Benadusi L., Durst M., in Fabretti V., 2011, *A scuola di pluralismo. Identities and differences in the public school sphere*, Aracne, Rome.

⁷⁷ Fabretti, 2011.

⁷⁸ Santambrogio A., 2003, *Introduction to the sociology of diversity*, Carocci, Rome.

⁷⁹ Larsen M.A., 2010, *New Thinking in Comparative Education: Honouring Robert Cowen*, Sense Publisher, Rotterdam.



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2.The Pedagogy of Rights: a possible pathway

1989 is a pivotal year, globally, in the history of the conception of childhood and adolescence. On 20 November, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child, also known in Italy as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, promulgated and ratified worldwide (with the exception of the United States).

The Convention delivers an idea of childhood and adolescence based on the ownership of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It is a revolutionary perspective, establishing a new idea of intergenerational relations based, until then, on the passivity and vulnerability of and of children. In this new conception, children are no longer a passive vehicle of needs to be met by adults.

The Convention is not only a legal corpus to be resorted to in order to denounce violations, but represents a pedagogical and educational tool in its cultural dimension, in fact it changes the concept of who is a child, as mentioned above.

It protects and promotes the rights of all human beings between the ages of 0 and 18, regardless of their socio-economic status. It declares that children and adolescents, individually and collectively, need rights and that adults, from the family to the international community, must ensure these rights. The Convention, like all human rights treaties since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, focuses on the person as the holder of rights (*right holder*) in relation to those who must respect and disseminate them (*duty bearer*). *Duty bearers* (governments, institutions, family and individuals) are bound to respect, protect and promote human rights. *Right holders* must claim their rights and respect the rights of others. As a duty bearer, a person has responsibilities first of all to himself and, consequently, to others. The focus on human rights aims at strengthening *duty bearers'* responsibility towards these rights, even in the whirlwind of political, economic and legislative changes, generating new awareness and behaviour, as well as new practices, models and values.

Adults, the family, the school, all the way up to the highest national and international institutions, should always keep the best interests of children in mind when making choices that affect them, taking responsibility for them at all times. The English word that expresses this concept - *accountability* - contains and promotes an idea that is even more decisive than that of simple responsibility: it is a responsibility to be held accountable.



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It is necessary to explore this relationship in an educational context, in order to begin to understand how best to orient everyday schooling from a rights perspective. If the focus is on rights, the teacher, or the teacher as *duty bearer*, is the pivot of an educational relationship based on the recognition of male and female students as *right holders* and on the possibility that they themselves may, through the teaching activities proposed by the teaching staff, know and exercise their rights.

This new way of understanding relations with children and minors promotes fairness, non-discrimination and inclusion by raising awareness, changing attitudes and behaviour, through intercultural practices attentive to differences. It creates much broader and more inclusive horizons with respect to diversity, in families, communities, institutions and society at large. It develops the capacity of *duty bearers* to include marginalised groups through inclusive education; and it makes services accessible to all children and their families, ensuring access.

The CRC qualifies for some of its specificities.

- It has a binding character that, unlike other Human Rights Declarations, makes it, by virtue of its being a ratified convention, a sort of contract, through which nations individually and collectively commit themselves, before the world community, to change their legislation and institutions, preventing the arbitrariness that usually occurs with other treaties.
- It has a holistic-integrated essence, which emphasises the interdependent relationship between the different rights mentioned: the right to survival, for example, cannot be read except in relation to the right to development, protection and participation.
- It has a strong pedagogical-educational component, through which it offers institutions, communities and families an educational pathway that proposes universal references while respecting different historical, cultural and socio-economic specificities. The CRC stands strongly as a pedagogical tool that is useful both to and for minors and the community as a whole.
- Lastly, the participatory aspect of the CRC envisages relational paths within which the participation of children as social subjects is indispensable: with respect for their developmental status, they must be able to express their point of view. The CRC also



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considers the family and the community as very important sites for the protection of the rights of girls and boys: any form of cultural change with regard to children must take place within mechanisms of participation and cross-sharing, which truly support the changes undertaken.

To conclude, putting the CRC at the centre means restoring the centrality of the child as an individual bearer of demands and rights that must be respectively listened to and guaranteed.



FORM 4

Practices and techniques

Participation techniques

Participatory methodologies are a tool to promote shared reflections, critical analysis, in-depth questions and collective problem solving. This allows to deepen knowledge and come to a better understanding of the problems and to articulate proposals and strategies for change.

Below are some techniques that facilitate the participation of the whole class and create an inclusive and non-discriminatory climate.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an Anglo-Saxon term that has been translated as "brainstorm", what occurs when building a stream of consciousness through ideas "pulled out" freely by the entire group, with the main purpose of detecting opinions on a given topic.

The rules that should always be made explicit in a brainstorming are: do not criticize the ideas of others; all ideas have a value and are welcomed.

Brainstorming can be used at school as a collaborative and inclusive activity; By promoting the participation of all and mutual listening, it facilitates the construction of positive relationships both with the teacher and among peers.

The teacher does not judge but acts as a facilitator in the process of expressing ideas, which he collects on the blackboard; he urges the most shy boys and girls to present their ideas, and promotes a positive climate of collaboration.

Through the analysis of all the ideas that emerged during the brainstorming, we come to different possible solutions to a problem, different points of view that will allow all the people involved to understand each other better. It can also be used in conflict resolution.

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Circle time

Circle-time is a low-hierarchy discussion group; it is not a therapy group or a self-centered group, as the goal is prevention and not cure. It is so called because the students and the teacher arrange themselves in a circle, so that everyone can look each other in the face and a circular communication takes place between all the participants, which facilitates the sense of belonging and participation in the group.

During this class time, students propose the topics to be discussed, which from affective will become intimate and personal when the class becomes a group. In fact, in the group the participants learn to know each other, to share experiences, ideas, emotions; In the long run this sharing will lead to group cohesion. Usually circle-times last from 20 to 30 minutes, but should not exceed 50 minutes, so that boys and girls do not deconcentrate and can receive all the attention of the group while talking.

The time of the circle is a valid "tool to transform a class into a primary group, enhancing the ability to express, listen and interact between children"⁸⁰ (Francescato, 1995, 106). By primary group we mean a group based on intense affective relationships, in which feelings of collective participation are lived and common objectives are conscious.

During the time of the circle, the teacher abandons the role of expert, to act as a facilitator of the group: he no longer evaluates a performance at the cognitive level, but listens and abstains from judgment. The teacher must be spontaneous and authentic, must know how to listen and try to understand the meaning of the simple description of the facts and the feelings evoked, must have a lot of patience with the group and with the individual people who compose it.

As a facilitating element, it must be able to openly express its feelings towards the individual or group, avoiding interpretative comments on the way the group proceeds and without manipulating it, safeguarding instead its spontaneity. The person who facilitates must also encourage the participation of all, offering support to those in need and limiting aggressive attitudes; At the end of the meeting he will summarize all the opinions that emerged.

⁸⁰ Francescato D., Putton A., Cudini S., 1995, *Feel good together at school. Strategies for a socio-affective education from maternal to lower secondary school*, Carocci, Rome.



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The facilitation figure is also responsible for observing the group dynamics, to verify the relationships within it: the disposition of the students, the verbal and non-verbal messages, the level of ease of each, the ways in which the participation of girls and boys takes place.

The time of the circle, being a discussion group, has as its main objective to promote communication and cooperation. It must develop, at group level, solidarity, mutual respect, tolerance and the learning of new relational modalities. At the individual level, on the other hand, it aims to develop feelings of trust, in oneself and in other people, of security and acceptance; It aims to increase respect for social norms, the ability to solve interpersonal problems, to know how to ask for help and to help, to know and share the ethical values of the culture to which one belongs.

Teamwork – Cooperative work

Cooperative learning, or *cooperative* learning, is based on the division of the class into small heterogeneous groups, composed of students different in learning level, characteristics and ways of learning, who learn by collaborating. The heterogeneity of the group benefits the group itself and the class in general, since the people who compose it can exchange different points of view and bring into play more negotiation skills.

The different groups maintain a positive interdependence between them: each person has a specific role and will contribute to succeed in the task entrusted by the teacher. Interdependence promotes taking responsibility both towards oneself and towards the whole group: success in the task depends directly on each participant and the ability to work together. In these groups leadership is shared, there is not one or a student chosen as a leader.

An integral part of the task concerns the development of social skills, since students must commit themselves to acquiring information from the rest of the group, mediating before arriving at a shared decision and recognizing the qualities of others in order to be able to use them in the success of the task.

The teacher, as in all participatory techniques, is not the main actor, but a director who organizes the scene and then lets students become the actors who carry out the work



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together. Another task of the teacher will be to manage conflicts and facilitate positive relationships in the group.

Cooperative teaching is particularly effective also in classes, multilevel and with pupils with SEN (Special Educational Needs).

Focus groups

The focus group is a technique used in the school environment to make a group reflect on a certain topic. The focus group is a group interview, in which the teacher who acts as moderator conducts the interview to deepen the opinions, attitudes or thoughts of the class, which underlie certain behaviors or ways of seeing.

Once the topic to be explored and discussed has been chosen, a list of previously established questions is prepared, on which the teacher directs the attention of the group, encouraging everyone to express their opinion and point of view freely. During the focus group, one or two observers record everything that is said through video footage, audio recordings or notes; the collected material is then processed.

This technique can be useful when complex phenomena emerge in the classroom, of which the positive/negative aspects, attitudes and opinions circulating in this regard must be deepened. It also allows you to recognize the relational dynamics that come into play and therefore to acquire information not only on the opinions of individual students, but also on the climate of the class as a whole.

Interactive or cooperative games

In cooperative games the participants play together, divided into pairs or small groups, without competing but collaborating to achieve a common goal. In interactive games you don't win or lose, and no one is left out. The challenge is not against other people, but against oneself and one's limits.

Cooperative games, such as treasure hunts or the construction of a skit, aim to entertain and feel good together with a few simple materials; The most important aspect is the process of playing, not the end result.



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Through cooperation games, a sense of community in the group and a climate of trust and mutual respect are promoted, mutual knowledge is fostered and the acceptance of everyone is promoted, increasing their sense of self-esteem.

Role-playing games and simulations

The role playing technique is a real role-playing game. Girls and boys, like real theatrical actors, fall into different characters, with roles defined in a particular situation and in a given context.

To use this technique, the teacher must have communicative, emotional and behavioral skills, so that both the group and the individual students can discover through role-playing personal aspects that are hidden in everyday life and that must be contained and processed.

Life stories

Through their own experiences, Roma and non-Roma trainers have drawn up the following document based on their own life stories, in the light of the CRC.

Roma and non-Roma children at school: when the violation of rights becomes a cause of exclusion and marginalization

"No child is lost if he has a teacher who believes in him." A quote borrowed from Bernhard Buebper to argue the complex world of rights and their violations with precise and empirical references to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the end of this document it will be demonstrated how the lack of respect for the rights of children, as well as adults, generates marginalization by promoting discomfort and discrimination.

The following articles will be analyzed:

Article 2 concerns discrimination

When the teacher at school noticed classmates making discriminatory jokes against Roma children, his reaction was summed up in three attitudes:



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- *Pretend not to hear*
- *Not giving due weight to the situation ("they are children, they joke")*
- *Support the discriminatory attitude, laughing or even making further jokes*

Cultural connotations, such as clothing and social difficulties such as housing deprivation have too often been elements that led to discrimination by the entire teaching class.

Art.12 (freedom of opinion and right to be heard)

The child in class was silent all the time, not even interacting with classmates. The teacher did nothing to change the situation, try to involve him, take an interest in his state of mind.

The Roma children had no interest in studying because they already knew that they would not be questioned by the teacher.

Art. 13 (right to be informed and to express oneself freely in the most congenial way)

Lack of involvement or incentive to participate in extracurricular activities or in the organization of common initiatives (eg school trip, not involved or fee paid by others by making it weigh).

It reads at the end of the year, "The children must all come with the red shirt" is an information that has not reached the family of the Roma child. The child was the only one dressed differently, 20 years later he still clearly remembers what he felt at that moment. He still remembers, however, also his part "I am Jupiter and I am the largest planet".

Dialectal forms (local or Romanes) are discouraged or even prohibited, even if used in the relationship between companions. It is very important to teach how to use a different linguistic register depending on the situation and the interlocutor, giving everyone the opportunity to express themselves (without feeling limited or judged) and recognizing the language as a cultural element.

Lexical poverty, greater involvement in the explanation and growth of one's vocabulary is necessary.



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Art. 18 (right to be raised and educated by your parents in your best interest)

Within the school context, parents project on children the difficulties and traumas they have experienced (perhaps even involuntarily) discouraging or not adequately supporting the school path (a sort of protection not centered on the child, but on their personal experience)

Art. 27

"You have the right to an adequate standard of living which means that your parents or in the absence of the State, will have to guarantee you food, clothing and a home to live in", Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

House. It is from this concept that we intend to open a reflection to get to explain how housing deprivation constitutes or not an obstacle to the formation and well-being of the child. And how, on the other hand, often, a condition of ease can create situations of laxity and disinterest. We want to emphasize how the condition of discomfort leads to the desire for redemption, or in some cases, surrender in the face of objective difficulties.

To better explain this assumption we borrow experiences, life stories lived and stories that have as protagonists Roma and non-Roma children who become, in spite of themselves, an example or model of behavior and how the housing condition can affect their growth in a positive and negative way. On the outskirts of an Italian city, a family with seven children from a slum, including two girls in adolescence, lives in a social housing. They all live in very small spaces, this makes little or nothing intimacy of the two girls struggling with the discovery of their bodies and with afternoon homework, as they are the only ones in the family to go to school. A few kilometers away, a family with five children lived for years in a field just outside Milan. Throughout their stay in the camp, the children had considerable difficulty attending school, constantly interrupting their education. The first three children once out of the camp had linguistic impediments, the last two, grown up directly inside the apartment no: completing perfectly and successfully the years at school. Oscar, Giada and Luca have resumed, albeit not easily, full possession of their abilities supported by the comfort of a better housing condition.



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Art. 42 (right to be informed about rights under the Convention)

Every teacher should know, make known and apply the CRC. Rights are not privileges or concessions, the teacher must put in place the conditions so that every child can enjoy his rights regardless of his social, ethnic and economic status. It is important to empower the child, linking the ownership of a right to active participation. Civic education should be reintegrated into educational projects.

We want to emphasize how even the internalization of events has an impact on the individual path of each one. The work of the teacher should, in our opinion, consist in identifying the causes that bring obvious consequences both of a personal and social aspect in the classroom and in the moments of aggregation that are created within the school. They should also create laboratories to develop emotional intelligence that goes hand in hand with the ability to empathize by dialoguing with the whole class to stem any type of discrimination.

PLAYPEN - Ruza, the story of a little girl who wanted to go to school

Ruza is a Roma girl from the former Yugoslavia. He lives in Rome in the formal camp of Salone, so basic services are guaranteed; not guaranteed is an area where Ruza can study and rest, due to the unification of several ethnic groups in a single space, coexistence is difficult due to overcrowding (Arctic 31).

Every morning at 7:45 am the bus of the municipality of Rome arrives to take her to school. The bus makes several stops within the town halls; since Ruza's school is the penultimate stop, Ruza often arrives late. She enters the classroom when the lesson has already begun, the teacher silently shows her where to sit. No one explains what is being done, so Ruza opens the notebook waiting for directions from the teacher, but they do not arrive until the time change. At the change of time and subject, the teacher gives her easier tasks (Article 28).

At recreation no child approaches her, being the class group already formed; In fact, she started school a month later, because the bus service started late. After lunch the bus comes to pick her up, while the other children are still in class; this does not favor either



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socialization in the class group or the learning of Ruza, who is given a fragmentary education.

Back at camp, Ruza has nowhere to study (Article 27). The next morning she will then arrive at school with her homework not done, also because the adults within the camp do not have an adequate schooling rate to help her (Article 5, due to lack of tools). This generates a vicious circle, which causes the teacher to stop handing over the assignments to Ruza, because she knows that it is useless (Article 4 and Self-fulfilling Prophecy).

Before Ruza lived at the informal camp of Casilino 900, in Centocelle, where he had space to study and could play with the girls and boys living in the neighborhood.

This story was written in order to show how early school leaving is the result of a work of segregation implemented by the state through its apparatuses, unable to implement adequate inclusion policies due to lack of preparation. A real change is only possible by involving the people involved in decisions, promoting co-design interventions.

Reality task

It is a situation close to the real world of girls and boys, in which they are required to find solutions, implementing problem-solving. It can be done individually, in pairs or in groups, or all three things in the various stages of the task. It represents a space of empowerment and autonomy.

An example would be, during math hours, shopping with a certain budget. The teacher will then have to prepare the place, materials and spaces useful to reproduce the supermarket.

The reality task must act in the so-called *zone of proximal development* of the boy or girl, that zone represented by an activity in which he or she feels comfortable enough to be able to take the situation in hand, but not too much, so that it does not act automatically. The concept was introduced by Vygotsky and determines the distance between the current capacities and the potential capacities of ⁸¹ the boy or girl: working on the zone of proximal development means going to work on the bridge that connects these two different areas (current capacities ↔ potential capacities) to ensure that girls and boys, with the support of

⁸¹ Potential abilities represent the skills that the child can achieve with a certain degree of help, which progressively fails as the child progresses in acquiring skills.



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an adult, Potential capabilities are appropriated, and work on the zone of proximal development results in the acquisition of new capabilities.

At the end of the task, a moment of return in *circle time* is recommended.

Active participation practices⁸²

Among the practices of active participation there are already formalized workshops, others more spontaneous and informal.

A. Active citizenship workshop

A group of boys and girls is formed who analyze problems and propose solutions through assemblies and meetings, finally confronting adults. The teacher can propose a problem felt in class, related to a space for example, organizing a series of assemblies to develop a solution to be proposed to the School Director.

As a technique it is very close to the task of reality.

B. Self-organization practices for boys and girls, boys and girls

Deciding is a practice, and as such it must be exercised. To help boys and girls make decisions, opportunities can and must be created. You could start to have them organize class trips, inviting the group to choose the destination, get informed, decide on the activities.

There is also the possibility of encouraging completely self-organized and self-managed extracurricular activities, such as the barter market, through a decision-making process initially supervised by the teacher, by means of meetings and assemblies, in which boys and girls decide how and what to do.

⁸² Roveda A., Volonté V., Nocentini C., *Ada decides. Participation practices for children and young people*, 2011, Sinnos editrice, Rome.



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Classroom activities

Title of the activity	In the editorial office of a newspaper
Themes	Anti-Gypsyism, media, hate speech
Duration	2 hours
In brief <i>(Summary of the activity)</i>	In 2008 the journalist Lorenzo Guadagnucci proposed an exercise, that of replacing the term "Roma" with "Jew" in the articles that appeared in national newspapers, to verify its effect on the reader, highlight the different sensitivity present at the level of public opinion with respect to these two communities and the inadmissibility of some messages and communication methods, which when it comes to Roma and Sinte people. On the other hand, they are considered entirely acceptable.
Related subjects	History, Civics, Italian
Objectives	To make the class reflect on the 'double standard' and anti-Gypsyism that still weigh on the Sinte and Roma communities, so inherent in contemporary language and thought that they are often invisible, completely acceptable.
Skills, knowledge, skills	Critical reading, media language analysis, cooperation skills.
Evaluation	You can choose between the following evaluation methods:



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Self-assessment: ask each pupil to evaluate their work and explain the reasons for this evaluation;- Discussion: At the end of the activity, you can ask the students "how did you think it went?" and record the answers. Repeat the activity after a few months or the following school year.- Circle time: a few days after the activity, discuss with the students about the topics addressed to verify the internalization of the concepts.
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Diagram of the activity:

- Introduction to the activity (10 minutes)
- Discussion-stimulus (20 minutes)
- Group work "We are journalists" (60 minutes)
- Return (20 minutes)
- Final circle time (10 minutes)

If necessary, extend the time of group work and postpone the last two steps to the next time.

Introduction to the activity

The teacher explains the objectives of this activity: to reason around the language used by the media, to understand what is the best way to communicate a news.

He reads the principles enunciated by the Manifesto of non-hostile communication:

<https://paroleostili.it/manifesto/>.

Discussion - stimulus

The teacher, if possible, projects or otherwise shows the students the following examples:

An example from the article in Il Giornale (October 31, 2022):

 Il Giornale

[Picchiato dal rom, ora è in coma irreversibile. La madre: "Vogliamo giustizia"](#)

Then, he asks the children what would happen and what effect it would have if it were written: "Beaten by the Jew, he is now in an irreversible coma. The mother: 'We want justice.'"

Again:



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G Il Gazzettino

[Mamma e figlia rom sorprese a rubare, 5 giorni prima un analogo furto nella stessa casa](#)

"Jewish mother and daughter caught stealing, 5 days before, a similar burglary in the same house."

After collecting the impressions of children, it can be explained that undeniably the two versions of the titles make different effects. While the ethnic connotation when it comes to criminal acts perpetrated by Roma and Sinte people is conventionally accepted and internalized, with respect to the Jewish minority a news given in this way would make us shudder.

Yet Jews were interned for equal racial prejudice, at the time internalized and conventionally accepted in public opinion. In the absence of a serious work of historical re-elaboration and deconstruction of stereotypes, we have been dragging for years an idea born and grown in eras far removed from ours. Show the children the following picture and move on to the group activity.



Teamwork: we are journalists

The teacher arranges the desks in such a way as to form groups of minimum 4, maximum 6 children. Explain that each group should write an article, in accordance with the Manifesto of Non-Hostile Communication.

The teacher will provide each group with invented news, within the reach of children and respectful of the various sensitivities. It provides few indications, to then allow the envoy to play his role.

Next, assign each child, based on the skills he has, skills and attitudes, one of the following roles:

- **Editor-in-chief:** defines the length of the article, monitors compliance with the deadline, at the end re-reads the article and gives permission for "publication".
- **Editor:** takes care of writing the article. It can also be more than one.



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- Sent: if there is no information useful for the drafting of the article, the correspondent goes to the teacher and asks for the missing information, or makes a small interview that then reports to the group. When he does not have to be a correspondent, he contributes to the drafting of the article.
- Graphic designer: takes care of drawing the article.
- Director: the director maintains focus and order during the writing of the article, he is responsible for the conduct of the group. Finally, read the article in front of the class.

Once finished, each Director will read the written article in front of everyone.

The teacher, or the other groups, can point out to the Director any ideas to make the article more correct from a "deontological" point of view.

Final circle time

The teacher asks the children circle time and asks how the activity went, trying to get answers from the discussion to the following questions: How did the children feel? Were there conflicts? How were they resolved? Have the roles been respected?

He then repeats a circle time after a few days (three or four at most), this time to evaluate the internalization of the topics covered.

Resources needed:

Paper, pens, colors, projector (if available).



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Title of the activity	Road, sinta homeland: the Porrajmos
Themes	Porrajmos, racial persecution, anti-Gypsyism
Duration	2 hours
In brief <i>(Summary of the activity)</i>	Starting from the reading of the book <i>Strada, patria sinta</i> and in particular the pages dedicated to the vicissitudes of the De Bar family in the 30s and 40s of the twentieth century, the promulgation of the Racial Laws and life in the field of Prignano, illustrate the events of Porrajmos in Italy and Europe.
Related subjects	History, civics, geography
Objectives	To make students reflect on the Nazi-fascist period and on the persecutions suffered by the Roma and Sinti minorities. How these were not an isolated episode in history, how they repeated themselves and how they can be considered the cause of current anti-Gypsyism.
Competences, knowledge, skills <i>(Indicate which skills, knowledge or skills are involved)</i>	Critical reading, ability to analyze current events
Evaluation <i>(provide a suggestion on how to assess whether the</i>	You can choose between the following evaluation methods: Discussion: At the end of the activity, you can ask the students "how did you think it went?" and record the answers. Repeat the activity after a few months or the following school year.



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objectives have been achieved)

- Circle time: a few days after the activity, discuss with the students about the topics addressed to verify the internalization of the concepts.

Outline of the activity:

From reading the book *Strada, patria sinta* by Gnugo De Bar, and in particular the pages dedicated to the promulgation of the Racial Laws of 1938 and life in the camp of Prignano sulla Secchia, and also using other sources stimulate a discussion among the students.

Resources needed:

<https://www.comune.modena.it/memo/prodotti-editoriali/intercultura/strada-patria-sinta-cento-anni-di-storia-nel-racconto-di-un-saltimbanco-sinto>



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Title of the activity	Strada, sinta homeland: the partisans
Themes	The War of Liberation, the partisans
Duration	2 hours
In brief <i>(Summary of the activity)</i>	Reading in the book <i>Strada, patria sinta</i> of the pages dedicated to the war of liberation and the participation of the Sinti in these events
Related subjects	History, civics, Italian
Objectives	To make boys and girls aware of the contribution made by Sinte and Roma linguistic minorities to the War of Liberation of Italy from Nazi-fascism. Aspect of our history still very little known but that deserves to be deepened.
Competences, knowledge, skills <i>(Indicate which skills, knowledge or skills are involved)</i>	Critical reading, historical knowledge
Evaluation <i>(provide a suggestion on how to assess whether the objectives have been achieved)</i>	You can choose between the following evaluation methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-assessment: ask each pupil to evaluate their work and explain the reasons for this evaluation; - Discussion: At the end of the activity, you can ask the students "how did you think it went?" and record the answers. Repeat the activity after a few months or the following school year.



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Circle time: a few days after the activity, discuss with the students about the topics addressed to verify the internalization of the concepts. |
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Outline of the activity: From the reading of the

book *Strada, patria sinta* by Gnugo De Bar and in particular from the pages dedicated to the War of Liberation and the participation of the De Bar family together with others belonging to the Sinta minority, to stimulate, also with the help of other sources in particular the audiovisual ones, the discussion among the students on this historical period. From the discussion to bring out the importance, still little appreciated, of the contribution given to the liberation struggle of the partisans belonging to the Sinta minority and of partisan formations composed of Sinti.

Resources needed:

<https://www.comune.modena.it/memo/prodotti-editoriali/intercultura/strada-patria-sinta-cento-anni-di-storia-nel-racconto-di-un-saltimbanco-sinto>



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Title of the activity	Strada, sinta homeland: the circus
Themes	The traveling show, the circus, the rides
Duration	2 hours
In brief <i>(Summary of the activity)</i>	Reading of the book <i>Strada, patria sinta</i> that traces the events of the family of the writer, Gnugo De Bar, belonging to the Sinta linguistic minority and who throughout the twentieth century traveled Italy first with a circus and later with rides.
Related subjects	History, art, geography
Objectives	To make known the fundamental contribution made by the Sinta minority to circus art and other forms of traveling entertainment, and at the same time to know the historical events that have characterized the twentieth century.
Competences, knowledge, skills <i>(Indicate which skills, knowledge or skills are involved)</i>	Cooperation and teamwork, artistic skills
Evaluation <i>(provide a suggestion on how to assess whether the objectives have been achieved)</i>	You can choose between the following evaluation methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-assessment: ask each pupil to evaluate their work and explain the reasons for this evaluation; - Discussion: At the end of the activity, you can ask the students "how did you think it went?" and record the answers. Repeat the activity after a few months or the following school year.



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Circle time: a few days after the activity, discuss with the students about the topics addressed to verify the internalization of the concepts. |
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Diagram of the activity:

- Reading of the book *Strada, patria sinta* (30 minutes)
- Knowledge of other realities (20 minutes)
- Creative workshop (60 minutes)
- Return (10 minutes)

Reading of the book by Gnugo De Bar: *Strada, patria sinta*. It is an easy reading that can be done by the teacher or in turn by the students. At the end, the teacher expands his knowledge of the subject with other examples, also well known as the circus families of the Togni or the Orfei, the traveling show, the circus or the rides, from which their close link with the Sinta minority emerges.

The class is then divided into small groups (3/4 students per group) who will be asked to produce a flyer / advertising poster of a circus or a typical attraction of the traveling show, using creative techniques such as drawing, collage or other.

At the end there will be the return of the works and each group will be able to illustrate their work.

Resources needed:

Colored markers, white and colored sheets, illustrated magazines to be cut, glue and scissors.

<https://www.comune.modena.it/memo/prodotti-editoriali/intercultura/strada-patria-sinta-cento-anni-di-storia-nel-racconto-di-un-saltimbanco-sinto>



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Title of the activity	Road, sinta homeland: the microarea
Themes	Living, micro-areas, "nomadic camps"
Duration	2 hours
In brief <i>(Summary of the activity)</i>	Reading from the book Strada, patria sinta of the pages that tell the typical lifestyle of Sinte families linked to the activity of the traveling show
Related subjects	History, geography, art
Objectives	Through the reading of these pages discover the typical housing types of families belonging to the Sinta minority. Knowing the micro-area and the privately owned land, their characteristics to finally arrive at the birth of the "nomad camps".
Competences, knowledge, skills <i>(Indicate which skills, knowledge or skills are involved)</i>	Critical reading, cooperation and teamwork, artistic skills
Evaluation <i>(provide a suggestion on how to assess whether the objectives have been achieved)</i>	You can choose between the following evaluation methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-assessment: ask each pupil to evaluate their work and explain the reasons for this evaluation; - Discussion: At the end of the activity, you can ask the students "how did you think it went?" and record the answers. Repeat the activity after a few months or the following school year.



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Circle time: a few days after the activity, discuss with the students about the topics addressed to verify the internalization of the concepts. |
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- **Outline of the activity:**
 - Reading the book *Strada, patria sinta* (30 minutes)
 - Knowledge of other realities (20 minutes)
 - Creative workshop (60 minutes)
 - Return (10 minutes)

Reading in the book by Gnugo De Bar: *Strada, patria sinta* delle parti in which the typical lifestyle of Sinte families linked to the activity of the traveling show is told. It is an easy reading that can be done by the teacher or in turn by the students. At the end the teacher expands the knowledge of the topic with other examples taken from the local reality if existing or from the news

The class is then divided into small groups (3/4 students per group) who will be asked to produce a drawing of how they understand or imagine a microarea or a "nomad camp" using creative techniques such as drawing, collage or other.

At the end there will be the return of the works and each group will be able to illustrate their work.

Resources needed:

Colored markers, white and colored sheets, illustrated magazines to be cut, glue and scissors. Any newspapers that report articles related to the topic.

<https://www.comune.modena.it/memo/prodotti-editoriali/intercultura/strada-patria-sinta-cento-anni-di-storia-nel-racconto-di-un-saltimbanco-sinto>



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