

BEYOND THE FENCE

*Understanding architects' agency in overcoming
Romani communities' socio-spatial segregation
in Italy*

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Master Thesis in Architecture and Urban Design*



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Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design

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Abstract

In the Italian context, Romani camps represent a distinctive form of socio-spatial segregation; paradoxically, these mono-ethnic spaces have often been institutionalised and built by the state itself. Although Italy is one of the European states with the lowest percentage of Roma (Roma, Sinti and Camminanti), there has been a progressive institutionalisation of marginality that has, since the 1970s, led to a network of 'historical' camps characterised by urban isolation, surveillance and precarious infrastructure.

This thesis investigates the role architects can play in challenging this condition, posing the following main question: How can architects' agency contribute to overcoming the camp as a device of socio-spatial segregation? To address this question, the research develops a literature review that allows for a better understanding of the phenomenon and establishes a theoretical framework on urban marginality, before examining four emblematic Italian case studies: Via Chiesa Rossa (Milan) and the inhabitants' attempt to set up a housing cooperative; Via Bonfadini (Milan) and the role of the 'ErsiliaLAB' project in promoting relationships; Casilino 900 (Rome) and the self-construction of "Savorengo Ker-la casa di tutti"; and finally Via Carrafiello (Giugliano in Campania), which allows a critical examination of the limits of intervention in contexts of severe housing degradation.

Each case highlights different ways in which architects exercise their agency to support communities in their 'practices of freedom'. These approaches are discussed through five key themes: participation; the construction of relationships beyond the camp; conflict management; the design and use of space; and the tension between process and result. On the one hand, the findings highlight the limitations of traditional institutional approaches, which tend to universalise by proposing one-size-fits-all solutions for different communities and contexts. On the other hand, this work remarks that, in the cases examined, architects valorised the intrinsic specificities of communities and spaces, promoting the creation of social and relational ties that help move 'beyond the fence'.

Key-words:

Romani communities, socio-spatial segregation, architects' agency, institutionalised marginality, participated processes

Nel contesto italiano, i campi rom rappresentano una forma peculiare di segregazione socio-spaziale; paradossalmente, questi spazi mono-etnici sono stati spesso istituzionalizzati e realizzati dallo Stato stesso. Sebbene l'Italia sia uno degli stati europei con la più bassa percentuale di popolazione rom (Rom, Sinti e Camminanti), a partire dagli anni '70 si è assistito a una progressiva istituzionalizzazione della marginalità che ha portato alla creazione di una rete di campi 'storici' caratterizzati da isolamento urbano, sorveglianza e infrastrutture precarie.

Questa tesi indaga il ruolo che gli architetti possono svolgere nel contrastare tale condizione, ponendo la seguente domanda: *in che modo l'agency (capacità d'azione) degli architetti può contribuire a superare il campo come dispositivo di segregazione socio-spaziale?* Per rispondere a questa domanda, la ricerca sviluppa una revisione della letteratura che consente una migliore comprensione del fenomeno e costruisce un quadro teorico sulla marginalità urbana, per poi esaminare quattro casi studio emblematici in Italia: Via Chiesa Rossa (Milano) e il tentativo degli abitanti di costituire una cooperativa edilizia, Via Bonfadini (Milano) e il ruolo del progetto 'ErsiliaLAB' nella promozione di relazioni, Casilino 900 (Roma) e l'autocostruzione di 'Savorengo Ker-la casa di tutti' e infine Via Carrafiello (Giugliano in Campania), che consente un esame critico dei limiti dell'intervento in contesti di grave degrado abitativo.

Ciascun caso evidenzia diversi modi in cui gli architetti esercitano la propria agency per supportare le comunità nelle loro 'pratiche di libertà'. Tali approcci sono discussi attraverso cinque temi chiave: la partecipazione; la costruzione di relazioni oltre il campo; la gestione dei conflitti; la progettazione e l'uso dello spazio; la tensione tra processo e risultato. Da un lato, i risultati evidenziano i limiti degli approcci istituzionali tradizionali, che tendono a universalizzare proponendo soluzioni standardizzate per comunità e contesti differenti. Dall'altro lato, la tesi sottolinea come, nei casi esaminati, gli architetti abbiano valorizzato le specificità intrinseche delle comunità e degli spazi, promuovendo la creazione di legami sociali e relazionali che aiutano ad andare 'oltre la recinzione' (beyond the fence).

Key-words:

Comunità Rom, segregazione socio-spaziale, agency degli architetti, marginalità istituzionalizzata, processi partecipati

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Preface

This thesis wants to focus on the specific case of the Romani communities living in camps in Italy and how architects' actions have contributed and can contribute in the overcoming of their socio-spatial segregation?

The interest towards this topic is a consequence of diverse encounters and experiences I had throughout my studies. Multiple times during my master's degree I had the chance to work within informal contexts and settlements, specifically in the cities of Maputo (Mozambique) and Lagos (Nigeria). The former was investigated during my semester abroad at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Melbourne (Australia) within the context of analysing the metabolics of urban inequalities in the informal settlement of Makoko, a floating slum counting around 100 000 inhabitants. At RMIT I also participated in the drafting of a report that had the aim of summarising a body of research on community engagement. The findings were the outcome of a community workshop designed and conducted both by us students and our professors. The scope was to analyse what good public design looks like, how its quality can be measured, what is our agency as architects and which voices should be shaping these decisions.

Studying and working within informal settlements but also investigating architects' agency in formal context gave me the opportunity to broaden my horizons on the capabilities of architecture and architects in being drivers of positive change by using participatory processes that comprehensively include project recipients.

Therefore, given my academic experience and the resulting sensitivity regarding the use of architecture as an agent of positive change accessible to all, I started researching on the themes of informality. Specifically on scholarships that were trying to transform the ways in which the cities of the Global South, and subaltern contexts in general, are studied, like the extensive work of Ananya Roy, scholar and professor of Urban Planning, Social Welfare, and Geography, where she stresses the importance of considering that even what we define as 'slum' is a place of habitation, livelihood and politics (2011).

However urban informality is a very broad topic and in order for my research to be grounded there was a need to delve deeper into the matter. Urban informality is strictly connected to the right to the city and to how the State constructs categories of legitimacy and illegitimacy. When looking at the Italian case and its types of informality, the case of the Romani communities struck me for its complexity and deep social injustice. Specifically, the state enforced urban exclusion of the community and the continuous recurrence to evictions, being that evictions are particularly problematic in informal settlements for their precarious nature.

This then led me to wanting to understand, through my thesis, whether somehow architects had interfaced with the Romani community and whether this had led to positive results in overcoming this enduring condition of marginality.

01

INTRODUCTION

01

01.1

Problem framing

01.1

The Romani population represents Europe’s largest ethnic minority, estimated at 12-15 million, with roughly 80% residing in EU countries, enduring centuries of persecution, poverty, and entrenched discrimination (Armillei 2018).

It is important to highlight that, throughout this thesis, for ease of understanding and given its focus on the spatial and architectural dimensions, the terms ‘Roma’ and ‘Romani’ will be used inclusively to designate a heterogeneous community composed of people belonging to the Roma, Sinti and Camminanti (RSC) populations. This lexical choice does not intend to make any discriminatory distinctions or simplify the cultural and legal specificities of each group and subgroup but only aims at making the discourse fluid and accessible, emphasising the shared urban dynamics.

Roma, Sinti and Camminanti are in fact distinct ethnic groups that are often mistakenly classified together, despite sharing a history of nomadism or semi-nomadism in Europe. The Roma (Central and Eastern Europe) and Sinti (Western Europe) are both of Indian origins and their spoken languages are almost identical, while the Camminanti are a nomadic group specific to the Italian region of Sicily, unrelated to the Romani populations (Associazione 21 Luglio 2025e).

Some of the groups that compose the Romani ethnicity in Europe, which in turn

are divided into other subgroups, are: Roma, Sinti, Manush, Romanichal, Romanishæl, Kale and Lom (European Commission 2020; Wikipedia 2026c); however, given that the Romani community does not ascribe to a single State, it is very difficult to know the number of people who are part of it, both in Europe and in Italy. Furthermore, when it comes to surveys, some people omit their Romani origins, in fear of being the subject of future discrimination, and also, in regard to ethnicity, is not that easy to define precise borders (Bontempelli 2022).

One of the common feature of all communities that identify as ‘Romani’ is that they speak, or in past centuries spoke, dialects that are mutually intelligible, constituting the Romani (or Romanes) language, which numerous philological and linguistic studies claim derives from popular variants of Sanskrit and is most closely related to the current languages of north-western India (Piasere 2004).

Moreover, a constant feature of the history of the Romani people is the persecution they have always suffered: enslavement, deportation and extermination; in general to refer to discriminations specifically targeted to the Romani communities the word ‘antiziganism’ is used. Throughout their history to the present days, the mistrust that arose when they first appeared in medieval Europe, where nomadism was seen as a curse from God, has continued over time. Hence the tendency of modern societies



Figure 2. (top) Romani woman photographed by Tomasz Tomaszewski for his book “Gypsies. Different people, just like us”. Source: Tomaszewski 2014.
Figure 3. (bottom) Romani housing photographed by Tomasz Tomaszewski for his book “Gypsies. Different people, just like us”. Source: Tomaszewski 2014.

to rid themselves of their presence, even at the cost of physical elimination. All European countries adopted expulsion orders against them, culminating in the planning of the genocide of the Roma, together with that of the Jews, during Nazism in Germany, which was defined by the community as ‘Porajmos’ or ‘Porrajmos’ (in Romani ‘devastation’ or ‘great devouring’), or ‘Samudaripen’ (genocide) (Ibid.).

Their first presence of Romani communities on Italian soil traces back to the XIV century, they were fleeing Kosovo after the invasion of the Ottomans, they then settled in Abruzzo and are now recognised as Rom Abruzzesi (Casa della Carità, 2024). In addition, for the first half of the 1900s, Italy was already hosting small Sinti and Roma encampments on northern urban fringes or in riverside sites in the south, tied to the aforementioned longstanding Italian Roma groups.

In the 1970s, there was a first wave of migrations from the former Yugoslavia due to its dismantling, which also included citizens of Roma ethnicity. Because of bureaucratic hurdles in verifying entry dates, humanitarian permits were blocked, furthermore officials misinterpreted these as cultural nomadism rather than forced displacement.

These reasons, and the general perception regarding Romani communities, have led to the implementation of special policies and the creation of settlements that reflected what was thought as a cultural peculiarity

that had to be addressed, the ‘Problema Nomadi’ (eng: nomad problem) (Ministero Dell’Interno, n.d.).

This spurred ‘nomad camps’ from the 1970s onward, cemented by regional laws like Lazio’s 1985 “norme per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale e l’ identità dei ‘ROM’” (eng.: norms for the protection of the cultural heritage and identity of the Roma) funding ethnic enclaves, mislabelled as camps for caravans and trailers (Consiglio Regionale del Lazio, n.d.).

Initially framed as emergency fixes to promote inclusion, these structures endured, entrenching exclusion; as of 2019, 122 of 144 formal sites qualified as ‘historical’ after over a decade of being on municipal soil while their design was still evoking what Armillei (2016) described as disaster zones, transience, surveillance, and control.

The ‘Roma camp’ label obscures a diverse ecosystem of formal setups like shanty towns, micro/macro-areas, mono-ethnic public housing, collection centres, and informal ones like hidden shacks or tents as post-eviction evasion tactics. The shared characteristics of the ‘formal camps’ can be seen in the urban isolation of the area chosen by the municipality, the presence of fences surrounding the area, sometimes also the presence of police at the entrance gates and, most of the times, precarious basic infrastructure (like electricity, sewage or public toilets) (Associazione 21 Luglio, n.d.-c; Pasotti 2025).

Until the end of the 2010s, while living in abandoned settlements, Roma communities were frequently evicted without adequate notice or prior consultation and without being offered alternative solutions. As a result, victims of forced evictions were often left homeless or in deplorable conditions. During these evictions, many lost their personal belongings and access, however limited, to education, public services and employment opportunities (Amnesty International 2010).

A pivotal turn came in 2012 with the EU-prompted ‘National Strategy for Roma, Sinti and Travellers inclusion’, targeting camp dismantlement, emergency mindsets, and welfare dependency (Cingolani 2014). Some municipalities started promoting housing transition with support focused on independence, significantly reducing the number of emergency accommodation units. Yet progress remains uneven: mere closures differ from true overcoming, and forced evictions persist systematically, without legal safeguards or remedies, as noted by the European Committee of Social Rights, with Italy admitting the practice amid ongoing segregation (Amnesty International 2024).

In fact, the shared characteristics of living of the Roma community, mostly imposed on them by the state, have contributed over the years to the stigma that characterises this community and to their living in a continuous ‘state of exception’ (Agamben 2003) that entails the absence of basic human rights (Amnesty International 2019).

Table 1. Discrimination in the past 12 months for being Roma in core areas of life. Source: elaboration by the author based on a FRA (2024) survey conducted among the Roma community.

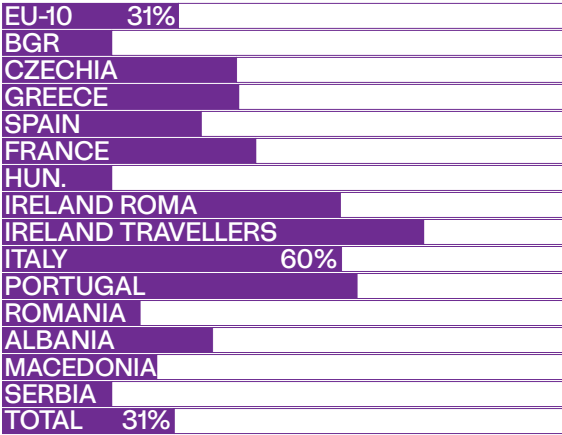
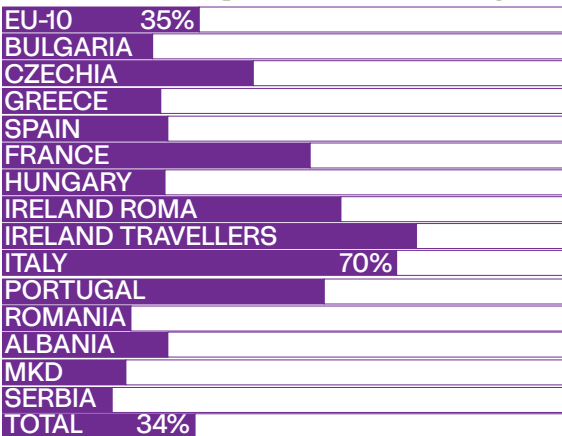


Table 2. Housing discrimination in the past 5 years for being Roma. Source: elaboration by the author based on FRA (2024) survey conducted among the Roma community.



■ the subject perceive discrimination
□ the subject does not perceive discrimination

¹ This statistics dates back to 2019 and can be found at page 48 of the ISTAT Report “Abitare in Transizione. Indagine sui progetti di transizione abitativa rivolti alle popolazioni Rom, Sinte e Caminanti.” The report was drafted by Nur Nadia in 2021.

01.2

Research aim and research questions

01 2

While the Italian ‘nomad camp’ has been extensively analysed through the lenses of sociology and political science and therefore critiqued as a site of institutional exclusion, the specific role of the architect within this landscape remains unclear.

This research does not intend to only describe the socio-spatial segregation of the Romani communities in Italy; indeed, its main aim is trying to investigate the architects’ agency in this exceptional context or, more precisely, some forms of architects’ agency, as they emerge through selected case studies considered particularly relevant for understanding this topic. Through the analysis of these case studies, all located in the Italian peninsula, this research explores how practitioners provided or could provide technical, social, and political support to those living within and working against these segregated environments.

Therefore, in this thesis, ‘agency’ is understood as the situated capacity of architects to act within and against institutional, political, and socio-spatial frameworks, not only through spatial design but also through negotiation, advocacy, and engagement with marginalized communities.

By adopting a spatial and process-oriented lens, this research seeks to determine how architectural tools, ranging from participatory design to urban advocacy, can be leveraged to foster integration.

Consequently, this study is guided by the following central question:

In the case of the Romani communities in Italy, how can architects’ agency contribute to overcoming the ‘camp’ as a device of socio-spatial segregation?

Furthermore, with the purpose of providing a more articulated answer to the just mentioned ‘main question’ three sub questions has been drafted, each addressing a different sub-layer of the issue.

Firstly, it was therefore important for me to gain a better understanding of the ‘genealogy’ of the ‘camp system’ so that the case studies analysed could be included in a historical and political framework that would provide a better understanding of the choices that architects made or could make in the future. This necessity led to the first sub-question:

What historical and institutional dynamics shaped the life of the Romani communities in Italy and their identification with the ‘nomad camp’ device?

Secondly, in order to better establish my analyses and findings, it was essential to acquire a theoretical framework that would allow me to better analyse and compare the case studies through the use of theories belonging to a broader context, such as urban informality, the right to the city, and

spatial agency, which led to the formulation of my second sub-question:

How can theories regarding urban informality, the right to the city and spatial agency help in framing this complex topic?

Finally, my last sub-question:

Are eviction and the subsequent placement in public housing the only pathways to overcome socio-spatial segregation?

Therefore, this thesis aims not only at understanding the discrepancy between the proposed case studies and the policies pursued by the various municipalities, but also at proposing new models or simply guidelines that look at a ‘new’ or ‘different’ way of dealing with this subject, valuably integrating the presence of architects.

01.5

Applied methodology

01 3

In order to address the complexities of architects' agency within Romani camp system in Italy, this research employs multiple case studies to advance a qualitative methodology. The research is designed to move beyond a descriptive account of segregation, instead using a theoretical-empirical loop where field data influence the work on theory and vice-versa.

With the aim of doing so, the methodology is structured into distinct operations, that will be briefly introduced in this section following the order of appearance in the thesis, which will help address the previously outlined research questions. During the analysis of this complex topic, there will be no expectation of giving finished answers, both to the research questions and to those that will arise in the meantime.

Firstly, the research begins with an extended literature review, incorporating both academic texts and grey literature (NGO reports, legal documents, and policy briefs). The selection of sources followed a snowballing approach, progressively identifying relevant texts through bibliographic references and cross-citations. This process was further integrated by recommendations emerging from several of the interviewees. This body of material was therefore used to reconstruct: the history of the Romani community and their presence in the Italian peninsula, the historical emergence of the 'camp system' in Italy and its institutionalization as a tool of governance over Romani populations,

the recent policy shifts toward its formal overcoming and the central role that eviction still plays within these transformations.

The literature review functions not only as contextual background but also as a discursive analysis, revealing how Roma housing is framed, problematized, and spatially managed within public narratives and planning practices.

Moreover, these findings are framed through a theoretical lens of urban informality, grey spaces and the production of urban marginality. The main theories studied include the analysis of mechanisms of exclusion enforced through infrastructural violence, calculated neglect and evictions, to then continue with the unpacking of theories regarding 'the right to the city', the importance of participation and different types of conflict within the aforementioned informal framework. The chapter is concluded with a section exploring the relationship between architects' agency and the 'wicked' realm they have to work within. These theoretical perspectives are interpretative tools that guide the reading of the case studies proposed in chapter four and help situate architectural practices within broader socio-political dynamics.

Moving to the empirical part of this research, its core involves a deep analysis of four emblematic sites in Italy: covering spaces, their physical and policy contexts, the processes and the role of architects. The

choice of case studies was consequent to the reconstruction of the Roma situation in Italy made in the literature review chapter. This reconstruction allowed me to identify significant issues related to specific Roma camps and subsequently choose four cases in particular; these cases would have allowed me to better address my main research question and, in addition, their documentation and actors were accessible to me.

To better understand the chosen cases, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with architects, a member of one Romani community involved in one of the processes, and key advocacy groups, most notably Associazione 21 Luglio². These interviews were essential for understanding the visible and invisible dynamics of the projects: the conflicts, the negotiations, and the specific ways spatial practitioners can support the community beyond the physical building.

Each case furthermore highlights a different facet of architectural agency:

- **Via Chiesa Rossa (Milan)**, chosen for its distinctive feature of being one of the most structured among the 'formal camp' encountered and for the proposal, brought forward by its inhabitants, of a

housing cooperative as a model for self-determination.

- **Via Bonfadini (Milan)**, a 'formal camp' characterized by a very evident spatial segregation, given it was located in a triangle created by rail tracks, and the importance of the 'ErsiliaLAB' project, by Architetti Senza Frontiere Italia (eng: Architects Without Borders Italy), in fostering positive relationships with the neighbourhood and the Milanese citizens.
- **Casilino 900 (Rome)**, one of the largest and oldest informal camps in the Italian peninsula, which, despite its hidden nature, became famous for the 'Savorengo Ker' project, a workshop based on self-construction that led to the creation of a prototype dwelling, demonstrating that the space for integration can be made through collective work (Careri and Romito 2016).
- **Via Carrafiello (Giugliano in Campania)**, this case highlights the limits of current interventions in a highly problematic and segregated environment, and thanks to a conversation with the president of Associazione 21 Luglio, become a 'open

² The Associazione 21 Luglio is a non-profit organisation founded in Rome on 6 April 2010, which supports groups and individuals in conditions of extreme segregation and discrimination, protecting their rights and promoting the well-being of children. Through projects such as 'Il Paese dei Campi' they map Roma/Sinti settlements in real time and promote the overcoming of camps through advocacy and data. It has been drafting annual reports on the condition of Roma and Sinti communities in Italy for over 15 years, with data updated to 2024, which are then presented to the Italian Senate. Since 2022, it has also been the national representative 2022–2027 for the European Roma Civil Monitor (Associazione 21 Luglio, n.d.-a).

question' regarding the architects' agency in similar contexts.

Finally, the interpretation of the four case studies is carried out transversally through five cross-cutting themes, which emerged from the observation of recurring elements among the case studies:

- **Participation**, meaning the degree of community involvement in the projects' processes.
- **Outside Relationships**, meaning how the projects aim at creating or improving the inhabitants' relationships with the surrounding neighbourhood/city.
- **Conflict Management**, meaning the analysis of different types of conflict that arose during the implementation of the project and thus understanding how the architects navigate tensions between institutional requirements and community needs.
- **Spaces involved**, meaning analysing which spaces were activated during the projects and through them and the role of architects in this 'activation'
- **Result vs. Process**, meaning evaluating whether the 'success' of a project lies in the built result or the social process it triggered, or both.

The discussion of the four case studies through the themes just described allowed

me to read the cases in the light of the concepts gathered through the theoretical framework, so as to interpret them and try to address the main research question.

In conclusion, rather than proposing universal solutions, this thesis evaluates how design can mediate conflictual transitions, support in the overcoming of the camp and engage with informality without reproducing exclusionary logics.

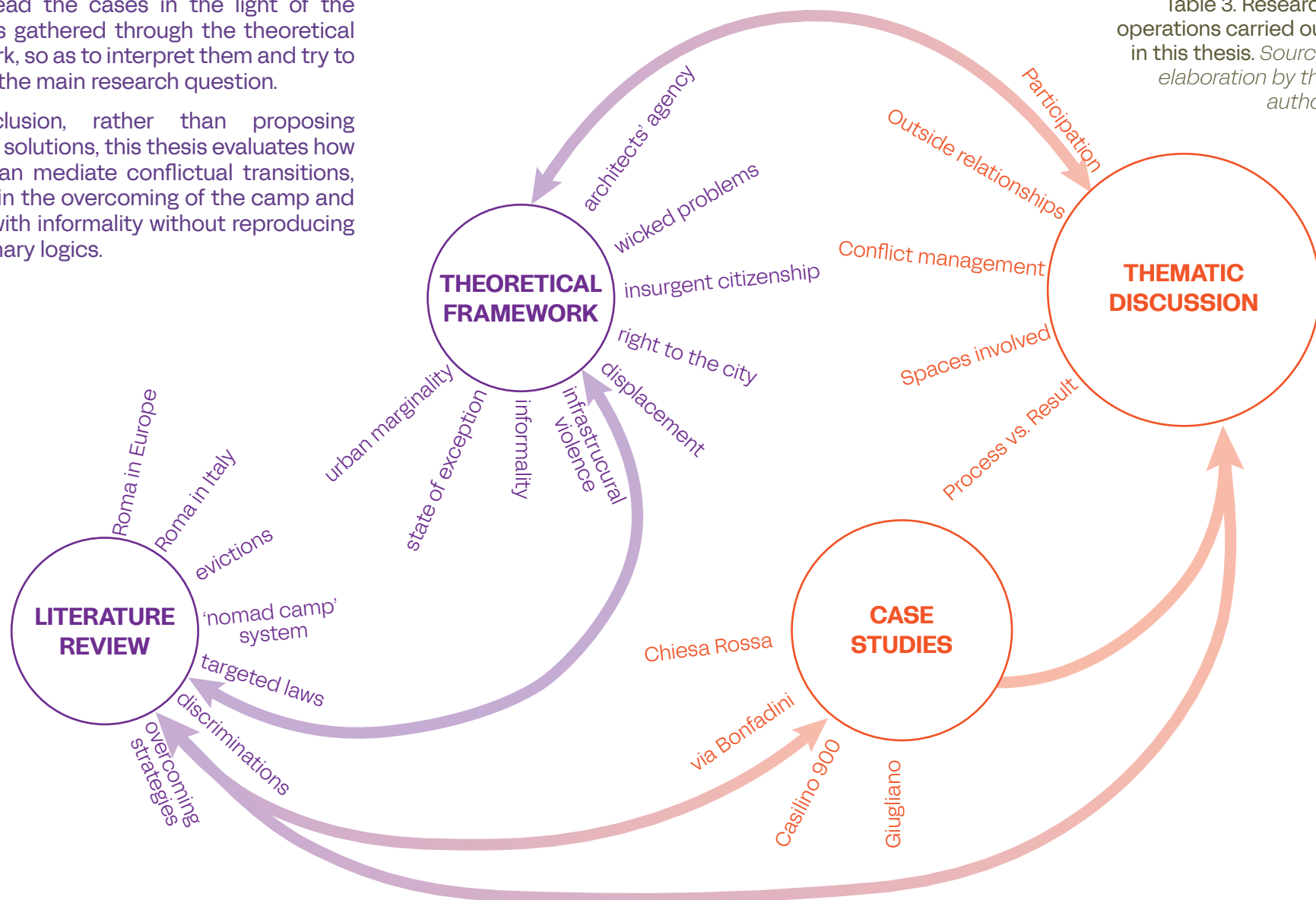


Table 3. Research operations carried out in this thesis. Source: elaboration by the author.

THE CHRONICISATION OF MARGINALITY

The history of Romani housing in Italy

02.1 Romani community in Europe

02.2 Romani community in Italy

02.3 The origins of discrimination

02.4 The regional laws and the
consolidation of the 'camp system'

02.5 The country of camps

02.6 From the great eviction season
to present days

02.7 Embarking on an alternative
path

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the Romani community, shifting from a broad European perspective to the specific socioeconomic and political landscape of Italy. It begins by defining the Romani population, Europe's largest ethnic minority, and deconstructing the 'nomadic' stereotypes that have historically fuelled social exclusion. The analysis then traces the historical origins of the community from their 14th-century arrival in Europe through the traumatic 'Porrajmos' (Holocaust) and into the contemporary era of 'antiziganism'.

Central to this literature review is the investigation of Italy's unique 'camp system'. The chapter examines how post-war marginalization was institutionalized through regional laws and 'nomad emergency' decrees, effectively creating a form of 'reversed urban planning' that segregated Romani families from the rest of society. Finally, the discussion evaluates the recent shift toward European-led inclusion strategies and the persistent challenges of 'chronic' marginality despite these policy changes.

Establishing this historical and structural framework is essential for the empirical part of this thesis. By identifying the systemic obstacles, legislative failures, and patterns of forced eviction, this chapter provides the necessary context to critically analyse and understand the projects and interventions discussed in chapter four and five.



Figure 4. A demonstration of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities against the police, crime, sentencing and courts bill in London in July 2021. Source: James Veysey (*The Guardian* 2023)

02.1

Romani community in Europe

02.1

As of the time of writing, there is still no reliable source on the number of Romani people neither worldwide nor at European level. The European Union estimates tell us that around 10 to 12 million of Roma live in Europe, half of which in the Union, making them the largest minority on European soil (FRA 2012). For centuries they have been subjected to suppression and social exclusion, and still to this day they are one of the poorest and most discriminated group on the continent (Armillei 2018).

As previously mentioned in the problem framing section, the term Roma/Romani includes a huge variety of ethnicities and function as an ‘umbrella’ term. Specifically, the different groups are usually based on dialect and migration paths and can be divided in:

- **Roma:** The largest group, primarily found in Central and Eastern Europe (Balkans, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary).
- **Sinti:** Predominantly in Germany, Austria, and Italy. They are often culturally distinct from Eastern European Roma.
- **Kale (Calé):** Primarily located in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) and parts of Southern France.
- **Romanichal:** Based in the United Kingdom.
- **Manouche:** A subgroup in France related to the Sinti.

- **Boyash (Rudari):** A group primarily in Romania and the Balkans who traditionally speak a dialect of Romanian rather than Romani.
- **Ashkali and Egyptians:** Primarily in Kosovo and Albania; they often claim distinct origins but are grouped under the ‘Roma’ umbrella in policy documents (Wikipedia 2026c).

The Romani demographic profile differs significantly from the aging ‘majority’ European population, in fact the Romani population is much younger: in the EU, the median age for Romani is approximately 25 years, compared to the EU average of 40 years. Furthermore, families tend to be larger, with higher birth rates than the national averages of their host countries and contrary to the ‘nomadic’ stereotype, 80% of Romani in Europe are settled, living in permanent housing (FRA 2025b).

There are not a lot of information on the origin of Roma population, being that their History was mainly transmitted orally. Nevertheless, it is known and proven since the eighteenth century that Romani, the language of the Roma, is a New-Indo-Aryan language and that its speakers are of north-western Indian origin. Their first presence in Europe was documented around the XIV and XV centuries and their route was through the Byzantine empire, current Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor (Wogg, n.d.).



Figure 5. Historical distribution of the diverse Romani ethnicity throughout Europe. Elaboration by the author base on diagram by UCRI (2021)

As soon as they arrive in Europe, their situation in the Ottoman Empire and Central Europe was of bondage and slavery and marginalisation and persecution in Western Europe. Subsequently, in the 18th century, the ‘age of enlightenment’ in European history, Roma were exposed to other methods of discrimination: internment in Spain and forced assimilation laws in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the second half of the 19th century, a second migratory movement took place: Roma groups from central and South-Eastern Europe moved to all other regions of Europe, some of them even overseas (Ibid.).

The peak of the discriminations toward the Romani community happened with the ‘Porrajmos’, in Romani language the ‘devourment’; the term is used to identify the genocide of the Roma community by the German Nazi party during the Second World War (Porrajmos, n.d.-a).

The prejudice and discrimination of Romani people is ongoing and has the name of ‘antiziganism’; some of the discriminations, listed in a 2021 report by the Council of Europe on anti-gypsism, can be: “labelling, hate speech and hate crime, discrimination, school segregation of Romani children, residential segregation, forced evictions, police and other law-enforcement officials’ violence targeting Roma, [...], forced sterilisation of Romani women, policies of assimilation, [...], extermination attempts, Roma Holocaust, the passive role of state

authorities in protecting the rights of Roma” and so on (Rostar (eds.) 2021).

The pervasive antiziganism can be seen in the laws targeted to ‘nomad’ people and more subtly to the Romani community, enacted by diverse European countries. In France there was firstly in 1969, the ‘Carnet’ law which required anyone without a fixed domicile to carry a circulation booklet (fr.: livret or carnet de circulation) that had to be stamped by police every 3 months, and later between 1990s and the 2000, the ‘Besson laws’ which mandated that all towns with over 5,000 inhabitants had to provide a ‘dedicated caravan site’ (Sudetic 2013; Wikipedia 2026a). In England, there was firstly in 1968 the ‘Caravans Sites Act’, which placed a mandatory duty on local councils to provide enough sites for ‘Gypsies and Travellers’, and later on, in 1994, the ‘Criminal Justice and Public Order Act’ which repealed the duty of councils to provide sites and gave police new powers to remove anyone “camping on land without consent” (Ringelheim 2012). Perhaps the most problematic of all was in Switzerland, where from 1926 until 1973, the ProJuventute foundation with support of the federal law, through the project “Kinder der Landstrasse” (eng: children of the country road), was allowed to forcibly remove Jenisch and Roma children from their parents to ‘settle’ them (Wikipedia 2026b).

To this day, for this continuing difficulty in assimilating them into something known and consequently labelling them as ‘foreign’, the

Roma people have remained the outsiders, the scapegoats of Europe who are blamed in times of crisis when no one is willing to take responsibility for the situation (Medeleanu 2023).

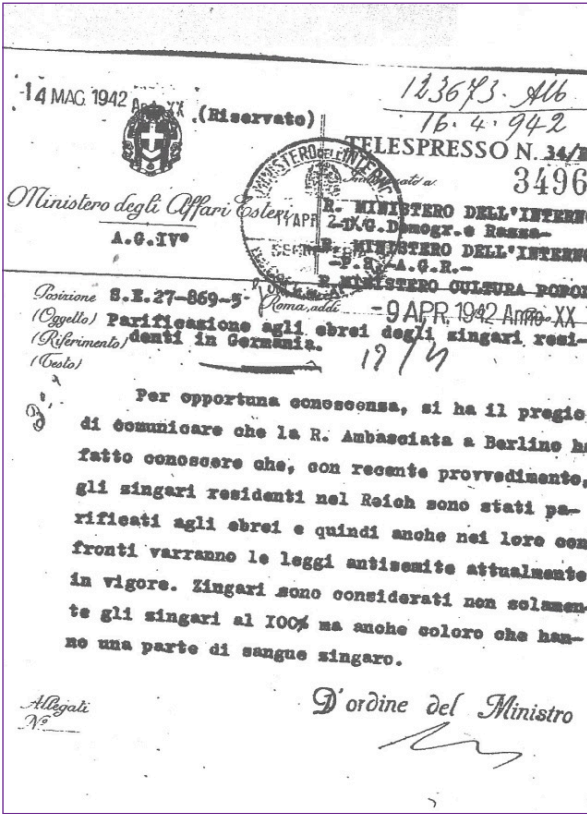


Figure 6. 1942 Document from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that gypsies are on an equal footing with Jews living in Germany. Source: Porrajmos website (n.d.)

02.2

Romani community in Italy

02 2

The Romani population in Italy is one of the smallest of the European continent, the estimates say it could range between 120,000 and 180,000, of whom around 80,000 are Italian citizens. At least 50% of them have been in Italy for over 15 years, having arrived during the war in the former Yugoslavia (Sangermano 2019). Furthermore, as in Europe, the first presence of Romani people, dates back to the XIV century; while fleeing Kosovo, after the invasion of the Ottomans, they settled in Abruzzo and are now recognised as ‘Rom Abruzzesi’ (eng.: Roma from Abruzzo) (Casa della Carità, 2024).

The community is not monolithic and is divided into three main branches: Sinti, which arrived in the 14th–15th centuries, they are predominantly in the North and Italian citizens. The Roma, that can be subdivide in ‘older settlers’, meaning groups that have been present in Central and Southern Italy since the 1400s (like Roma Abruzzesi), the Balkan Roma which arrived in waves following the 1960s and specifically the 1990s Yugoslav wars and the Romanian Roma which arrived following Romania’s EU annexation in 2007. Lastly, Camminanti, which is a specific group unique to Italy, primarily based in Sicily. Even though they have nothing to do with the Romani ethnicity, because of their nomadic lifestyle they have been frequently associated with it (Casa della Carità 2024).

Even if Italy has the smallest Romani population in Europe (0.23–0.25% against

the 30% of Romania, 12% of Hungary or 6.5% of France)³, the housing situation is the worst. Referred by the European Roma Rights Center (2000) as “Paese dei campi” (eng: Country of camps), as of 2024, around 11,100 to 15,800 people live in ‘institutional’ (government-run) or informal camps. This is a 53% decrease since 2016, as many camps have now been closed (Associazione 21 Luglio 2024a).

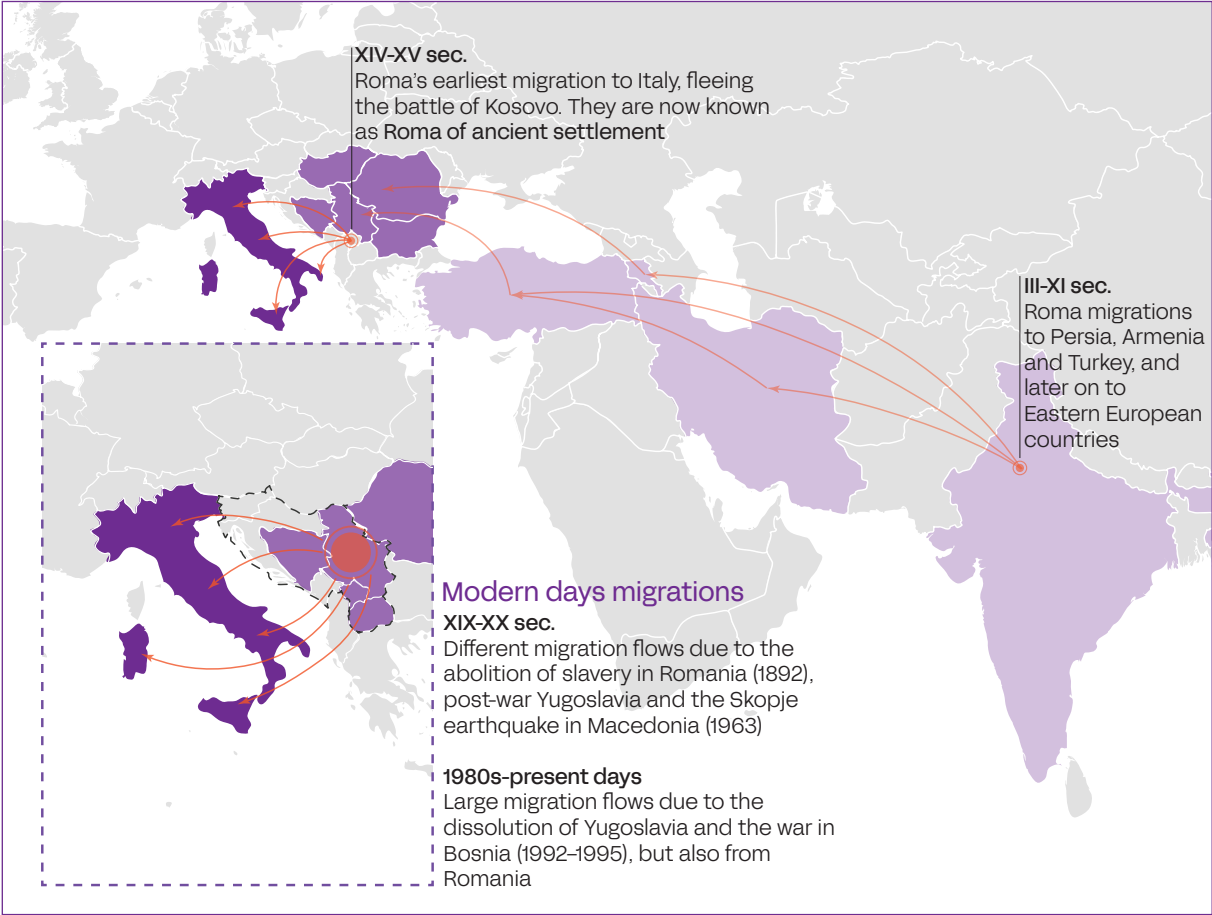


Table 4. Romani migrations towards Italy. *Source: elaboration by the author.*

³ The data are from an update of a 2024 European Parliament brief named “Understanding EU action on Roma inclusion” (Lecerf 2025).

Table 5. Timeline of Romani presence in Italy. *Source: elaboration by the author.*

before 1950
Roma and Sinti of ancient settlement
mainly in Abruzzo and Puglia

Beginning of migration of Roma people from former Yugoslavia

First massive influx of Roma migrating from former Yugoslavia

In the name of an **alleged nomadism**, the camp becomes an instrument of **ethnic separation**

New wave of Roma migrating from former Yugoslavia

Beginning of stigmatisation by the public opinion

Creation of the first “formal” camps

Permanence of:

- large camps
- evictions without adequate alternatives
- barriers in access to citizenship and discrimination

Ongoing discrimination

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

Police control, evictions and mobility restrictions

1973
Administrative circular of the ministry concerning the “nomad problem”.

1984
In Veneto region, a law passed for interventions to protect the Roma culture

later on, several regions adopt laws that “recognise the right to nomadism”, financing **stop-over camps**

1999
In the law 482 on historical **linguistic minorities**, the Roma and Sinti community is **not included**

2012
Drafting of the first **National Strategy** regarding the **inclusion** of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti population

2021–2030
A **new National Strategy** is drafted

02.5

The origins of discrimination

02 3

With the end of the Second World War, the Roma who had survived deportation and extermination reappeared in Italian cities. However, the living conditions of these groups were extremely poor and precarious. In addition to the widespread impoverishment that affected all the most marginalised segments of society in the post-war period, there was also hostility from a large part of the population due to the prejudices that fascist policies had instilled in the collective memory over time.

In the 1950s, Roma and Sinti, described as groups isolated from the rest of society, lived in conditions similar to those of many other Italian citizens. Even the dramatic stories of child begging, which public opinion associated with the ‘culture of nomads’, belonged to a broader context of marginalisation and exclusion: in the many shanty towns, minors were often forced into prostitution, illegal work and begging but they were not only Roma but belonging to the broader group of ‘baraccati’⁴(eng: shanty town dwellers) (Forgacs and Schettini 2015).

However, the marginalisation of the Roma also took on specific characteristics, different from any other social group, as in several cities they had to contend with ‘no stopping for nomad caravans’ regulations, which effectively prevented the creation of temporary settlements. Groups that did not

live as ‘itinerants’ were also affected by these bans. Over time, this hostility gave rise to genuine ‘forced nomads’. Because of these bans, children were unable to attend school regularly and, without having a fixed abode to give as their residence, families were unable to register with the registry office, which further exacerbated the marginalisation of ‘gypsy’ groups (Sigona 2002).

The 1960s and 1970s, in Europe as in Italy, were characterised by profound social changes and massive migratory flows, which also included Roma from Yugoslavia. In Italy, migration was more limited; however, although they lived in conventional housing in Yugoslavia, once they arrived in Italy they found themselves having to live in shacks and settlements where ‘native Roma’ were already present (Bontempelli 2022).

Meanwhile, in 1965, Opera Nomadi was founded, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the integration of the Roma, Sinti and Camminanti populations. The issue of social marginalisation was immediately at the heart of the association’s policies, claiming the right to park caravans and the related right to residence registration. Opera Nomadi’s advocacy work soon bore fruit. In 1973, a circular from the Ministry of the Interior invited mayors to remove obstacles to caravans stopping, to recognise the residence of itinerant Roma and also “to examine the

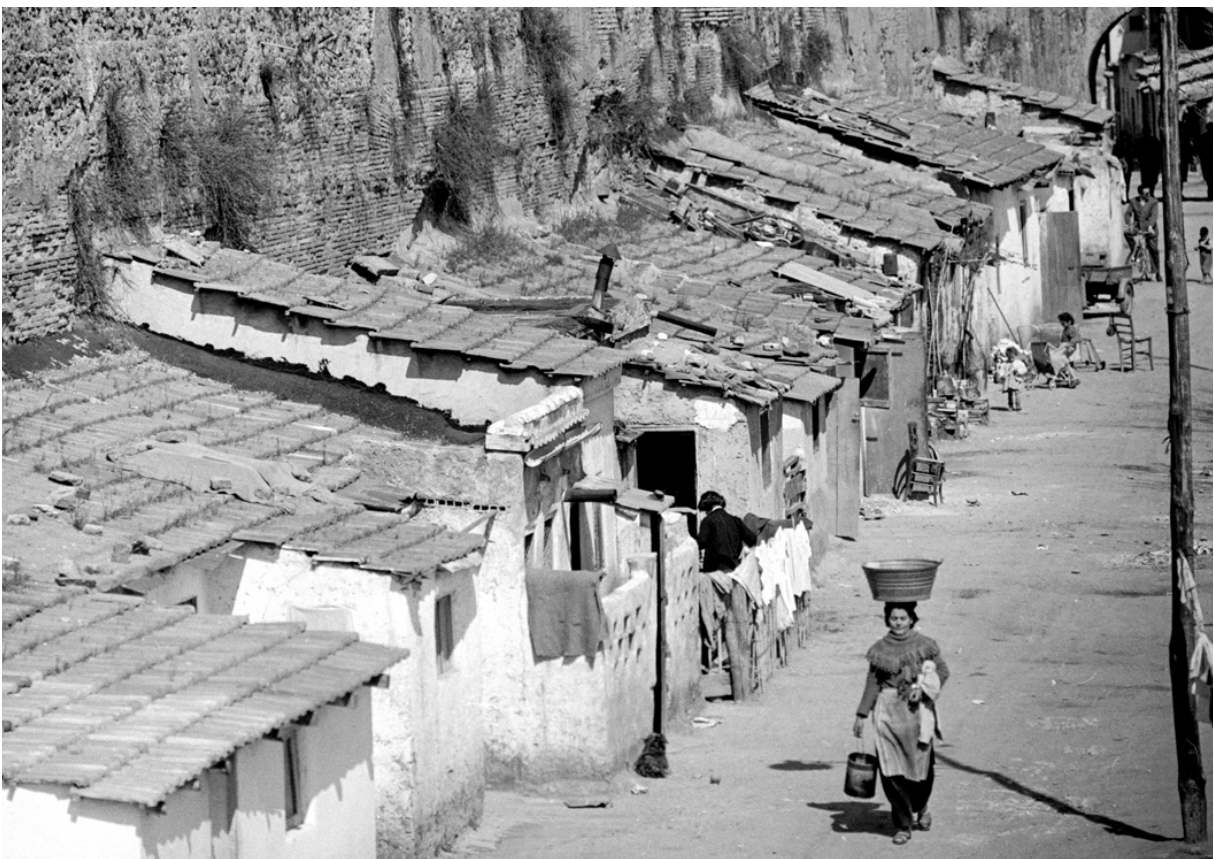


Figure 7. Borgata Mandrione (Rome), a ‘baraccati’ neighbourhood, in 1956. Source: photograph by Franco Pinna (Stritof 2021).

⁴ Baraccati is an Italian word used to describe people living in shanty towns (ita: baraccopoli) in Italy, around 1950s. Specifically, in the years of the economic boom (1959–1963), the intense migrations from the South to the North and from the countryside to the cities caused a very serious housing crisis, making shacks the only solution for many Italian families. The shacks, often built on municipal or private land, were made of wood and tin. Lack of drinking water, the presence of insects, the risk of fires, floods and living in confined spaces were common (TheMaximumVolumeable 2021).

possibility of creating campsites equipped with essential services on suitable land" (C.M. 11 October 1973, no. 17, "Problema nomadi", my translation). Although largely ignored by local authorities, the circular seemed to open a first crack in the wall of indifference and contempt shown by institutions towards the Roma (Sasso and Massano 1974).

Despite the important help of Opera Nomadi in bringing the Roma issue out of invisibility, the association also became the bearer of an approach that over time proved to be highly problematic: the thesis of 'gypsy deculturation' (ita: deculturazione zingara). This thesis argued that the Roma were unable to keep up and were doomed to lose their original culture, falling into deviance, marginalisation and delinquency. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the process of impoverishment of certain groups was not the result of a clash between 'modernity' and 'traditional cultures', but part of broader processes affecting entire segments of Italian society (Bontempelli 2022).

Pursuing this thesis was therefore problematic because redefined in ethnic terms a problem that was in reality a social one, placing almost entirely on the Roma the responsibility for their condition: it was 'they' who had to adapt and not the Italian Republic that had to 'remove the economic and social obstacles that [...] prevent the full development of the human person', as stated in Article 3 of the Constitution.

According to Opera Nomadi, in fact, the Roma should not have been assimilated into the Italian shanty town dwellers (ita: baraccati), which were very common in Italy, but needed special solutions that respected their 'nomadic' nature, such as camps or equipped areas. Negotiations thus began with various municipalities for the creation of 'camping sites'; This solution created discontent both among the Roma, who, just over 20 years after the Porrajmos, did not want to return to places of segregation, and among those who lived in the neighbourhoods where the camps were to be created, who, due to hostility towards the 'gypsies', called for evictions and removals. These protests by residents began to create problems of consensus for politicians, but also friction with nomadic workers who did not want to create new ghettos on the outskirts of cities (Sigona 2005; Bontempelli 2022).

Even in this early phase of the camp system, Nando Sigona (2002) highlighted how this solution was fraught with problems: the new stopping areas isolated a specific ethnic group, concentrating them in a specific place and thus making them hyper-visible to the surrounding population. This diversity, characterised by 'inferior' living conditions, contributed to fuelling collective fears and anxieties. Thus, in a vicious circle, local administrators, through the camp system, ended up creating the hostility they thought they already saw in the population.



Fig. 6 - Orientale nordica



Fig. 7 - Orientale levantina



Fig. 5 - Alpino baltica

tale attraverso i Balcani. Si calcola che in Germania il loro numero giunga a 20.000 mentre invece nell'Europa Orientale superano il milione.

Gli zingari appartengono quasi sempre alla razza orientale e i loro meticci sono quasi sempre degli individui asociali, tanto più pericolosi in quanto difficilmente distinguibili dagli europei.

L'osservazione delle unite figure sarà più dimostrativa di una lunga descrizione. Le figg. da 1 a 11 mostrano degli zingari di razza più o meno pura. Essi si presentano dolicocefali, con viso allungato, colorito bruno, naso leggermente convesso, occhio a mandorla quando sono soltanto di razza orientale; altrimenti presentano anche leggermente i caratteri delle razze europee con cui si sono mescolati. Come si comprende facilmente, un esame antropologico superficiale farebbe confondere la razza orientale con la mediterranea, da essa così diversa psichicamente. Basterà però tenere presente che il naso dei mediterranei è

È NECESSARIO INDIVIDUARE I METICCI EUROPEI

diritto e non convesso e che l'occhio non è a mandorla per distinguerli dagli orientali. È necessario quindi diffidare di tutti gli individui che vivono vagabondando alla maniera degli zingari e che ne presentano i sopraricordati tratti somatici. Si tratta di individui asociali, differentissimi dal punto di vista psichico dalle popolazioni europee e soprattutto da quella italiana di cui sono note le qualità di laboriosità e attaccamento alla terra. Le figure 12-13 mostrano una tipica famiglia di zingari: l'eterogeneità dei figli è chiaro indizio delle avvenute mescolanze. Data l'assoluta mancanza di senso morale di questi eterni randagi si comprende come essi possano facilmente unirsi con gli strati inferiori delle popolazioni che incontrano peggiorandone sotto ogni punto di vista le qualità psichiche e fisiche. In Germania è stata compiuta una inchiesta ed è in progetto il concentramento di tutti gli zingari in una località particolare. Sarebbe sommamente auspicabile che una inchiesta del genere fosse compiuta anche in Italia e che fossero presi i relativi provvedimenti.

Più facilmente rilevabili sono i caratteri dei mulatti: il colore molto scuro della pelle, la forma crespa dei capelli, il naso largo, le labbra tumide sono dei sicuri indizi per gli incroci di bianchi e di negri.



Fig. 9 - Orientale



Fig. 10 - Orientale levantino alpino



Fig. 11 - Orientale

Figure 8. 1940 article by anthropology professor Guido Landra (1913-1980) entitled "Il problema dei meticci" (eng: the problem of mixed-race). Highlighted in yellow: "Gypsies almost always belong to the Oriental race and their half-breeds are almost always antisocial individuals, all the more dangerous because they are difficult to distinguish from Europeans". Source: Porrajmos website.

The regional laws and the consolidation of the 'camp system'

The regional laws and the consolidation of the ‘camp system’

Meanwhile, in conjunction with the protests of 1968, popular protests and squatting increased, this led the Parliament in 1971 to approve Law No. 865 of 22 October on public housing, which allocated funds for the construction of new housing. Thus, in many municipalities, steps were taken to overcome the slums. A notable case was that of Rome, where both Mayor Argan (1976–1979) and Mayor Petroselli (1979–1981) managed to demolish almost all the shacks, providing housing also for many Romani families without discrimination (Daolio ed. 1974; Karshan 2017).

Towards the end of the 1970s and with the death of Tito in 1980, due to the progressive worsening of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Yugoslavian Roma arrived in Italy and, in the absence of real policies and reception facilities, occupied the areas left vacant by the Italian ‘shanty dwellers’. Thus, the shacks and slums that had housed the poorest segments of Italian society for decades, became what, in the collective imagination and in journalistic iconography, is still associated with ‘Slavic gypsies’. As a result, the ‘nomadism’ attributed to Roma and Sinti was increasingly associated with a type of ‘inferior’ living (Gariglio et al. 2010).

In this context of significant social and urban transformation, the regions began to enact laws providing for the establishment of

transit and stopping areas exclusively for the Roma and Sinti communities:

- **Veneto-1984**, Law No. 41 of 16 August, “Interventi a tutela della cultura rom” (eng: Measures to protect Roma culture)
- **Lazio-1985**, Law No. 82 of 21 May “Norme in favore dei rom” (eng: Regulations in favour of Roma)
- **Autonomous Province of Trento - 1985**
- **Sardinia-1988**
- **Friuli-Venezia Giulia-1988**
- **Emilia-Romagna-1988**
- **Tuscany-1989**
- **Lombardy-1989**
- **Liguria-1992**
- **Piedmont-1993**
- **Marche-1994**

The regional governments completed the process of redefining a social and housing problem in ethnocultural terms. In all regulations, the Roma community was defined as ‘nomadic’ or ‘semi-nomadic’, and their marginalised conditions were interpreted as a symbol of an irreducible cultural difference. As a result, the ‘nomad camp’ became the preferred place for the

reception of all people who were labelled ‘gypsies’, even if they had always lived in conventional dwellings in their countries of origin (Bontempelli 2022).

The municipal administration of Rome therefore began to look for land to use as ‘nomad camps’, which led to noisy demonstrations by the working classes of the city. For the first time, the demonstrations were exploited and often led by representatives of the neo-fascist right, who sought to gain support by playing on the xenophobic sentiments of part of the population. The protests spread throughout the peninsula and, from a phenomenon relegated to the margins of public life, the ‘Roma question’ became the subject of intense political debate and controversy, increasingly intertwined with the general issue of immigration (Ibid.).

Secular associations therefore showed a renewed commitment to the Roma community (see old organisations such as ARCI or new ones such as NAGA); in the Catholic world, the monopoly of Opera Nomadi was called into question and new entities such as Caritas and the Community of Sant’Egidio emerged. Towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, many priests and nuns decided to live in caravans together with the Roma community: among the names, the most relevant for the purposes of this thesis is that of Carlo Stasolla, at the time a seminarian and now president of the Associazione 21

Luglio (Piasere 2018).

As for politics, the intensification of public debate prompted all parties to take active measures: the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which had ignored the issue for years, sided with the associations, while the centre-right saw the anti-Gypsy protests as an opportunity to gain a foothold in working-class circles, traditionally oriented towards the left (Bontempelli 2022).

Figure 9. (Next page) Italian newspaper articles between 1985 and 1999. The Roma people are always referred to as ‘nomadi’ (eng.: nomads) or ‘zingari’ (eng.: gypsies). The articles denounce the emergence of the nomad problem and describe hate crimes: throwing molotov at Roma people, shooting Roma people, Italians and NIMBY (not in my backyard) phenomenon. *Elaboration by the author based on articles from La Stampa and L’Unità newspapers.*

02.5

The country of camps

02 5

The regional laws described above were only implemented in the early 1990s, when municipalities began to set up parking areas with funds allocated by the regions. The locations of the new parking areas and the methods of management were handled by the individual municipalities, but there were many recurring elements that made it a substantially uniform policy throughout the country. The parking areas were located on the outskirts of urban areas, in sparsely populated areas and close to motorways, railways or major traffic arteries. In many cases, the Roma were already living in those areas: they had been driven there by continuous evictions, carried out to remove them from residential neighbourhoods (Vitale 2008).

Between 1991 and 1995, while nomad camps were being set up in many Italian cities, the territories of Yugoslavia were overwhelmed by a bloody armed conflict. The flow of refugees brought to Italy populations that were heterogeneous in terms of language, culture and sense of belonging, but which were all labelled as ‘nomad’. Although Law No. 390 of 24 September 1992 guaranteed humanitarian residence permits to Balkan refugees, the Roma were generally excluded: many of them did not have documents and were unable to prove that they had entered Italy after the watershed date of 1 June 1991(Bontempelli 2022).

The authorities struggled to understand what was happening: faced with the increase

in numbers in the camps, their main concern was to stem the negative reactions of public opinion. Pressured by increasingly alarmist press campaigns, mayors rushed to reassure their citizens and guarantee that the (alleged) ‘invasion of nomads’ would be kept under control (Ibid.).

Meanwhile, in the most degraded areas of the urban suburbs, large new spontaneous settlements sprang up, sometimes built a short distance from authorised stopping areas, which in the following years would become the only refuge for all Roma excluded from any other form of reception (Kosovar Roma, Romanian Roma and even non-Roma foreigners).

In these new and tumultuous processes of urban displacement of the Roma, completely new forms of settlement emerged compared to the past. Until the end of the 1980s, the stopping areas had been roughly similar to ‘ethnic campsites’, with pitches for parking caravans, shelters from the sun and brick toilets located in each housing unit. The new shanty towns, on the other hand, were set up by the Roma themselves, who had lived in normal flats in their countries of origin and who tended to reproduce the urban layout of Roma neighbourhoods in Yugoslavia in their new living environment. Using scrap materials, the inhabitants usually built one- or two-storey wooden houses with large external verandas, often raised above the ground for protection. These houses were then arranged in such a way as to form a real



Figure 10. Rome informal camp. *Source: Il Messaggero (2019).*



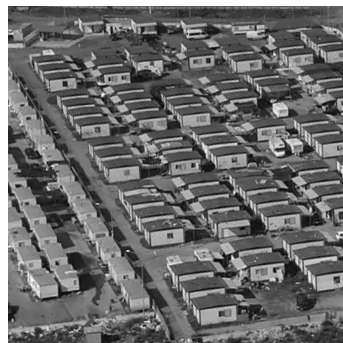
Figure 11. Via Triboniano formal camp in Milan. Active since 1990s, became formal in 2007 and was closed in 2011. *Source: Il Redattore sociale (2010)*

Table 6. (Next page) Typologies of Roma camps in Italy: *Source: elaboration by the author based on Associazione 21 Luglio cataloguing.*

micro-areas



shantytowns



macro-areas



temporary
reception centers



transit areas



settlements on
private land

urban fabric, with streets, alleys, crossroads and small squares (Piasere 2006).

If we look at the situation at the time of writing, the term 'Roma camp' encompasses several types of settlements, both formal and informal, but all sharing the ethnic origin of their inhabitants and the logic of segregation with which they were created.

In the survey proposed by Associazione 21 Luglio, formal camps can be divided into:

- **Baraccopoli (Shanty towns):** fenced-off areas located on the outskirts of towns, consisting of containers, caravans and shacks. Sometimes regulated by municipal regulations, monitored by CCTV and patrolled by law enforcement agencies. Frequently inhabited by Roma citizens, many of whom are Italian.
- **Microaree (Micro-areas):** found mainly in central and northern Italy, these are public spaces equipped for Italian Sinti families. They are regulated by local authorities and are home to stable, close-knit communities.
- **Macroaree (Macro-areas):** widespread in northern Italy, they mainly accommodate Sinti families. They may include brick-and-mortar dwellings or mobile homes, access to services, regular residence registration and the presence of facilities linked to travelling shows.

- **Edilizia residenziale pubblica monoetnica (mono-ethnic public housing):** buildings entirely dedicated to Roma families. They are isolated, lacking in services and often inadequate in terms of housing.
- **Centri di raccolta Rom (Roma collection centres):** closed structures created in emergency situations, such as former schools or exhibition halls. They offer common areas, surveillance and meals, but end up becoming permanent accommodation, in violation of their supposed temporary nature.

Alongside formal settlements, there are also more fragile and less visible realities, namely so-called informal settlements: tents and self-built shacks, hidden in urban suburbs to escape controls. They constitute a 'strategy of invisibility' to avoid eviction. In some cases, they are also the result of evictions from formal settlements that are not followed by adequate support in finding an alternative housing solution.

Informal settlements can be divided into:

- **Microinsediamenti (micro-settlements):** small areas occupied by one or more families, often in isolated areas that are difficult to detect (in many cases, they are the direct consequence

of forced evictions or failed municipal projects).

- **Aree di transito (transit areas):** makeshift spaces where Roma families temporarily stay in campers or caravans, often in car parks or marginal areas, waiting for solutions that never arrive.

Finally, there are two other situations that are currently difficult to monitor:

- **Settlements on private agricultural land.**
- **Occupations of abandoned buildings.**

Even if these spaces are not always exemplified by a shack, the underlying idea is always the same, that of a permanent exception (Associazione 21 Luglio, n.d.-c).

One of the characteristics they have in common is that of the location of the 'camp': spaces connected to road infrastructure, uncertain areas of conurbation, borderlines between countryside and suburbs, semi-hidden enclaves. All the parameters that came into play when deciding on the "where" of the 'camp' serve indirectly to oppose and discourage the presence of the Roma community on Italian soil, like some sort of 'reversed urban planning' (Brunello 1996).

02.6

**From the great
evictions
season to
present days**

02 6

Towards the end of the 1990s, due to a growing process of criminalisation of the Roma, large-scale eviction operations were carried out. In Milan, for example, Mayor Albertini, elected in 1997, pursued a public ‘urban security’ campaign based on the perception of danger. In fact, although the Roma camps were not in themselves a threat, their dismantling allowed the council to win the sympathy of voters, in the words of Albertini: ‘the evictions (...) make the people of Milan feel that the institutions exist’ (Bontempelli 2022).

Between October 1999 and July 2002, in addition to establishing a quota for the number of Roma in the city, there were six evictions, carried out with bulldozers that destroyed the shacks without providing alternative accommodation. During the same period, in Rome, Mayor Rutelli established a quota system and promoted a new ‘Nomad Plan’ that aimed to further concentrate the Roma community in even more peripheral areas, establishing 35 equipped areas and dismantling all those considered ‘illegal’ (Vitale 2008).

Furthermore, in this progressive climate of marginalisation, the Roma community was not included in the list of linguistic minorities (Law 482/1999) (Senato della Repubblica, n.d.).

Between 1998 and 1999, there was a new wave of migration due to yet another conflict in the territories of the former

Yugoslavia, this time involving Kosovar Roma. Subsequently, Roma from Romania also began to arrive, but they called themselves Tismănari and refused to assimilate and therefore cohabit with the existing ‘Gypsy’ communities. Shortly afterwards, however, in order to escape periodic raids, they were forced to take refuge in ‘tolerated’ settlements in cities where Bosnian, Kosovar and Macedonian Roma communities already lived (Bontempelli 2009).

Another event that marked a new season of evictions was when, on 21 May 2008, the new Berlusconi government issued a Prime Ministerial Decree (also called Maroni⁵ Plan) declaring a ‘state of emergency in relation to the settlements of nomadic communities in Campania, Lombardy and Lazio’. The measure stated that the presence of ‘nomads’ in Rome, Milan and Naples had ‘led to an increase in social alarm’, risked putting ‘public order and safety in serious danger’ and represented a threat that could not be ‘addressed with the tools provided for by ordinary legislation’. Security rhetoric thus reached its peak: in effect, the Roma were equated with a veritable natural disaster, for which a declaration of a ‘state of emergency’ was necessary. In concrete terms, in the regions concerned, the decree conferred broad powers on the prefects of the regional capitals, who became ‘special commissioners’: in order to build new camps or ‘villages’, to identify and register Roma in ‘illegal’ settlements, and to proceed with

the expulsion of irregular foreign Roma, the prefects could act in derogation from the laws in force (Lunaria Association 2011).

The first measure implemented under the new regulations was a large-scale census of the inhabitants of formal and informal camps: the police, in collaboration with the Red Cross, were tasked with photographing and fingerprinting all camp inhabitants, including minors. This news sparked fierce controversy, and the Prefect of Rome, Carlo Mosca, even refused to take the children’s fingerprints (ERRC 2008).

In the months and years that followed, the nomad emergency resulted in a series of forced evictions from ‘illegal’ camps, especially in Milan and Rome. Between 2008 and 2010, there were 200 such interventions in the Lombard capital and 158 in Rome: the aim seemed to be to persecute entire communities, evicting them wherever they went, in what many described as a ‘manhunt’ (Lunaria Association 2011).

The consequences were devastating in human and social terms: to escape continuous evictions, Roma groups were forced to hide in increasingly isolated and dangerous places; children interrupted their schooling and adults found themselves increasingly marginalised and excluded from the world of work (Bontempelli 2022).

Furthermore, throughout the second half of the 2000s, the ‘Roma question’ was at the centre of Italian public debate: it continuously

Il Commissario delegato
per l'emergenza insediamenti comunitari nomadi nella regione Campania
O.P.C.M. 3678 del 30 maggio 2008
CENSIMENTO

Insediamento: CAMPO CONTINUALE DEL LATTE Data: 25/06/2008
Famiglia: C.Fam.:
Cognome: BEGOVIR SERBIA
Nome: BEGOVIR SERBIA Sesso: M
Data nasc.: 25/06/1978 Età: Grado Paren.: MARITO
Religione: ORTODOSSO Etnia: ROM DI SERBIA
Istruzione: ELEMENTARE Attiv. Lavor.: DISOCCUPATO
Documento: PASSAPORTO Num. Doc.:
Rilasciato: SERBIA Fem. Sogg.: NO
Data Risc.: Scadenza: Rinnovo:
NOTE: CAPOFAMIGLIA

Napoli 25/06/2008

copia per l'interessato

Figure 12. Document of the census of a Romani man following the issuing of the ‘nomad decree’ in 2008. Source: Porrajmos website

Figure 13. (Next page) Italian newspaper articles between 2007–2009 during the outbreak of the ‘nomad emergency’. The Roma people are still referred to as ‘nomadi’ (eng.: nomads). Elaboration by the author based on articles from La Stampa and L’Unità newspapers.

⁵ Roberto Maroni (1955–2022) was an Italian politician that between 2008 and 2011, with the Berlusconi IV government, was Minister of Interior Affairs (Wikipedia 2026d).

Nomadi, scontro Bruxelles-Prodi

L'Ue: le regole ci sono, l'Italia le applichi. Il Viminale: direttiva già attuata. Rutelli: niente potestà a chi abbandona minori

■ di Anna Tarquini / Roma

SULLA QUESTIONE ROM è scontro tra Roma e Bruxelles. Le parole di Prodi non sono piaciute al commissario per gli affari sociali Vladimir Spidla. Quello dei rom - ha spiegato la Ue - non è, come ha detto ieri il premier italiano, un problema politico complesso

che l'Europa non ha ancora risolto. «Le regole ci sono. Ed è caso mai l'Italia a non averle ancora applicate e a rischiare una procedura di infrazione se non si adeguerà entro il 27 agosto». Quella a cui fa riferimento il commissario Spidla è la direttiva del 2000 che proibisce la discriminazione sulla base dell'origine etnica o razziale. L'Italia - sostiene Bruxelles - sarebbe carente su tre punti: la mancanza di condivisione dell'onere della prova in base al quale non solo la persona discriminata deve dimostrare di aver subito una discriminazione, ma anche la persona che ha discriminato è tenuta a provare di non averlo fatto. Il secondo punto è la limitata protezione contro le ritorsioni e una non corretta definizione di maltrattamento per motivi razziali. Inoltre l'Italia dovrebbe fare di più per integrare minoranze etniche come i rom nel mercato del lavoro. «Contro l'Italia - specifica l'Europa - è già da tempo aperta una procedura di infrazione proprio per non aver ancora recepito la direttiva europea contro le discriminazioni basate sulla razza e sull'etnia». Il Viminale però non la pensa così.

per togliere la patria potestà a chi abbandona o sfrutta minori. «Ho posto da tempo il tema della condizione dei rom in Italia nel dibattito pubblico, senza ricevere risposte - ha detto il vice-premier - i diritti umani debbono valere per tutti, anche per i moltissimi bambini lasciati in abbandono, condotti in schiavitù, costretti all'accattonaggio o ai furti». E mentre lo scontro politico va avanti l'Opera nomadi lancia nuovi allarmi. «Quella dei rom in Italia - dice Massimo Converso - è ormai una vera e propria emergenza. Più volte è stato chiesto l'intervento del ministero dell'Interno e della Protezione Civile. È più di un anno che lo sollecitiamo, perché in questi ultimi cinque anni sono arrivate 70 mila persone fuori controllo». Il riferimento è in particolare ai rom che vengono dalla Romania, «gente abituata a vivere in casa, non certo a fare il nomade».

ROMA

22 campi e 4 nuovi villaggi E un «patto» con la Romania

■ di Maristella Iervasi

Nel novembre del 1995 a Roma

tano 4.500 persone; 13 invece i piccoli insediamenti. E altri 4 villaggi della solidarietà dovrebbero

FIRENZE

Alloggi al posto di baracche Resta il nodo roulotte

■ di Tommaso Galgani

A circa quota 800 (almeno me-

ne in strutture in legno e case in laminato ignifugo. Il campo dell'Olmatale, invece, è l'unico dove i rom della non nomadizzazione

BOLOGNA

«Qui? L'edilizia popolare Si spende anche di meno»

■ di Chiara Affronte

Non accetta la vicesindaco delle due Tori Adriana Scaramuzzino

muzzino che «queste esperienze nuove, originali e coraggiose», vengano «poco finanziate, preferendo sempre parlare di campi

Francia

Il modello Sarkozy: chi non rispetta la legge è cacciato definitivamente

Ha adottato un modello che si muove tra l'accoglienza e la tolleranza zero. Da una parte la legge Besson che prevede che ogni comune con più di 5 mila abitanti sia dotato di un'area di accoglienza; dall'altra il provvedimento dell'allora ministro dell'Interno Sarkozy che nel 2003 ha previsto sanzioni dure contro le infrazioni allo stazionamento: chi non rispetta le regole è cacciato in maniera definitiva.

Germania

Hanno case in palazzine popolari e il sussidio per il vitto

I 130 mila circa tra Rom e Camminanti sono considerati per legge «minoranza nazionale». Hanno diritti e doveri. A partire dagli anni Sessanta, la Germania ha accolto gran parte di rom in fuga con un progetto di welfare. Sono state assegnate loro case in palazzine popolari, hanno avuto il sussidio per il vitto, è stata data loro la possibilità di lavorare con l'obbligo di rispettare la legge, pena l'espulsione.

Spagna

Una comunità di 800 mila persone ma nessun campo nomadi

La comunità nomade conta 800 mila persone. Dalla fine degli anni Ottanta il governo ha messo a punto un Programma di sviluppo per la popolazione rom con un budget annuale di 3,3 milioni di euro. Nella penisola iberica ogni regione ha un Ufficio centrale che coordina gli interventi per gli zingari. Non esistono quasi più campi nomadi, quasi tutti vivono in affitto nei condomini popolari o in case di proprietà.



Un campo nomadi alla periferia di Roma. Foto Ansa

2 l'Unità

lunedì 30 giugno 2008

IN ITALIA

L'ULTIMO SCANDALO

Nonostante gli attacchi dell'opposizione della Ue e della Chiesa il ministro insiste: critiche ipocrite e infondate

L'incontro al ministero per catechizzare i «ribelli» Nel mirino il prefetto della capitale, Mosca che si era dissociato dal piano

Impronte ai rom, Maroni sfida e minaccia

«Non arretrato di un millimetro». E intima ai prefetti di Roma, Milano e Napoli: le schedature vanno fatte

■ di Cinzia Zambrano / Roma

NESSUNA RETROMARCIA Nonostante gli attacchi - nazionali ed europei - sulle impronte digitali, Maroni tira dritto per la sua strada. Dopo le polemiche dei giorni scorsi sulla schedatura della popolazione nomade - e in particolare sull'identificazione delle impronte

digitali dei minorenni - il ministro degli Interni sfera l'offensiva: «Sono critiche ipocrite - tuona - non recederò di un millimetro». Gli affondati lanciati dall'opposizione, dalla Chiesa e da Bruxelles sull'idea di

ORDINANZA

Si parla di «rilievi segnaletici»

li sulla linea da seguire. Nel mirino il prefetto della Capitale, Carlo Mosca, che nei giorni scorsi si era dissociato dall'indicazione del ministro, dicendo chiaramente che, nel corso del censimento, non avrebbe fatto prendere le impronte digitali dei minorenni: «Così come non si prendono per i minorenni italiani per il passaporto», aveva spiegato. Diverso il comportamento del prefetto di Napoli, Alessandro Pansa, che ha già cominciato la schedatura. Prendendo le impronte anche ai minorenni (dai 14 anni in su).

A presiedere la riunione di ieri Giuseppe Procaccini, il capo di

Gabinetto del ministro, che ha ricordato ai prefetti - in particolare a Mosca - che l'ordinanza di nomina affida loro il compito di identificare i nomadi, anche i minori, «attraverso rilevati segnaletici», come le impronte digitali appunto. Nella riunione, di circa due ore, Mosca ha avuto modo di spiegare

il suo punto di vista. Al termine, il Viminale ha fatto sapere che si è trattato della «prima di una serie di verifiche periodiche, che ha consentito di mettere a punto una completa e condivisa linea tecnica nell'applicazione delle ordinanze». Il censimento nei campi nomadi, fa sapere, «sta procedendo regolarmente, secondo le indicazioni contenute nelle ordinanze, con l'obiettivo di riconoscere l'identità personale, anche a coloro che non sono in grado di dimostrarla, attraverso il ricorso alle tipologie di rilievo segnaletico necessarie, comprese le impronte digitali».

La polemica non si placa. L'euro-parlamentare Gianni Pittella ha bollato come «segno di barbarie», il fatto che «a 70 anni dalle leggi razziali il governo Berlusconi decida che la

questione Rom si risolve prendendo le impronte digitali ai bambini». «Questa procedura - attacca Pittella - ha soltanto un nome: si chiama schedatura in base all'etnia, è un provvedimento discriminatorio barbaro e inutile, che non risolverà uno solo dei problemi». E ammonisce: «Portare in questione al più presto all'attenzione del Parlamento europeo per fermare un provvedimento inaccettabile che ci mette fuori dall'Europa, fuori dalla civiltà».

Sostegno a Maroni arriva invece dal suo compagno di partito, nonché ministro della Semplificazione, Roberto Calderoli. «Se rilevare le impronte per qualcuno può rappresentare una discriminazione - dice - lo lancio una proposta: tutti i cittadini italiani si facciano rilevare le impronte».

LA CASSAZIONE

«Legittimo discriminare i nomadi se sono ladri»

EMERGENZA ROM

LA POLITICA

un problema complesso, interverremo»

Prodi promette soluzioni per i Rom. Ma la destra fa propaganda sui piccoli morti: «Avete fallito»

■ / Roma

UN PROBLEMA COMPLICATO «Quello dei Rom è un problema politico di una complicazione terribile. Dobbiamo studiare tutti gli aspetti politici e tecnici per trovare una soluzione e non dimenticare le persecuzioni che hanno subito nella storia a causa della

loro diversità». Non sfugge Romano Prodi alla domanda sulla tragedia di Livorno e quella ancora più scomoda su quale integrazione è possibile per la comunità Rom. Incalzato, mentre partecipa a un incontro con l'associazione onlus «Opera per la gioventù Giorgio La Pira» a Castiglione della Pescaia, ammette: «L'Italia è meno preparata di altri paesi perché è un fenomeno più recente. In ogni caso si tratta di un problema che va ben oltre i confini europei e riguarda buona parte del mondo». È come un macigno. Ore dieci del mattino, bar Vanni, centro di Roma. Una donna Rom chiede

sponsabilità da parte nostra, non ci può essere indifferenza ma uno scatto di indignazione. Occorre reagire e dire anche che non c'è integrazione senza legalità». «Bisognava pensarci prima» - accusa ora la destra. «Prodi dice oggi i rom sono un problema politico - spiega Roberto Maroni, ca-

pogruppo Lega Nord - . È vero, ma perché non ci ha pensato prima? Invece di contribuire alla frettolosa entrata della Romania in Europa il presidente del Consiglio avrebbe fatto bene a prendere in considerazione la proposta avanzata dalla Lega di una moratoria, per cercarla prima una soluzione adeguata al

problema». Accusano tutti. Forza Italia, Rifondazione e il ministro Ferrero. «Quella di Livorno è una tragedia annunciata - dice Giro, Fi - La vergogna delle baracopoli possibile perché qualcuno ha chiuso gli occhi». «Il governo usa solo parole retoriche, ma ha fallito sia sul versante della sicu-

rezza che su quello della solidarietà» - dice Maurizio Gasparri dell'Esecutivo di An. Il ministro della Solidarietà Sociale è il più duro: «Occuparsi di loro non porta voti. Gli Enti locali voltano la testa, porta voti - osserva il ministro in un'intervista a Repubblica Molte amministrazioni locali - dice - anche davanti al-

la condizioni disumane dei campi, voltano la testa dall'altra parte. Per poi piangere se quattro bambini muoiono bruciati. Mentre la destra alimenta il fuoco dell'intolleranza e della paura...». L'accusa agli enti locali scatenata la reazione di Massimo Cacciari, sindaco di Venezia: «Lo sa, il ministro, che ci hanno tagliato i fondi? Crede che sia semplice sistemare i campi nomadi e aiutare i più indigenti?». Don Benzi non gioca tanto con le parole: «Gli zingari debbono essere riconosciuti come una minoranza etnica da tutelare alla stregua delle altre. Ai problemi che riguardano la loro presenza nelle nostre città non c'è nessuna soluzione possibile che sia diversa da questa». «Non possiamo negare a nessun uomo la dignità di persona, loro reclamano questo riconoscimento ma nessuno li ascolta».

a.t.

Cacciari replica al ministro: «Crede che sia semplice intervenire dopo il taglio dei fondi?»

L'EMERGENZA SICUREZZA

Un centro di una confederazione nazionale già prevista dal verno ad ottobre, per rimuovere i pregiudizi e dare loro diritti. Uno dei primi atti, a settembre sarà la presentazione di un progetto di legge voluto da Rut

Nomadi a Milano, fantasmi con il sogno di una casa

■ di Oreste Pivetta / Milano / Segue dalla prima



(nese) ma soprattutto una rete di educatori, d'itali e volontari che «superano i pregiudizi» e ne facilitano la comprensione delle «nostre regole».

Quanti siano non si sa: cinquemila o diecimila. Ma non chiamateli nomadi: anche loro desiderano vivere tra quattro solide mura

Una continua emergenza sempre trascurata. Così sono nate le favelas sparse nella periferia a ridosso dei quartieri più poveri e difficili

occupied the front pages of newspapers, divided political forces, inspired repeated ‘security emergencies’ and aroused waves of emotion marked mostly by rejection and contempt. Such overexposure in the media could not fail to have consequences on the material lives of the many Roma and Sinti residing in our country in various capacities. One of the major obstacles to understanding these phenomena was the persistent lack of reliable statistical data (Ibid.).

Forced eviction of Romani people in Italy is still an ongoing and systematic issue. Between January 2017 and March 2021, the European Roma Rights Centre documented around 187 evictions throughout Italy that affected around 3,156 people that, as a consequence, were left homeless or put into unstable housing solutions (such as CAT, centres for temporary reception, or SAT, temporary public housing). The evictions commence with little to no notice, and people are often either left on the streets, or offered only temporary shelters far removed from their communities and livelihoods. The forced eviction of entire Romani communities and families without viable alternatives and agreed-upon relocation plans risks destroying families, disrupting children’s education, and erasing a site of collective memory. They echo a long and painful history of marginalisation, scapegoating, and exclusion of Romani people across Europe (ERRC 2025).

As of recent times, mother and child

shelters have been frequently proposed as temporary relocation solutions. Public authorities have instrumentally used the exclusive targeting of mothers and children to avoid offering a housing solution to all evicted residents, while at the same time seeking political legitimacy. Consequently to this, families are often concerned about separation and therefore not all accept this housing solution. This enables authorities to show that they formally respect human rights law (by offering alternative relocation) while in fact putting the burden on the Roma, who are left to figure out alternative housing arrangements on their own (Maestri and Mantovan 2025).

The state provides guidelines but does not impose any specific course of action. For this reason, each municipality has addressed the problem as it saw fit, often without any dialogue with the Roma community, to whom these projects are supposedly directed. But even when there is dialogue, for the municipalities, eviction from the camp is seen as the only solution, leading to the dismantling of a consolidated and tight community.

Table 7. Italian state and regional ‘laws’ since the word ‘nomad’ was included in an official document until the time of writing. *Elaboration by the author.*

- Veneto R.L. n° 41/1984
- Lazio R.L. n° 82/1985
- Sardinia R.L. n° 75/1985
- Autonomous Province of Trento R.L. n° 15/1986
- Tuscany R.L. n° 25/1987
- Abruzzo R.L. n° 51/1988
- Friuli Venezia Giulia R.L. n° 11/1988
- Emilia Romagna R.L. n° 47/1988
- Lombardy R.L. n° 77/1989

R.L. = Regional Law

1970
Ministerial Circular n°17
11 October 1973
Topic: the issue of nomads
("nomad problem")

1980

1990

- Apulia R.L. n° 54/1990
- Umbria R.L. n° 32/1992
- Piedmont R.L. n° 26/1993
- Marche R.L. n° 14/1994
- Liguria R.L. n° 46/1995

Law N° 390
24 September 1992
Topic: acknowledging ethnic minorities, the Romani communities were not included

2000
Prime Ministerial Decree
21 May 2008
Topic: declaring the ‘nomad emergency’.

2010
National Strategy for Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2012-2020

2020
National Strategy for Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-2030

2011
Ruling No. 6050/2011 by the State’s Council, annulled the 2008 decree, calling the state of emergency illegitimate, irrational and discriminatory.

2015
Emilia Romagna REPEAL of R.L. n° 47/1988

02.7

Embarking on an alternative path

02 7

Between the late 1990s and early 2000s, the EU had developed a complex regulatory framework aimed at guaranteeing human rights and combating discrimination. Roma organisations at European level, as well as NGOs most active in the protection of human rights, had begun to use these rules as a political weapon: discriminatory actions by governments were increasingly challenged in the courts or referred to the European Commission for violation of Community directives (Bontempelli 2022).

In addition, between 2000 and 2003, the European Commission funded an international research programme on the education of Roma and Sinti children. In Italy, the research group was coordinated by Leonardo Piasere⁶, who decided to map all camps, whether regular or not, inhabited by foreign Roma. The task was entrusted to researcher Lorenzo Monasta, who surveyed a total of 155 camps, most of them informal, inhabited by 18,000 people. This is a very significant proportion of the Roma population in Italy: according to estimates at the time, of approximately 110,000 Roma, 70,000 were foreigners, so according to Monasta's census, a quarter of immigrant Roma were living in poor housing conditions (Monasta 2002).

In October 2000, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), an international organisation for Roma rights, published a detailed dossier on nomad camps in Italy, describing it as 'the country of camps' and accusing it of racial

segregation against the Roma and Sinti populations (ERRC 2000).

In the early 2000s, however, there was widespread agreement among qualified sectors of public opinion on the need to implement housing inclusion policies and thus overcome the Roma camps. Some municipalities simply replaced the old camps with so-called micro-areas, small authorised and equipped settlements usually granted to individual families, but despite this, the micro-areas continued to be based on 'inferior living' (Bontempelli 2022).

In the various inclusion projects, however, municipal administrations had to contend with very aggressive press campaigns,

LEGEND:

- open camps (2026)
- ✕ closed camps
- △ camps in the 'overcoming' process

Table 8. Roma formal camps in Italy as of 2026.
Elaboration by the authore base on data from Associaizone 21 Luglio.



⁶ Leonardo Piasere is Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography at the University of Verona, where he directs the "Francesca Cappelletto" Centre for Ethnographic Research and Applied Anthropology. He has conducted extensive ethnographic and ethnohistorical research on Roma and Sinti communities in Europe. He edits three book series and co-edits the journal "Public Anthropology" (vicino/lontano, n.d.).

which gave voice to a well-established repertoire of hostile stereotypes. Mayors were accused of 'giving away' homes to families of idlers and vagabonds intent on living off the public purse; for right-wing and centre-right parties, inclusion programmes were bound to attract uncontrollable flows of 'gypsies' drawn by the mirage of an 'easy home'. Unlikely 'invasions' were feared, and the most aggressive commentators called for expulsions and 'crackdowns'. Alarmed by these reactions and fearful of losing support, the mayors hastened to reassure public opinion, complying with some of the demands made by local newspapers and opposition parties (Ibid.).

Furthermore, the theory of the 'call-back factor' (Bontempelli 2022) spread among administrators almost everywhere, according to which any reception intervention was bound to attract new flows of Roma: this idea was fuelled by alarmist reports in local newspapers, but had no empirical basis (Colucci 2018).

Later, in April 2011, the European Commission was urged by the most influential continental NGOs to take action: in its communication of 5 April 2011, No. 173, the governing body invited Member States to abandon emergency policies and to prepare intervention plans aimed at the 'inclusion' of Roma and Sinti.

In Italy, the real turning point came in November of the same year, when the Council of State declared the 'nomad emergency'

decrees to be unlawful. Subsequently, in February 2012, the government published a substantial document entitled 'National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Travellers', which largely reflected the recommendations made by Brussels. The strategy represented a radical departure from the past. The document referred to the need to 'remove the Roma phenomenon from a purely emergency-based approach (...), subject to media exploitation and emotional responses'. The text also challenged the equation 'Roma = nomads' and called for an end to the policy of holding camps. In terms of concrete actions, the strategy identified four areas of intervention: housing, education, employment and health. The strategy was a simple 'political-programmatic' document: it was not binding, had no legal value, and many of its proposals were expressed in fairly general terms (Nur 2021).

The strategy was poorly implemented and remained largely a dead letter. In large cities, mayors continued to apply the old Nomad Plans from the emergency period out of inertia, or in any case to carry out evictions and removals.

In the end, the strategy was never actually implemented, but it still had an effect. With the emergency period over, the 'Roma question' seems to have disappeared from the spotlight of the mainstream media and has returned to being a relatively marginal issue in political debate. Mayors continue to carry out evictions, demolish shacks

and remove Roma families and groups, but without the media hype that characterised the emergency period: in recent years, in fact, it has often been the case that interventions in 'illegal' camps have not even been publicised (Bontempelli 2022).

According to the 2021 ISTAT-UNAR survey, compiled in a volume edited by sociologist Nadia Nur, there were just under 15,000 Roma and Sinti still living in formal and informal settlements in 2019. The decline in numbers is also confirmed by Associazione 21 Luglio, which, again in 2019, reported approximately 20,000 people (Nur 2021).

However, this decrease cannot be attributed to the effectiveness of institutional housing integration projects, which, according to the same ISTAT survey, numbered 96 between 2012 and 2019. It can therefore be imagined, but not taken for granted, that some groups of Roma and Sinti have managed to leave the settlements and find some form of independent housing on their own.

The absence of effective public housing integration policies and the failure to implement the national strategy have therefore led to a veritable 'chronicisation' of marginalisation: thousands of Roma and Sinti are condemned to live in precarious conditions, with no real possibility of starting integration processes. From this point of view, Italy continues to be the country of camps, as it was defined two decades ago (Bontempelli 2022).

Moreover, the European Committee of Social Rights found that forced evictions remain a 'current practice' which the government has admitted, and that Italy has failed to adopt a legal framework to ensure remedies when they occur. It also said: 'in practice segregation of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities continues to exist' (Amnesty International 2024).



Figure 14. Formal camp of via Candoni (Rome), still open at the time of writing. *Source: Il Messaggero (2023)*

In Conclusion

The history of the Romani community in Italy is defined by a ‘chronic’ marginalization, where temporary emergency measures have evolved into permanent exclusionary structures. From the initial post-war hostility to the formalization of the ‘camp system’ in the 1980s and 1990s, Italian policy has consistently prioritized segregation over integration. Even the landmark “National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Travellers” in 2012, which aimed to dismantle the logic of the camps, remained largely a ‘dead letter’, leaving thousands to navigate a landscape of precarious housing and systematic forced evictions.

To this day, Italy remains the “Country of Camps” (ERRC 2000), characterized by a ‘reversed urban planning’ that seeks to discourage Romani presence by pushing communities to the geographic and social fringes of society. While the population in formal settlements has decreased, this shift often reflects a ‘strategy of invisibility’, adopted by families fleeing State pressure, rather than the success of institutional housing projects. As international bodies continue to condemn the ongoing practice of segregation and the lack of legal remedies for those evicted, it is clear that overcoming this cycle requires more than programmatic documents; it demands a fundamental shift in how the Italian state recognizes and protects the rights of its Romani citizens.

In this complex framework, characterised by exclusionary structures, architects are also confronted with a systemic failure: overcoming the camp requires spatial planning skills, but also the ability to work with these marginalised communities and act within the bureaucracy’s maze that has used space as a weapon of exclusion practicing what can be defined as ‘calculated neglect’. It is in this scenario of “chronic marginality” that the case studies analysed in chapter four fall.

To move beyond a purely historical and descriptive account, the next chapter will present the theoretical framework of this thesis. This framework will introduce critical concepts such as ‘grey spaces’, ‘advanced marginality’, and ‘insurgent citizenship’ to deconstruct the power dynamics and spatial strategies that sustain the camp system and to identify potential avenues for architectural and social agency.

03

MARGINALITY, EXCLUSION, QUEST FOR RECOGNITION AND ARCHITECTS' AGENCY:

Four topics for a theoretical framework

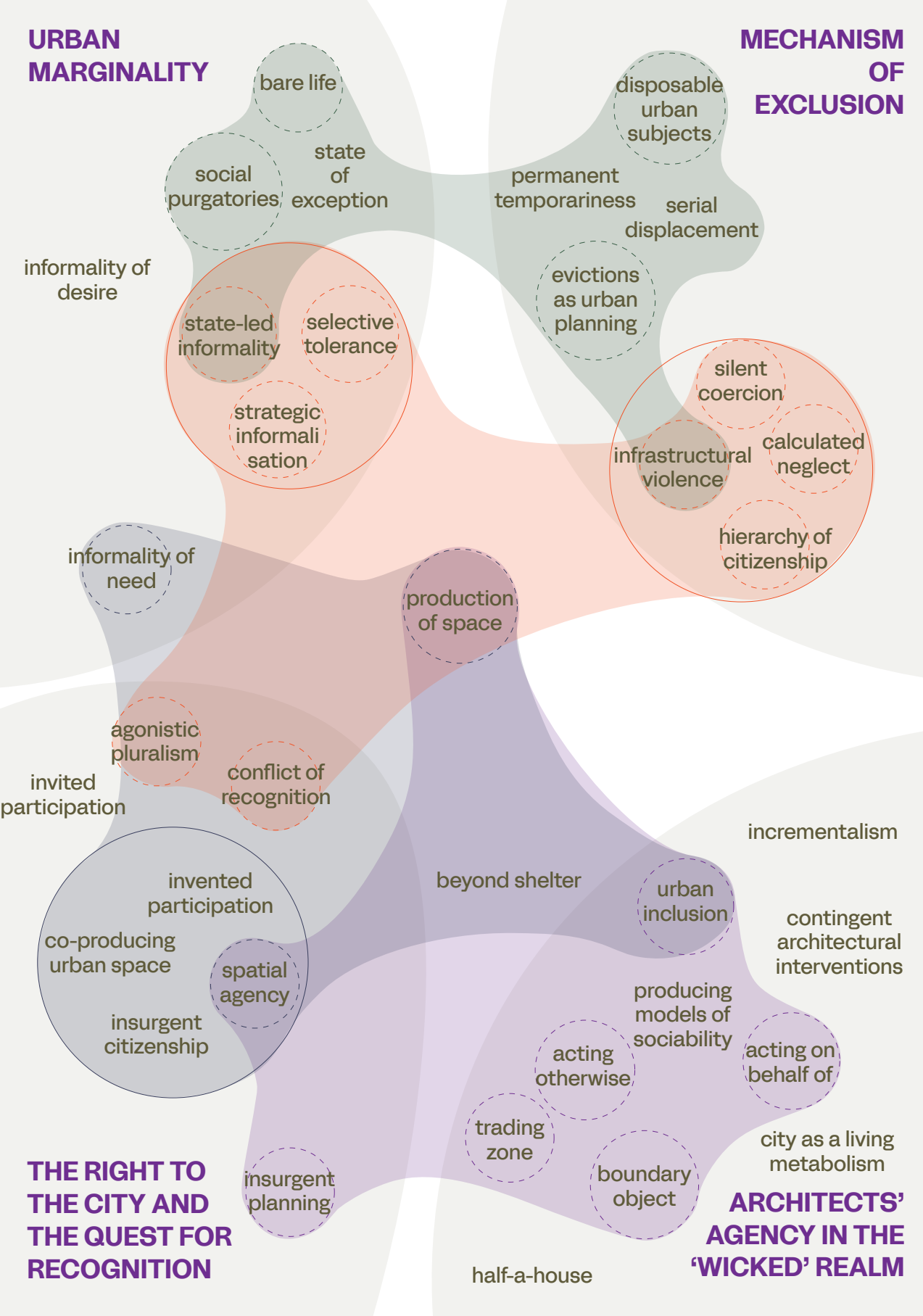
03

- 03.1 The production of urban marginality
- 03.2 The mechanism of exclusion
- 03.3 The right to the city and the quest for recognition
- 03.4 Architects' agency in the wicked realm

URBAN MARGINALITY

MECHANISM OF EXCLUSION

Table 9. Main themes and theories discussed in the theoretical framework chapter and their intersections. *Source: elaboration by the author.*



This chapter establishes the theoretical framework through which the socio-spatial exclusion of the Romani community in Italy will be examined. Moving beyond the historical and legislative narrative of the previous chapter, this section introduces critical urban theories to deconstruct how marginality is not a static geographical condition, but a dynamic and intentional 'output' of the state.

In fact, the production of urban space is not a neutral act of design but a dynamic, often exclusionary process that shapes the lives of those at the margins of society. This chapter establishes the framework necessary to understand the complex interplay between state power, urban informality, and the agency of both inhabitants and architects within marginalized territories.

Central to this exploration is the concept by French sociologist Loic Wacquant of 'advanced marginality', where territorial stigmatization and the withdrawal of the welfare state converge to isolate specific populations in 'urban purgatories'. These spaces often exist in a state of 'permanent temporariness', occupying a grey legal zone between formal recognition and total expulsion. By examining these settlements through the lens of the 'state of exception', theorised by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2003), we can see how the suspension of legal protections reduces individuals to 'bare life', transforming the slum or camp into a deliberate technology of social control.

Furthermore, this chapter challenges the traditional dichotomy between the Global North and South, arguing that in Mediterranean contexts like Italy, informality functions as a deliberate mode of governance rather than a mere lack of law, as can also be seen in the previous chapter. Borrowing the distinction between 'informality-of-need' and 'informality-of-desire' theorized by the urban planning scholar Ryan Devlin (2018), we can better analyse the motivations behind unauthorized construction and the quest for the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1997). Ultimately, this framework positions the architect not as a master builder of finished objects, but as a spatial agent capable of navigating these 'wicked problems' to facilitate social change and community empowerment.

03.1

The production of urban marginality

03.1

Urban marginality is not a static condition of geography or poverty, but a dynamic spatial output of the State. Loïc Wacquant (2007) defines it as ‘advanced marginality’, meaning the process through which territorial stigmatization and the withdrawal of the welfare state converge to ‘lock’ certain populations into a condition of social purgatory. In fact, one of the core features Wacquant (Ibid.) highlights, in regard to advanced marginality, is that it tends to concentrate in bounded and isolated territories, the aforementioned ‘urban purgatories’, where only who has been rejected from society would accept to live.

Wacquant theorization builds up on Ervin Goffman’s earlier theoretical body. In fact, in his book ‘Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identities’, Goffman (1963) identifies three typologies of stigma: the ‘abominations of the body’, the ‘blemishes of individual character’ and ‘tribal stigma’, all of which in their varying ways contribute to the exclusion or withdrawal of those who are burdened from full participation in society. In addition and intersecting to these existing stigma typologies, traditionally associated with poverty and ethnic origin or postcolonial immigrant status, Wacquant (2007, 67) adds what he terms as “blemish of place”. Specifically, he stresses how spatial arrangements really matter, and that the material and symbolic constructions of places are meaningful in terms of how groups of people and individuals are viewed,

the conditions under which they become viewable, and how we/they relate to each other (Meade 2021).

This production of marginality is also a result of what Lefebvre (1997) terms as the ‘production of space’. As a matter of fact, for Lefebvre (Ibid.), space is not just a ‘container’ where life happens but is a social product, and in order to better understand its production he theorizes a ‘spatial triad’ suggesting that space is perceived, conceived and lived all at once.

In the specific case of marginality production, the dominant powers create ‘conceptualized spaces’ (through planning, maps, and regulations) where what is lived is identified with what is conceived and usually ignores how people live and feel the space, therefore ignoring or criminalizing the ‘representational spaces’ of those at the periphery, where the space is lived through images and symbols and that the imagination seeks to change (Lefebvre 1997).

The ‘social purgatory’ just mentioned is the situation in which the Roma community in Italy finds itself (see section 02.5). In order not to lose the support of certain sections of public opinion, the camps were deliberately placed in ‘isolated territories’. In addition to the location, the fact that they were built with emergency materials (such as plastic for containers) and metal fences certainly affected the rest of the population’s view of the Roma, increasing their marginalisation.

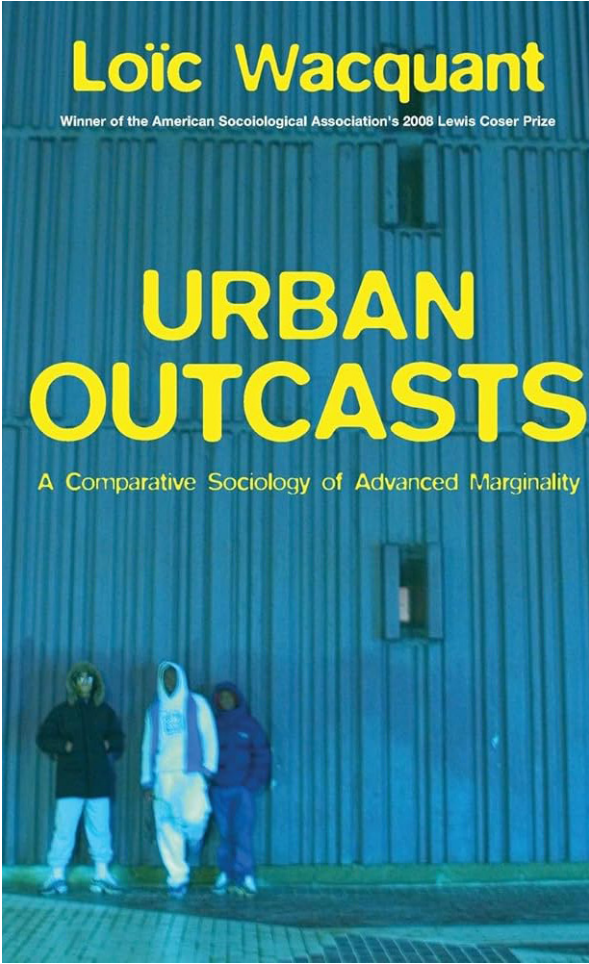


Figure 15. Cover of the book “Urban Outcasts-A comparative sociology of advanced marginality” by Loïc Wacquant. Source: Feltrinelli

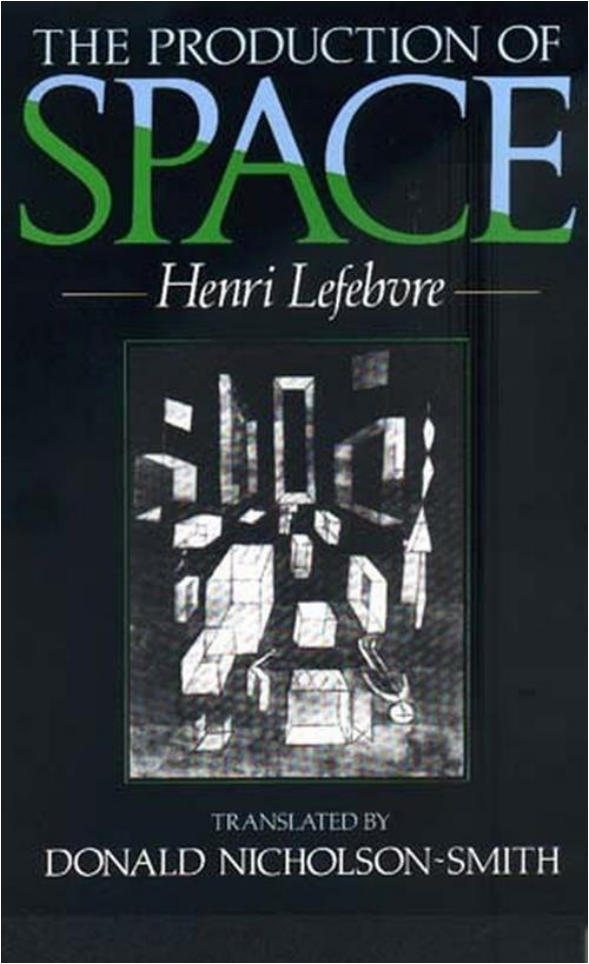


Figure 16. Cover of the book “The Production of Space” by Henri Lefebvre. Source: Il Libraccio

03.1.1

Gray spaces and the state of exception

Marginalized settlements can be theoretically positioned within what Yiftachel defines as 'grey spaces' (2009), in his opinion this concept is directly connected to the "spatiality and politics of urban citizenship at the early stages of the twenty-first century" (Yiftachel 2015, 730). The 'grey spaces' are territories positioned between the 'whiteness' of legality (formal city) and the 'blackness' of total expulsion (destruction), these spaces in fact are neither formally included nor subject to eviction (Ibid.). Furthermore, Yiftachel argues that grey spacing is a deliberate tool used by the state to maintain a condition of 'permanent temporariness' through what he calls "politics of un-recognition" (2009, 92). By keeping these spaces in a state of suspended legality, tolerated when convenient but punishable, when necessary, the state prevents inhabitants from gaining a secure foothold in the urban fabric (Ibid.).

This spatial condition is legitimized through

the Agambenian 'state of exception' (2003). Within this framework, the state, in order to protect itself, suspends normal constitutional protections by declaring a state of emergency or crisis. In this absence of law, individuals are reduced to 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998), a condition where they are managed through administrative and police measures after being stripped of political rights and legal status.

In this sense, the 'camp' or the 'slum' is not a failed urban project, but a successful political technology of control and distancing. Moreover, with design having become a control tool in people's subjectivity and lives, Yiftachel proposes the introduction of "planning citizenship, a useful tool with which to conceptualize the impact of urban regimes on people materialities and identities" (2009, 97).

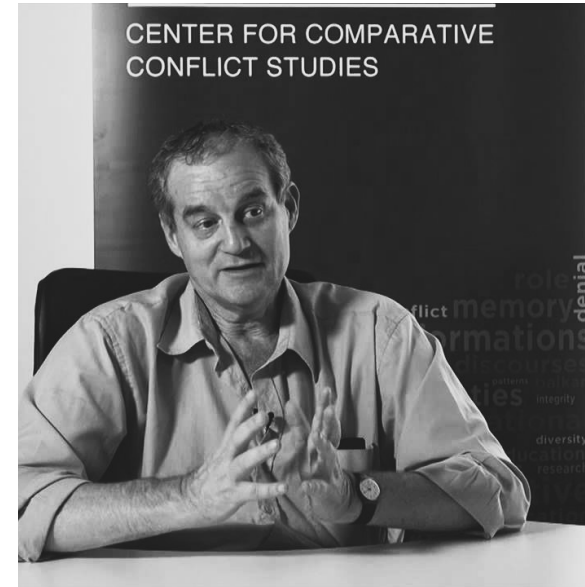


Figure 17. Oren Yiftachel, professor of legal and political geographies, urban studies and urban planning. *Source: Center for comparative conflict studies (2013).*



Figure 18. Giorgio Agamben, Italian philosopher. *Source: Medium (2023).*

03.1.2

Urban informality in the global north vs south

Urban informality is a concept that not only relates to housing. Urban informality also refers to the spontaneous, non-regulated activities and physical spaces that exist alongside or in response to formal urban planning, encompassing areas like slums, street vending, and unauthorized construction.

Informality became more important through the years for its striking contrast with the formal areas of the cities and therefore caught the attention of planners and institutions. Nevertheless, this apparent disorder cannot be thought as separate from the city and the state but instead as something produced by the latter (Roy 2005). It is in fact frequently misunderstood as a 'lack of law', but Ananya Roy (2005) redefines it as a 'mode of governance'. She argues that informality is a deliberate 'planning logic' used by the state to exercise power by selectively deciding which spaces are recognized as legal and which are rendered informal. This allows

the state to intervene with total discretion, bypassing its own regulatory protocols.

The conventional dichotomy between the Global North and Global South has long dominated the conceptualization of urban informality, often relegating it to a structural characteristic of the South while viewing it as an exceptional, marginal phenomenon in the North (Devlin 2018).

While informality in the Global South is often an insurgent 'bottom-up' claim to the city by the urban poor, informality in the Global North is often 'state-led'. The state, in fact, as in the case of the Romani community analysed in the previous chapter, 'informalizes' certain populations by placing them in non-residential zones or temporary containers, effectively manufacturing the 'slum-like' conditions it later uses to justify displacement. This creates a mismatch compared to the rigid regulatory environments of the Global



Figure 19. Ananya Roy, Professor of Urban Planning, Social Welfare, and Geography.
Source: University of Texas.

North. Inhabitants are trapped in a paradox because they utilize 'Global South' tactics of incrementalism and spatial flexibility to survive, yet they are judged and penalized by 'Global North' standards of hygiene, permanence, and fire safety (Chiodelli et al. 2021).

However, contemporary scholarship challenges this binary view, arguing that Mediterranean welfare states, including Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Greece, represent a 'transition zone' where elements of both idealized modes cohabit and recombine

in unique assemblages. In these contexts, urban informality is not an exceptional occurrence but a structural component of urban development (Ibid.).

Distinguishing Needs from Desires

A critical lens through which to analyse this North-South intersection is the distinction between 'informality-of-need' and 'informality-of-desire' theorized by Ryan Thomas Devlin (2018).

Informality-of-need refers to strategies employed by the urban poor to meet basic requirements, such as housing or income generation, often as a 'forced choice' necessitated by deprivation and marginalization. Since they would otherwise have very little opportunity to have their voices heard by planners and policy makers, with actions considered illegal, the locals thus reject the planning that institutionalize socio-cultural norms of the dominant society (Devlin 2018).

Instead, informality-of-desire encompasses for Devlin (Ibid.) informal practices originating from the preferences of middle and upper-class residents for convenience or efficiency, due to frustration over inconveniences caused by state bureaucracy.

While informality born of need possesses the potential to challenge exclusionary regimes

of spatial management, informality born of desire can sometimes serve as a 'back door' for neoliberal ideologies that favour privatization and individualism (Ibid.).

However, in Southern European contexts, these motivations are often indissolubly mixed (Chiodelli 2021). For example, middle-class unauthorized second-home construction in Italy may fulfil recreational desires while simultaneously responding to a lack of institutional mechanisms for affordable holiday housing. Conversely, 'survival squatting' by the most vulnerable may lack counter-hegemonic potential differentiating from political squatting that, rooted in desire, can maintain an avowedly anti-neoliberal stance (Ibid.).



Figure 20. Ryan Thomas Devlin, researcher focused on urban informality in cities of the Global North. Source: Tyler Temple.

Informality as a Mode of Governance

In the Global South, informality is frequently viewed as a resilient form of urbanization that fills gaps left by state incapacity. In the Global North, specifically in Mediterranean contexts, it often functions as a deliberate 'mode of governance'. Rather than being a failure of law, informality is produced through the action, inaction, and structural features of public institutions (Chiodelli 2021).

This 'state-led informality' manifests in several ways:

- **Selective tolerance:** public authorities may oscillate between repression and widespread tolerance driven by politically mediated interests and electoral consensus.
- **Strategic informalization:** vulnerable populations are often managed through 'emergency' measures and a lack of formal planning, effectively using informality as a primary governance tool to maintain social control.
- **Hybrid institutions:** a complex network of actors, that includes civil servants, politicians, and socio-technical mediators, juggles formal and informal performances to negotiate land-use and housing rights (Chiodelli et al. 2021).

Structural Differences and Shared Patterns

While the material and sanitation conditions of informal housing in Mediterranean states are typically better than Global South slums, the scale of settlements lacking secure tenure remains significantly higher than in Northern Europe or America.

Informal settlements built on squatted lands share morphological similarities with Global South slums, resulting from migration pressures and a systemic lack of social housing. Nevertheless, in some Mediterranean contexts like Italy, unauthorized construction is barely distinguishable from formal production, involving broad social groups (not just the marginalized), based on shifting conditions of convenience critically shaped by state authorities (Chiodelli et al. 2021).

Characterized by blurred boundaries between formal and informal practices, these contexts also demonstrate that informality is not exclusive to the disadvantaged but involves broad social groups, including the middle class, driven by specific political and institutional incentives (Ibid.). Public institutions play a decisive role in this phenomenon, frequently oscillating between punitive repression of marginalized groups, such as the Roma or squatters, and selective tolerance or legalization for more politically central subjects through periodic amnesties. Furthermore, as Elena

Tarsi (2020) and Francesco Chiodelli et al. (2021) demonstrate, informality can act as a "governed externality" used by the state to compensate for structural failures in provided housing and welfare systems.

Analysing urban informality through this lens forces a move beyond the simplistic North-South dichotomy. It reveals a landscape where the boundary between the formal and informal is mobile and politically mediated, and where the 'wicked problem' arises not from a simple lack of law, but from the complex entanglement of cultural features, historical processes, and institutional weaknesses (Devlin 2018; Chiodelli 2021).

Ultimately, this framework can be used to analyse the Roma as extensively explained in the previous chapter. Indeed, Roma camps are effectively the result of what Ananya Roy (2005) calls 'urban informality as a mode of governance'. Certainly later on the camps, both institutional and non-institutional, have evolved according to an 'informality-of-need', but it is precisely the institutions, starting from the 1980s, that through 'strategic informality' and the use of emergency measures have given rise to the perception that drags on to this day of the Roma community.

03.2

The mechanism of exclusion

03 2

03.2.1

Infrastructural violence and calculated neglect

Urban exclusion is not merely a passive byproduct of growth or administrative oversight; it is a systematic, active process facilitated by specific material and temporal tools designed to maintain social hierarchies (Martone 2021). While exclusion is often discussed in abstract socio-economic terms, contemporary urban theory increasingly recognizes it as a material reality manifested through the built environment and the strategic management of time.

These mechanisms transform informal settlements into areas where the state exercises power not only through physical displacement but through the constant threat of erasure and the strategic withdrawal of life-sustaining resources (Yiftachel 2009; Agamben 2003). Looking at exclusion as a set of active mechanisms it is therefore possible to understand how the state deliberately produces and manages 'disposable' urban subjects.

Exclusion is materialised through the

concept of 'infrastructural violence' where the provision or strategic denial of essential services such as water, electricity, and sewage serves as a potent tool of political and social marginalisation (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012).

Infrastructure is not a neutral background; it is weaponized to render certain populations 'uncanny' or 'out of place' (Lancione 2017), transforming the very pipes and wires of the city into conduits of exclusion that reinforce the othering of the urban poor. This process constitutes a form of 'calculated neglect', a mode of governance where public authorities manage populations through the slow attrition of their living conditions (Chiodelli et al. 2021).

By allowing infrastructure to remain substandard or entirely absent, the state performs a 'silent' coercion, using the resulting unhealthy and dangerous environment as a pressure mechanism to compel movement without the immediate

political cost of physical force.

In many Mediterranean and Global South contexts, this violence is an active mode of governance rather than a technical failure. The state does not simply 'forget' to provide services; for instance, in Delhi, the denial of water and sanitation in slums was not a failure of engineering but a technique of governance designed to maintain the residents in a state of perpetual precariousness and 'biological' insecurity (Kumar et al. 2021).

This infrastructural gap creates a hierarchy of citizenship where the 'right to the city' is directly proportional to one's connection to the formal grid. Those relegated to the 'outside' of this grid are kept in a state of the aforementioned 'bare life', where the daily struggle for biological survival, as in accessing a tap water or securing a fire-safe connection, exhausts the capacity for political agency and social mobilization (Chiodelli et al. 2021).

03.2.2

The 'chronopolitics' of eviction

Eviction is traditionally analysed as a spatial event: the physical removal of bodies from a specific plot of land. However, modern scholarship identifies it as a temporal act of governance, often referred to as 'chronopolitics' (Rhoads 2018).

As argued by Elizabeth Rhoads (2018), forced evictions serve as a method of 'urban planning' where displacement is utilized to clear space for neoliberal 'world-class' city visions, often framed under the discursive guises of public health, restoring order, or environmental protection. The frequent repetition of evictions ensures that marginalized communities will never be able to develop a future sense of permanence or territorial roots, keeping them in a cycle of 'serial displacement' (Bhan 2016a).

This temporal management is particularly evident in systems where evictions occurring at regular intervals prevent the formation of residency claims or social networks that

could lead to legal formalization (Chiodelli et al. 2021). Furthermore, eviction acts as a 'forced choice' that drives the urban poor deeper into the informal market, where they are exploited by 'rackets' or criminal groups who manage the only remaining housing options in a vacuum left by state absence (Martone 2021).

Eviction is not just a result of poverty but a fundamental cause of it; it creates a 'shatter zone' that destabilises families, interrupts education, and destroys the 'human capital' necessary for social mobility. This constant state of 'waiting for the bulldozer' reduces the inhabitant to a state of 'permanent temporariness', where political status is suspended by the urgent and repeating needs of physical survival (Agamben 2003).

Through the analysis of the Roma community using the theories just expounded, it can be said that they too are victims of 'infrastructural violence', whether it takes



the form of physical displacement or 'calculated neglect'. Their inability to put down roots is thus a consequence of this series of operations that also confines them to a situation of permanent temporariness, limiting their possibility of asserting their right to the city.

Figure 21. Forced eviction of Roma camp in Italy. Source: *European Roma Rights Centre* (2016).

03.3

**The right to
the city and
the quest for
recognition**

03 3

03.3.1

Beyond shelter: appropriation and participation

The 'right to the city', firstly theorized by Henri Lefebvre in 1968, transcends the mere legal entitlement to occupy a physical dwelling; it is an active claim to urban life and a demand for the collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization, a struggle to 'de-alienate' urban space, to reintegrate it into the web of social connections (Purcell 2014).

In the context of marginalized communities, this right is often sought through a 'quest for recognition', where the struggle is not only over material resources but over the institutional acknowledgement of their identity as legitimate urban subjects (Pizzorno 1994).

This recognition is a prerequisite for moving beyond the Agambenian state of 'bare life', where biological survival is the only concern, toward a condition of 'bios' (the qualified political life defined by Agamben (2003)), which is characterized by the agency to influence urban decision-making

(Lancione 2017). The tension between the formal city's regulatory requirements and the community's lived practices creates a landscape where the right to the city is continuously negotiated through acts of appropriation and political presence.

True urban inclusion must move 'beyond shelter', acknowledging that residential space is a site of social production rather than just a technical commodity (Bhan 2016a; Lancione and McFarlane 2021).

Participation in this sense is not a passive consultation granted by the state, often termed as 'invited' participation, but an active process of appropriation, where inhabitants reclaim the right to use and transform space according to their own cultural and economic needs (Holston 2008; Lefebvre 1997). Appropriation manifests in the incremental building of domestic environments, the management of communal infrastructures, and the creation of 'invented' spaces of

citizenship that bypass or challenge formal planning protocols (Miraftab 2009).

In environments characterized by 'state-led Informality', where the municipality maintains populations in a state of 'permanent temporariness', the act of participation becomes a survival tactic (Chiodelli et al. 2021). By organizing cooperatives or mapping their own settlements, as will be analysed in the following chapter, Roma communities transition from being passive 'occupants' to 'co-producers' of urban space (Ostrom 1996). This shift challenges the modern current where the state attempts to reduce political demands for rights to mere technical problems of sanitation or electricity (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2014).

Participation thus serves as a tool for 'spatial agency', empowering residents to define their own residential outcomes and break the cycle of biological insecurity imposed by infrastructural violence (Awan et al. 2011; Rodgers and O'Neill 2012).

The different levels of citizens' participation can be analysed through Sherry Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation", a framework that will be fundamental in the transversal thematic analysis carried out in chapter five.

The ladder is divided in eight rungs, grouped into three overarching categories:

- **Nonparticipation**, which includes the rungs of 'manipulation' and 'therapy', is the category with less to zero participation. The citizens are treated as subjects that need of education if they want to participate in the city life.
- **Tokenism**, which includes the rungs of 'informing', 'consultation' and 'placation', is the middle category, meaning the citizen are briefly included but still under the control of the traditional powerholders, which still hold the ultimate right to decide.
- **Citizen Power**, which includes the rungs of 'partnership', 'delegated power' and 'citizen control', is the highest category; here power is redistributed through negotiation, citizens achieve dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or program or, moreover, have the power to govern a program or institution (Arnstein 1969).

For Arnstein (Ibid.), what is really crucial is to stress that through the redistribution of power the citizens who are currently excluded from political and economic processes could be included in the future.

03.3.2

Conflict of recognition and insurgent citizenship

Urban struggles are frequently mischaracterized as simple conflicts of interest, disputes over the allocation of land or funding, when they are, in fact, deeper conflicts of recognition (Pizzorno 1994).

In a conflict of interest, the parties agree on the rules and seek a favourable outcome; in a conflict of recognition, one group struggles to even be acknowledged as a valid interlocutor by the state. For marginalized groups, the camp or the informal settlement is not just a site of poverty, but a site of 'territorial stigmatization', rendered so by being the settlement in a well-identified, bounded, and increasingly isolated territory, that reinforces their legal invisibility and political exclusion (Wacquant 2007).

Analysing these struggles through Chantal Mouffe's (1999) theory of 'agonistic pluralism' reveals that the goal is not to eliminate conflict through consensus, but to transform 'antagonistic' relations, where the state

views the community as an enemy to be evicted, into 'agonistic' ones, where they are recognized as legitimate urban actors with a right to differ. This recognition is often blocked by the 'state of exception', which allows public institutions to selectively tolerate some informal practices (Italian illegal construction of new housing units) while criminalizing others (Roma camps) based on political expediency or electoral consensus (Chiodelli et al. 2021).

Breaking this cycle requires a move toward 'insurgent citizenship', where the community uses its very exclusion as a platform to demand a new order of urban belonging that values 'lived space' over 'conceived space' (Lefebvre 1997).

The concept of 'insurgent citizenship' was firstly articulated by Holston (2008). In its book he argues that Brazil's informal settlements can be seen as places where 'insurgent citizenship' takes place, both producing

stability in state-citizen relationships but also destabilising them.

The inhabitants, through universal citizenship and a rights-based system, claim their entitlement to the city and to urban livelihood, and challenge what Holston (Ibid.) defines as 'differentiated citizenship', meaning that the system uses social differences (education, property, race, gender, occupation) to distribute treatment to different categories of citizens. In this way the law is used not to establish equal rights, but to distribute privileges to some and disadvantages to others. This differentiation of treatment can be seen in section 02.4 when talking about the public housing Law No. 865 of 22 October 1971 and the 'baraccati' phenomenon. The law provided for the allocation of funds for the construction of public housing, which, however, in some cases, such as at the camp Casilino 900 in Rome, were only made available to the Italian baraccati and Roma of ancient settlement, leaving the Roma community from the former Yugoslavia in the camp.

In light of Holston theorisation, Faranak Miraftab (2009) introduced the concept of 'insurgent planning' as a counter-hegemonic response to the neoliberal governance, which seeks to stabilize state-citizen relations through symbolic inclusion. Furthermore, 'insurgent planning' highlights how 'inclusive planning', that also ground its works in citizen participation and civil society partnership, frequently ended up being an accomplice of



Figure 22. Faranak Miraftab is a urban scholar of globalization. Her scholarship is situated at the intersection of sociology, geography, planning, and feminist studies, using case study and ethnographic methodologies. Source: University of Illinois.

neoliberal governance and how the interest of the latter, is to wrongfully appropriating the collective action trying to politically neutralize planning and its actors (Miraftab 2009).

03.4

Architects' agency in the 'wicked' realm

03 4

03.4.1

Wicked problems and architects' agency

In the face of systemic marginalization and institutional neglect, the traditional role of the architect as a master builder of finished objects is rendered insufficient. The intervention in contested urban spaces requires a shift toward 'architectural agency', where the practitioner navigates the ethical and political complexities of the city to facilitate social change.

This section explores how architecture functions within a landscape of 'wicked problems', utilizing spatial agency and incremental design to bridge the gap between formal regulatory systems and the informal realities of the urban poor. By reframing architecture as a mediatory practice, the architect becomes an advocate capable of translating political demands into viable spatial interventions.

Urban inclusion and the design of social housing for marginalized communities constitute what Rittel and Webber (1973)

famously termed as 'wicked problems'. Unlike 'tame' problems that have definitive technical solutions, wicked problems lack a clear stopping rule or a singular correct answer, as every solution attempt creates new sets of consequences.

Based on the issues analysed in the previous chapter, the Romani communities can be identified as a 'wicked problem'. Unlike the 'tame problems' just mentioned, in the case of the Romani communities, no real end point in terms of inclusion can be identified; success in this field can mean several things: total assimilation into Italian culture, preservation of Romani culture, economic equality, solving substandard housing issues. In all these cases, one cannot define with certainty whether the policies adopted are 'good' or 'bad'; what is good in one situation may not be suitable for another.

Moreover, the problems that characterise the Romani communities are cascading

symptoms of other problems: poor health is caused by inferior housing, inferior housing by economic exclusion and unfounded prejudices, and so on.

Moreover, in the context of informal settlements, a wicked problem arises from the competing rationalities of state governance, which prioritizes order and hygiene, and the logic of survival, which prioritizes proximity to labour markets and social networks (Watson 2003). Because these problems are indissolubly linked to broader issues of poverty, stigma, and legal invisibility, any architectural intervention is inherently 'contingent' and must remain open to continuous renegotiation (Simone 2004).

In order to better understand how to produce contingent architectural interventions it is important to also take into account what is the architect agency in these processes. The word 'agency' is becoming increasingly used and the idea of architects acting as agents can be associated with the most conservative of actions. In the worst-case scenario, agency just denotes 'acting on behalf of': on behalf of a contractor, a client, developer, etcetera. Nevertheless, through a transformative lens, within architectural production, the notion of agency could gain a more empowering sense, as an action that effects social change, and therefore the architect would not be the only agent of change but one among many. As Doina Petrescu ask herself in her article

"Relationscapes: Mapping agencies of relational practice in architecture" (2012, 135): "What is the architect's role in producing, instigating an architecture whose quality does not reside in its aesthetics but in the model of sociability it produces? What are the architect's roles and tools in a relational practice?"

In its formulation of agency, sociologist Anthony Giddens (2001) states that above all, agency 'presumes the capability of acting otherwise'. This statement is disarmingly radical in an architectural context. Furthermore, for Petrescu (2012, 136) "acting otherwise" is a way of getting engaged with the politics of the place in which we live, and it is also a way of questioning the rules and regulations of current architectural and urban practice; introducing participatory approaches, promoting ways of working which are not 'service-led' or 'client-oriented'.

In fact, for Petrescu and Petcou, founders of Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée⁷, it is fundamental to valorise the contribution of the other in this 'otherwise acting' of the architects' agency; they chose also to not act for themselves or on behalf of others but to act with others, by empowering them to become agents themselves and to take collective responsibility (Petrescu 2012).

Furthermore, Schneider and Till (2009, 97) argue that the architect should be therefore reframed as an anti-hero, someone who co-authors from the beginning, someone who

⁷ The atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa) is a collective platform for exploration, action and research into urban change and emerging cultural, social and political practices in the contemporary city. aaa acts through "urban tactics", encouraging residents to participate in the self-management of neglected urban spaces, relativising contradictions and circumventing stereotypes through nomadic and reversible projects, and initiating interstitial practices that explore the potential of contemporary cities (populations, mobility, temporalities) (AAA 2015).

actively and knowingly gives up authority. Someone who doesn't work in the foreground but takes a step back. Someone who is part of the process, and sometimes but not always the initiator of the project. In their opinions architecture could be a socially and politically aware form of agency, situated firmly in the context of the world beyond, and critical of the social and economic formations of that context, in order to engage better with them in a transformative and emancipatory manner.

Spatial agency in fact inevitably exposes the architect to issues of power, and in particular, of how power might be used and how it might be abused by architects acting as spatial agents. A different and perhaps better definition in relation to spatial agency, given by Schneider and Till (2009), is that the agent is one who effects change through the empowerment of others. Empowerment here stands for allowing others to 'take control' over their environment, for something that is participative without being opportunistic, pro-active instead of re-active. The question, therefore, is how the architect might and can play in this process of empowerment (Ibid.).

In conclusion, it is precisely in the aforementioned marginalised contexts, through participation and the presence of architects, that architecture can become what Galison (2000) defines as 'trading zone', a material infrastructure that functions as 'exchanger' of dialogue between different sub-cultures, but also what Star and

Griesemer (1989, 393) defines as 'boundary object': "... They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation".

Extending these concepts to the architects' agency field is very interesting because it emphasises that the issue regarding the project and its implementation is not finding the strategy that everyone agrees on, that is shared because everyone has participated and is convinced of the effectiveness of the solution. Rather, it is to strive for those solutions that can belong to different life-worlds, to the different strategic perspectives of the actors involved, while assuming that these perspectives are and remain in conflict (Balducci 2011). These concepts will be fundamental in the thematic analysis of the case studies carried out in chapter five, so to better understand what made the projects thrive and what not.

Figure 23. Construction of 'Santuario Frontera' by Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman. The project consists of a refugee housing project that occupies an illegally excavated parcel on a steep canyon hillside, restoring the topography with terracing and biofiltration promenades. *Source: Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman.*



Figure 24. Construction of Odaia (2013) by aaa, as part of the laboratory 'Nomadic School', co-designed and co-built as collective building for eco-tourism, run by a local association to strengthen the local economy and collective governance in the Calinesti area, near the small town of Brezoi in the Romanian Carpathians. *Source: Atelier d'Architecture Autogeree (2015).*



03.4.2

The informalisation of practice

In the contemporary Global South, the primary challenge for architects is no longer the creation of finished monuments, but the navigation of informal contexts through innovative, incremental spatial strategies. This requires a fundamental 'reversal of course' regarding the traditional expectations of architectural projects, moving away from a fixation on the 'completed object' and toward a professional ideology that embraces the informalisation of practice (Dovey 2013). To engage with informality is not to abandon formal concerns, in fact the 'top-down' approach of urban planning could still be useful in order to anticipate territorial organisational logics but this should not underestimate the patterns of community development (Cruz and Forman 2022).

The urban and architectural morphology of informal settlements is often dismissed as chaotic, being that it concerns a set of operations which transgress political boundaries and imposed economic models

(Ibid.); however, research suggests these environments embody a highly consistent typology of room-by-room increments (Dovey 2013). This 'order' is dictated by the physical limitations of manual labour and the accessibility of long-span materials. Theoretically, this is best understood through the lens of assemblage and complexity of Fariás & Bender (2010), where the city is viewed as a living metabolism that adapts and recovers through its own internal resilience.

Incrementalism acknowledges that marginalized households often lack the immediate capital for a complete home but possess the 'human capital' and labour to build incrementally. Architecturally, this allows for culturally specific dwelling practices that standard social housing often fails to accommodate. Within this framework, the 'result' is not measured by the speed of construction, but by the durability of the community's collective governance and

Figure 25. Half-a-house 'first half' of Villa Verde Social Housing in Constitución, Chile by ELEMENTAL, 2010. Source: ArchDaily



their transition from 'temporary occupants' to 'urban co-creators'.

An example of spatial agency in contested contexts can be found in the 'designed' incremental housing proposed by Alejandro Aravena/Elemental⁸ (Aravena and Iacobelli 2012). The proposed framework of the "Half-a-House" is composed by the 'institutional half' provided by the architects, which includes the complex structural frame, legal land title, and essential infrastructure, while leaving the 'informal half' to be completed by the residents over time. Through this proposal ELEMENTAL aims at shifting the function of the house from merely a "shelter against the environment" to a "investment to overcome poverty" (Ibid., 19).

Figure 26. Half-a-house 'second half' of Villa Verde Social Housing in Constitución, Chile. Source: ArchDaily



The noteworthy aspect of the 'half-a-house', also with regard to this thesis, is the participative one, in fact, the project recipients, before getting to self-construct the 'second half', were included in the decision-making process from the very beginning; ELEMENTAL, after sharing the restrictions framework with the families, integrated them as real associates, with the aim of fully understanding what the priority aspects of the project were and what could be done later (Ibid.).

⁸ ELEMENTAL is a "Do Tank" founded in 2001, led by Pritzker Prize 2016 Alejandro Aravena and partners Gonzalo Arteaga, Juan Cerda, Víctor Oddó and Diego Torres (ELEMENTAL, n.d.).

In Conclusion

The theoretical landscape of urban marginality shows how the ‘wicked problem’ of the informal city is not merely a technical failure to be solved by standard planning, but a politically mediated condition deeply rooted in historical and institutional structures. In contrast to the state utilizing mechanisms like infrastructural violence and the chronopolitics of eviction to maintain social hierarchies, the struggle for marginalized communities becomes a quest for recognition, a demand to be acknowledged as legitimate political subjects rather than mere biological entities.

Achieving true urban inclusion requires moving ‘beyond shelter’ to embrace the radical potential of insurgent citizenship and participatory appropriation. Through the lens of Sherry Arnstein’s “Ladder of Participation” (1969), it is clear that meaningful change only occurs when power is redistributed, allowing citizens to transition from being passive occupants to active co-producers of their environment.

For the architect, this necessitates a ‘reversal of course’. The aforementioned ‘acting otherwise’ can be pursued by embracing incrementalism, as seen in the ‘half-a-house’ model of ELEMENTAL or acting as a boundary object between ‘conflicting worlds’; through different practices the architect can contribute to dismantling the ‘fixity of form’ that often excludes the poor.

Thus, this chapter sought to provide a framework grounded in scholarships that would allow the Roma community and their urban exclusion to be placed in a broader context, regarding the ‘relation with the other’ and urban informality in the Global North. After analysing in chapter four some case studies where architects have ‘acted otherwise’ or could do so, this framework will allow for a better discussion in chapter five of architects’ agency through the themes presented in the Introduction.

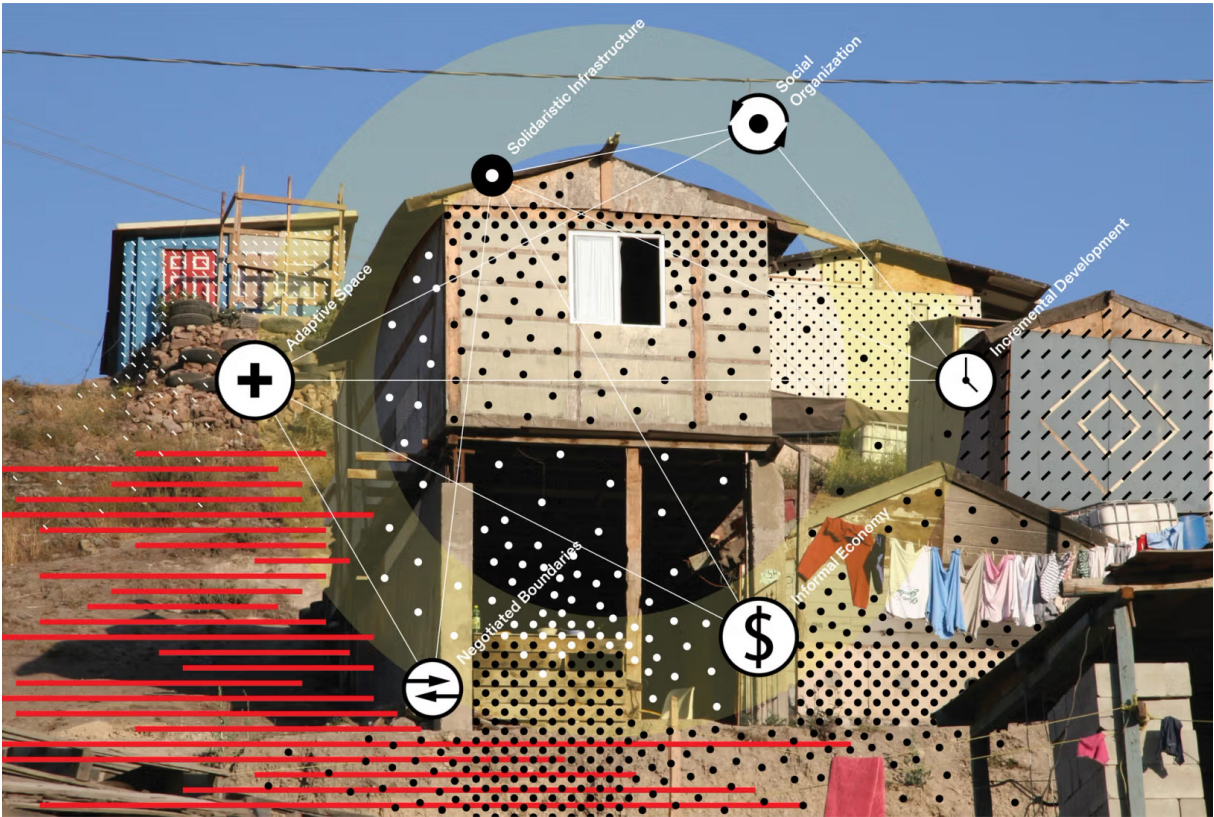


Figure 27. Nothins is wasted, everything is useful diagram. Source: Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman.

ANALYSING ROMA'S 'PRACTICES OF FREEDOM'

Cases from Milan, Rome and Naples

- 04.1 **Milan:** Chiesa Rossa coop & Ersilia: dual paths to Romani agency
- 04.2 **Rome:** Self construction for community emancipation at Casilino 900 informal camp
- 04.3 **Naples:** Ma.Rea project, a glimmer in the story of abandonment of Giugliano settlement

This chapter analyses the historical evolution and contemporary managements of Roma settlements in three emblematic contexts: Milan, Rome, and Naples. Through these three urban contexts, I will explore the transition from the institutionalized 'camp system' toward modern 'overcoming strategies' aimed at closing settlements and fostering housing integration.

By investigating specific case studies within these cities, such as the formal camp of via Chiesa Rossa and of via Bonfadini in Milan, the historic Casilino 900 in Rome and the precarious via Carrafiello slum in Giugliano in Campania, I aim to illustrate how communities, together with other actors, including architects, can challenge top-down, 'one-size-fits-all' municipal strategies through innovative architectural and social proposals.

Specifically, these four case studies were selected because they represent significant and diverse manifestations both of the critical living conditions in Roma camps in Italy and of the past and ongoing initiatives aimed at overcoming the segregation inherent in the camp system, with particular attention to the role and agency of architects.

Milan was selected for its long history of formal camp management and to highlight the shift from institutional neglect toward collective autonomy, exemplified by the Via Chiesa Rossa community's proposal to form a housing cooperative. This initiative seeks to

transform a self-built village into a sustainable residential area, through the proposal, yet to be realised, of architect Giovanni La Varra of models like Alejandro Aravena's incremental housing aimed at resolving infrastructure issues while respecting cultural identity. Complementing this is the Ersilia project (ERSILIAlab) at the via Bonfadini camp, a participatory architecture intervention that used a mobile pop-up carriage to foster 'relational bridges' between Roma residents and the surrounding neighbourhood, challenging deep-seated spatial and social isolation.

Rome, as the capital, provides a critical look at large-scale, highly surveilled 'Nomad Plan'. The project of Savorengo Ker (The house of everyone) in the Casilino 900 informal camp, a collaboration between the Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade collective and the university, served as a housing prototype designed to meet official building regulations, thereby offering a dignified, community-led alternative to the uninhabitable containers provided by the state. The aim was also to emancipate the community from the negative prejudices of the neighbourhood and the city.

Finally, Naples and its metropolitan area, specifically the informal settlement of Giugliano, were included because they represent the most acute housing emergency in the country, characterized by extreme degradation and repeated forced evictions that highlight the urgent need

for new models like Ma.Rea (Mapping and Realising Communities) by Associazione 21 Luglio.

Together, these cases illustrate the systemic failures of the camp model and the emerging 'practices of freedom' that seek to reclaim the right to the city for Roma communities, stressing furthermore how overcoming the camp logic requires not just closure, but the creation of spaces for collective creation and cultural emancipation.

04.1

Milan

*Chiesa Rossa Coop & Ersilia:
dual Paths to Romani Agency*

04.1

From the 1980s in Milan specific policies started to get drafted targeting the Roma communities, specifically in 1989 in Lombardy (Milan's Region) was published the regional law mentioned in section 02.4: law n.77/1989, titled "Azione regionale per la tutela delle popolazioni appartenenti alle etnie tradizionalmente nomadi e seminomadi" (eng: Regional actions for the safeguarding of populations belonging to traditionally nomad and seminomad ethnicities; the law has been repealed in July 2015) (Regione Lombardia, n.d.).

Since then, the first 'formal camps' began to appear, and they were seen as an organisational and control solution. Throughout the 90s the camp system was becoming more established, nevertheless their management remained a purely emergency-based matter: sanitary conditions were disastrous, with no sewers, toilets, showers, etc. Overcrowding was often a risk, and the proposed housing solution was composed of typical emergency building materials like containers. The municipality used the camp as its main response to the Roma housing emergency, while spontaneous settlements were tolerated or cleared in waves without a structural policy on access to housing (Tavolo Rom di Milano 2012).

The first 'formal camps' opened were:

- via Idro (1989–2016): grew through the years into a small village of shacks

and container, was closed through an eviction.

- via Triboniano (end of 1980s–2011): began as a spontaneous settlement, in 1997 it was institutionalised by the Albertini administration with infrastructure such as water and electricity, it was then cleared in 2011 to make way for infrastructure for Expo 2015.
- via Bonfadini (1985–2024): established by the municipality to house Italian Sinti families, it was also closed by forced eviction after almost 40 years.

In 1997, under the administration of Gabriele Albertini, the number of camps increased exponentially, with an emphasis on evictions following a campaign on 'urban security', despite the fact that the statistical data did not confirm any link between Romani people and petty crimes.

In fact, the words of the mayor in office at the time are very explanatory: "I, too, feel unsafe. I don't know if looking at the statistics one can say that the situation in Milan has worsened in recent years. But in the end the data are not that important (...) what counts is the perception of the Milanese. Maybe petty crime is stationary but seeing the drug dealer in the garden where I take my child gives me the feeling of not being protected (...) The operations that we are conducting have the aim of reducing the discomfort in certain areas and, in my opinion, improving the perception of security. The evictions of



Figure 28. Via Idro (Milan) formal camp, closed in 2016. Source: fanpage (2016).

the nomad camps also make the Milanese feel that the institutions exist." (Bontempelli 2022, my translation)

Specifically, at the time of this declaration, a closed number of 1200 'Roma and Sinti' was decided regarding presences in formal camps. Subsequently, in 1999 the shacks of the camp of via Barzaghi (informal camp next to the via Negrotto one) were destroyed with bulldozers and this led to other six forced evictions, in the span of three years, carried out with the same methods. This kept fuelling a dynamic of continuous displacement that then was leading to new irregular settlements (Bontempelli 2022).

During the Moratti administration (2006–2011), around 500 forced evictions were conducted. These actions were closely linked to the climate following the declaration of the 'state of emergency' and the subsequent approval by the Berlusconi government of the 'Maroni Plan' (see section 02.6) which among other regulations required that Roma citizens living in camps be identified through picture and fingerprints.

As already mentioned before, there was no strategy behind these evictions, the operations were very expensive, and people were reorganising somewhere else. Because of the aforementioned 'Maroni Plan', the

Table 10. Milan's formal camp as of 2026. Source: elaboration by the author based on Associazione 21 Luglio mapping.

see annex 2026_03_Audero_01



Figure 29. Booklet with Milan formal camps with: camp name, date of opening, date of closing (if closed), Google earth aerial view. Source: elaboration by the author.

LEGEND

- open camps (2026)
- ✕ closed camps
- ▲ camps in the 'overcoming' process

municipality received 13,6 million euros by the State that invested in various formal camp like the one in via Lombroso (defined as an Social Emergency Centre, opened in 2013 and closed in 2016 (Dragotto 2016)), which envisaged 148 places in big dormitories without partitions. The containers were seen as a temporary solution for the ‘nomads’ evicted from informal settlements, the families could stay there for 40 days and then, once outside, helped in search of rent, a job, a school for their children. (Stella 2013).

From 2012, conforming to the ‘National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Travellers’ discussed in section 02.7, the centre-left administrations that have succeeded one another to this day, have approached the issue with the aim of overcoming the camps, meaning closing them. At the beginning, the results were contradictory: in some cases, financial contributions or temporary accommodation in facilities and lodgings were provided, while in others, the individuals were simply removed, only to reappear in settlements elsewhere.

In 2024, after 14 years of the ‘overcoming strategy’, the closed camps were twenty-four, four authorised and twenty informal, most of the times the families were involved in some kind of accompaniment project. These projects can vary from helping with the housing transition to help the family with their minor’ schooling process (Il Giorno 2024). As of the time of writing, one of the last



Figure 30. Gabriele Albertini, Milan mayor between 1997 and 2006. Source: *Corriere della Sera*.

settlements in the process of being closed is the one of via Chiesa Rossa, in the southern outskirts of Milan, that with the previously mentioned camp of via Bonfadini is one the case studies I will analyse in this chapter.

“I, too, feel unsafe. But in the end, the data are not that important (...) what counts is the perception of the Milanese. (...) The operations that we are conducting have the aim of reducing the discomfort in certain areas and, in my opinion, improve the perception of security. The evictions of the nomad camps also make the Milanese feel that the institutions exist.”

-Gabriele Albertini, 1997 (Bontempelli 2022, my translation)

04.1.1

From nomad camp to village: the case of via Chiesa Rossa

The camp of via Chiesa Rossa was opened in 1999 to address the displacement of Roma citizens who had been evicted from other camps, mainly from the one of via Fattori in the north-west periphery of Milan, this happened in order to make way for a new supermarket.

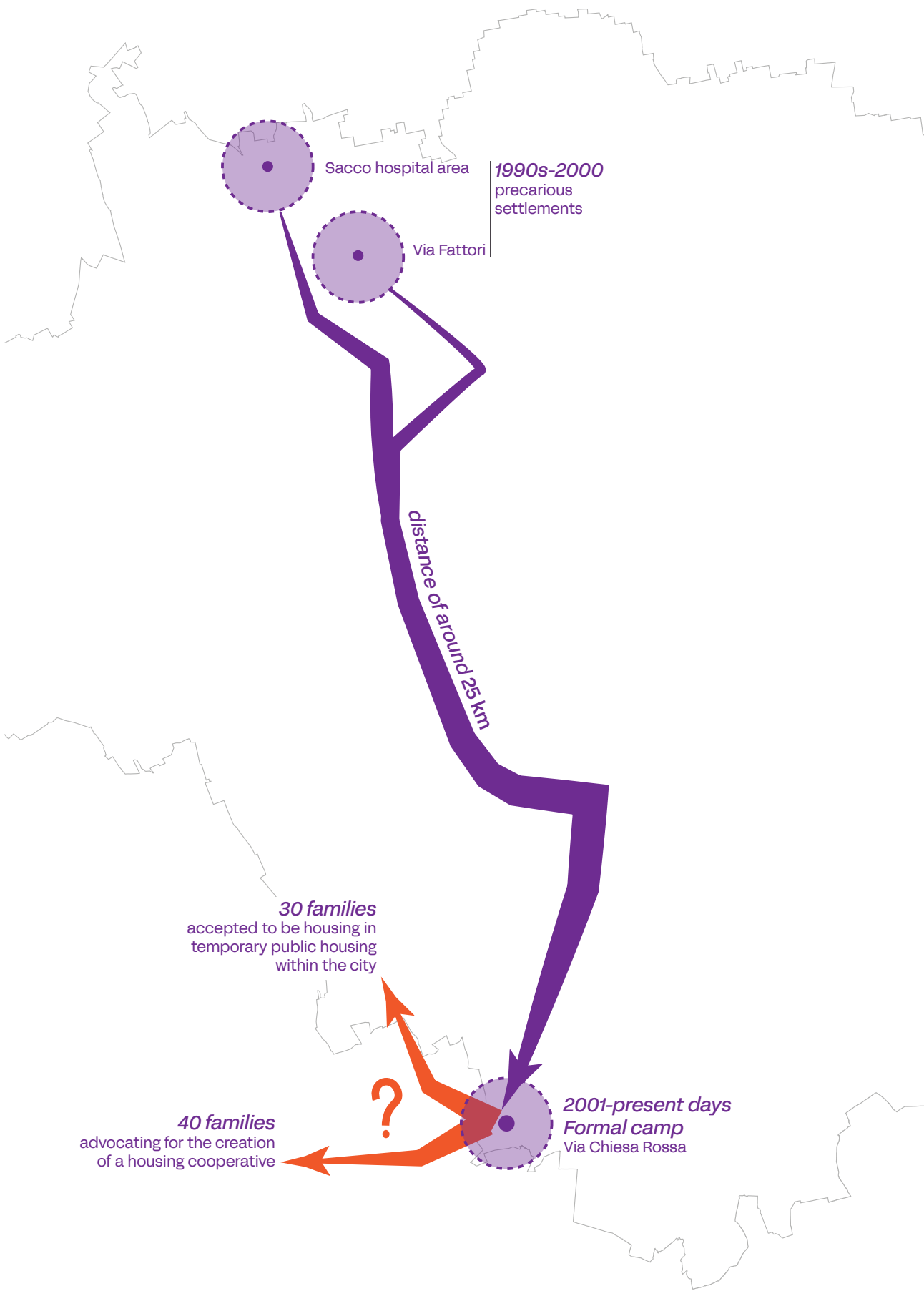
In around 2002, the camp became fully operational counting around 70–75 family units (250 people circa). The inhabitants stipulated an open-ended contract with the Albertini administration that was authorising them to self-build a house on land granted by the municipality of Milan as long as it had no foundations. For this reason, the families started to progressively build prefabricated houses and semi-permanent structures, consolidating its character as a ‘village’ rather than a temporary camp (Mianews 2025b). With the concession, a consequent infrastructure was promised by the municipality, but this was never realised, and this is also why the inhabitants resorted to

self-building, even expanding on land not in their concession (La Varra 2025, interviewed by Sofia Ferrazzi).

Most of the people, who are Italian citizens (Mochi 2025), work on a permanent basis and pay taxes and utilities, although problems remain with electrical connectivity and regulations. For some instances of petty crimes and the aforementioned issues with the electricity connections, the settlement is frequently described in the news as a place of degradation, fuelling the securitarian narrative of the time.

In connection with the apparent ‘nomad emergency’ of 2008, during the Moratti administration, fundings were cut, services reduced and the school bus eliminated. Given the isolated nature of the settlement, the nearest school was more than two and a half kilometres away and public transport was insufficient. Institutional abandonment generated school dispersion,

Table 11. Movements of the Chiesa Rossa camp inhabitants. Source: elaboration by the author.



precariousness, marginality (Romania and Bertazzo 2026). Meanwhile, also serious infrastructural deficiencies emerged: inadequate electrical and sewage systems and no proper heating systems. The families demanded action, but they did not get a response (Ibid.).

It is from the 2010s that pressures for the camp closure started to be more frequents, stressing on the illegal connection to the electricity line and illegal occupation of some lots. The use of illegal ways of connecting to electricity is, however, due to the mismanagement of the camp by the municipality and the consequent self-organisation of the inhabitants so as to maintain a minimum of living dignity (Ibid.).



Figure 33. House in the Chiesa Rossa camp. Source: photograph by Romania and Bertazzo (Il Manifesto 2026).

Figure 31. Aereal view of the Chiesa Rossa camp surroundings. Source: elaboration by the authore based on Google Earth snapshot. Figure 32.Chiesa Rossa camp aerial view. Source: elaboration by the authore based on Google Earth snapshot.

Despite the pressures for the camp closure, a formal notice was only given in February 2024 to vacate not later than June of the same year. The taken decision though was unilateral, with vague reference to support paths following the evictions.

This camp has been the home of 80 families for around 25 years, and it was collectively built and sustained, in an interview by Andrea Staid (2017), Iaio, one of the oldest resident, says: “We have been in Chiesa Rossa for 16 years, I built this village with my cousin and also thanks to Giorgio, it took us years to get this area and now we have built a village. We live well here, we are only Roma, in a completely self-managed village. They would like to send us away and put us in



Figure 34. House in the Chiesa Rossa camp. Source: La Repubblica (2024).



public housing, but why? To say that we are taking them away from poor Italians? We are fine here.

In our camp there is life, culture, dignity of the people who live here, everyone has their own houses and shared collective spaces. With all the residents we made a monument for Roma Memorial Day, the whole village contributed by putting a quota, we did it for us, for the dignity of us people.” (Ibid., 51, my translation).

The community instead of being evicted proposed an alternative, consisting of forming a housing cooperative and transforming the area into a sustainable, community led housing model. In this regard, the European Roma Rights Commission, stressed how it

was clear the municipality wanted to use a top-down approach and, driven by the reason of severe safety infrastructure issues, decided to proceed to the camp’s closing instead of trying to understand the residents need (2025).

In fact, the municipality, following the guidelines of the National Strategy, is adopting an approach whereby all the Romani camp are on the same level, with regard to housing, schooling and employment. The ‘Villaggio delle Rose’ (the name used by the inhabitants of the camp of via Chiesa Rossa to address their home), however, is clearly an example in itself, something that the inhabitants and associations are continually trying to point out to the municipality (Staid 2017).

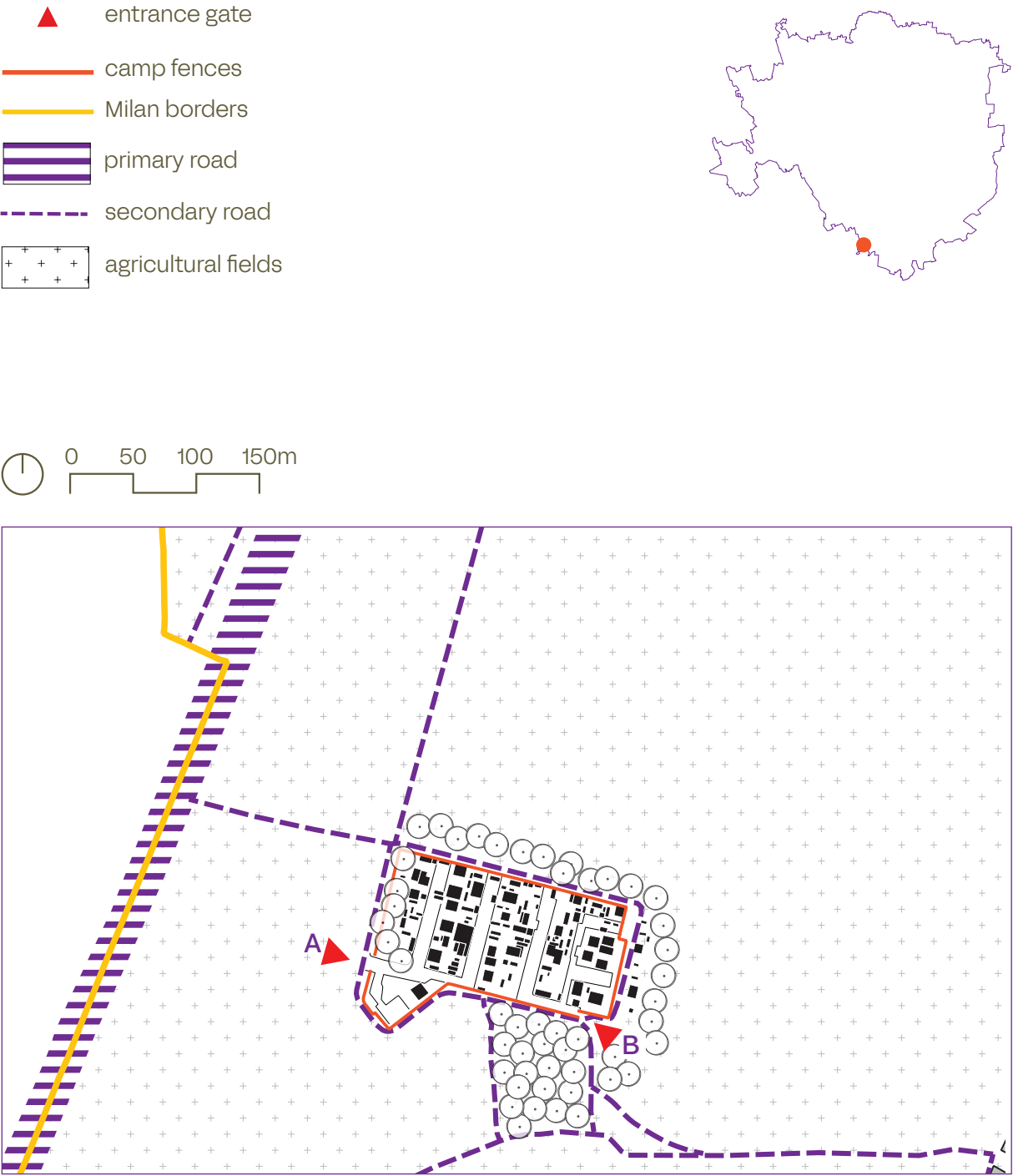


Figure 35. Entrance A and fences of via Chiesa Rossa. Source: street view snapshot (2026).



Figure 36. Entrance B and fences of via Chiesa Rossa. Source: street view snapshot (2026).

Table 12. Diagram of Chiesa Rossa camp boundaries. Source: elaboration by the author.



04.1.2

Creating a housing cooperative

The idea of setting up a self-managed housing cooperative was born as a response to the eviction notice from the municipality at the end of 2024; in the settlement there was already a workers' cooperative, therefore this was not something totally unknown of (La Varra 2025, interviewed by Sofia Ferrazzi). Thanks to the help of Roma associations such as the Movimento Kethane (eng: Kethane movement) and Upre Roma and professionals such as architect Giovanni La Varra and architect Gabriele Rabaiotti (also former municipality councillor for Public works and Housing), the residents proposed an innovative model of undivided housing, in which the area remains municipal property but is granted in public-private partnership for collective management that includes structural redevelopment, installation of photovoltaic panels for an energy community and equal governance. This initiative, discussed at round tables with councillors such as Lamberto Bertolè (Welfare council) and Fabio Bottero (Building council) starting in January 2025, represents the first Italian experience of a Roma

cooperative on a normative public area, with about 50 families in favour against the 30 that accepted alternative municipal housing, despite the TAR's rejection of the suspensions to eviction in November 2025 (Ferri 2025).

The community, composed of families with children, has already developed through the years an internal network of solidarity: community gardens, craft workshops (metal recovery and carpentry) and informal schools. Therefore, this proposal, as explained in an interview by Dijana Pavlovic (spokesperson for the Kethane movement), comes from the belief that overcoming the stigma inherent to 'camp' device can also happen by transforming the place in a residential area, thus rejecting the isolated container model proposed by the municipality, perceived as segregating (Mianews 2025b).

The proposal emphasises community agency, family networks and autonomous activities and, as of today, is still awaiting a definitive response from the municipality,

Table 13. Timeline of Chiesa Rossa camp's history. Source: elaboration by the author.

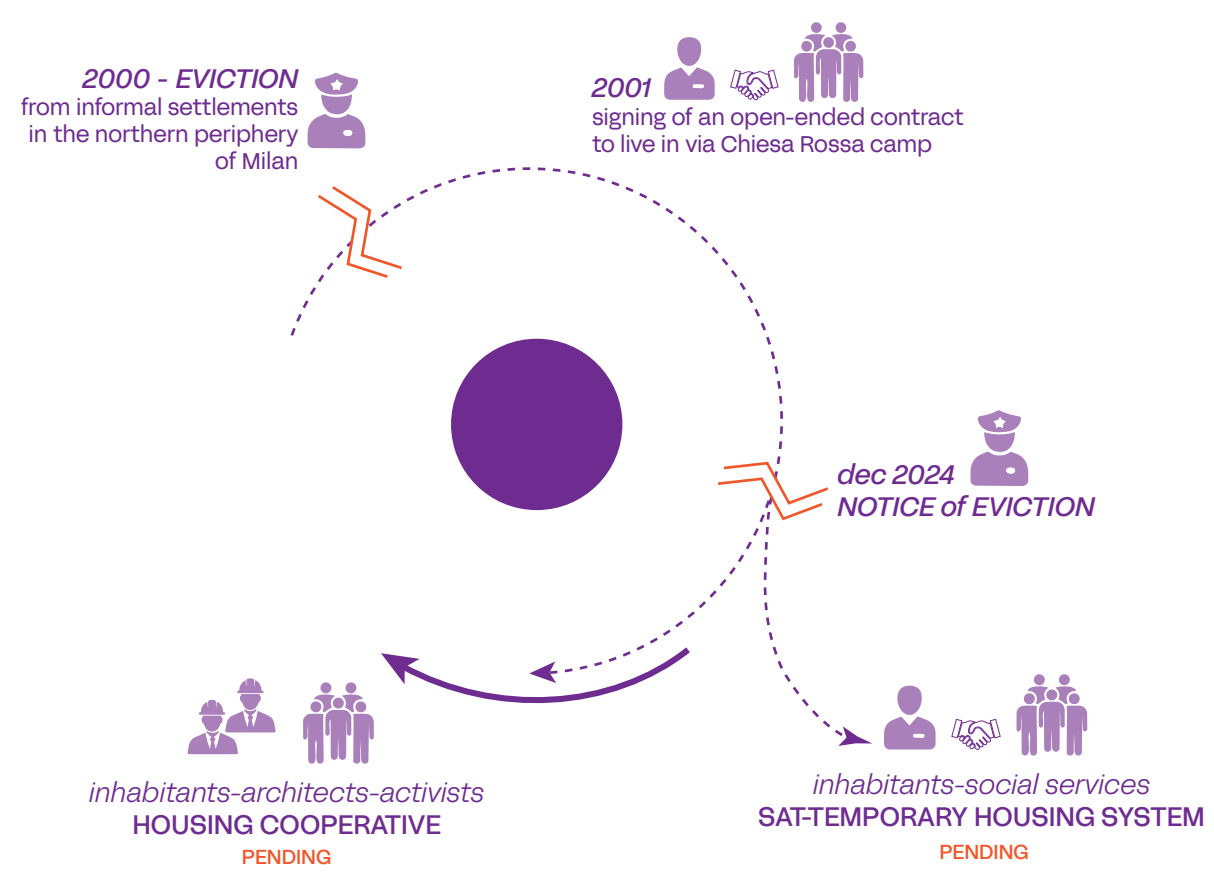




Figure 37. Round table with architects Gabriele Rabaiotti and Giovanni La Varra and the camp's representatives. Source: photograph by Bottino and Oliva (L'Espresso 2025)



Figure 38. Proposal for the camp restructuring. Source: photograph by Bottino and Oliva (L'Espresso 2025)

“...since that day (eviction notice) we have not slept, we are in a phase of not knowing our fate. We thought we had built our future in the village. Since 1999 when they had moved us from Quarto Oggiaro, the municipality had given us this place with a open-ended contract, and so we were sure to be spending our whole lives there. Now after 25 years, in a way that is really... 10 days before Christmas, they have told us that the village has to be overcome. Overcoming means it has to be torn down and our houses will be torn down too.”

acting as a potential model for overcoming the segregationist logic of the camps.

Specifically, Gabriele Rabaiotti and Giovanni La Varra were working on parallel projects, Rabaiotti was focusing on the realisation of the housing cooperative and La Varra on a strategy/model to restructure the settlement. For Rabaiotti the creation of the cooperative was of fundamental importance, so that the community could interface as one with the municipality and thus pursue its demands (La Varra 2025, interviewed by Sofia Ferrazzi). It was in fact Gabriele Rabaiotti that asked Giovanni La Varra to participate in this project and suggest a housing system that would help to partially restructure the settlement.

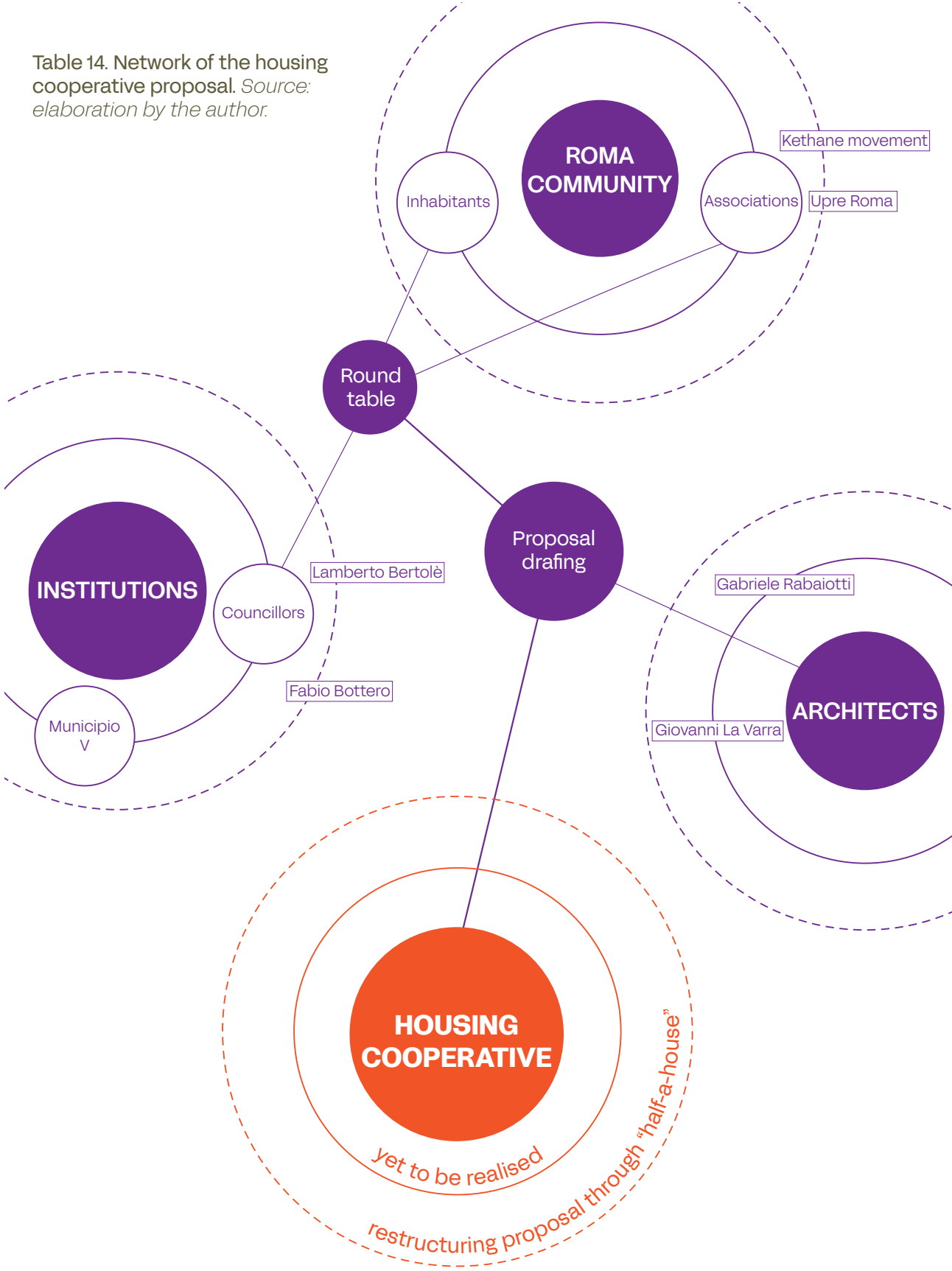
In June of 2025, in conversations with the inhabitants La Varra presented a strategy with the goal of transforming the area without demolishing it, so as to resolve the critical issues reported by the municipality while respecting the community’s right to live according to their own cultural model (Bottino and Oliva 2025).

There were two initial proposals, the first was basically focused on reorganising the field into something orderly and stable, reducing the occupation of the streets by densifying the built-up area and redeveloping the open spaces. Using a modular subdivision, the more precarious dwellings would be moved, and the other spaces densified with more resistant buildings (Zanotti 2025, interviewed by Sofia Ferrazzi).

The second proposal, and also the one most enthusiastically received by the inhabitants, was based on Alejandro Aravena’s concept of incremental housing, whereby houses were built in halves, thus significantly reducing the budget required and giving the inhabitants the possibility to complete their homes as they saw fit. Housing in this context was of crucial importance, as already mentioned, because the inhabitants who had the most structured houses had no intention of demolishing them; however, Aravena’s system would allow less structured housing situations to be ‘regularised’ and at the same time create development potential (La Varra 2025, interviewed by Sofia Ferrazzi). During the same interview, La Varra added: “in my half house I can put a motorhome for 10 years, in your half house you can do the iron workshop, in the other half house I can do the son’s house. And so, it was a system that seemed possible to them. It intercepted one of their housing models, one of their ideas of living and one of their ideas of possible housing” (Ibid., Ibid.)

To date, both La Varra’s proposal, as well as the creation of the housing cooperative supported by Rabaiotti, but also the fate of the inhabitants who had chosen the path of social housing, remain uncertain and at a standstill: the camp has not yet been evicted, there has been no real institutional response to the proposals made, and the infrastructure that should have been completed is still unfinished.

Table 14. Network of the housing cooperative proposal. *Source: elaboration by the author.*



04.1.3 Surrounded by the railway: the formal camp of via Bonfadini

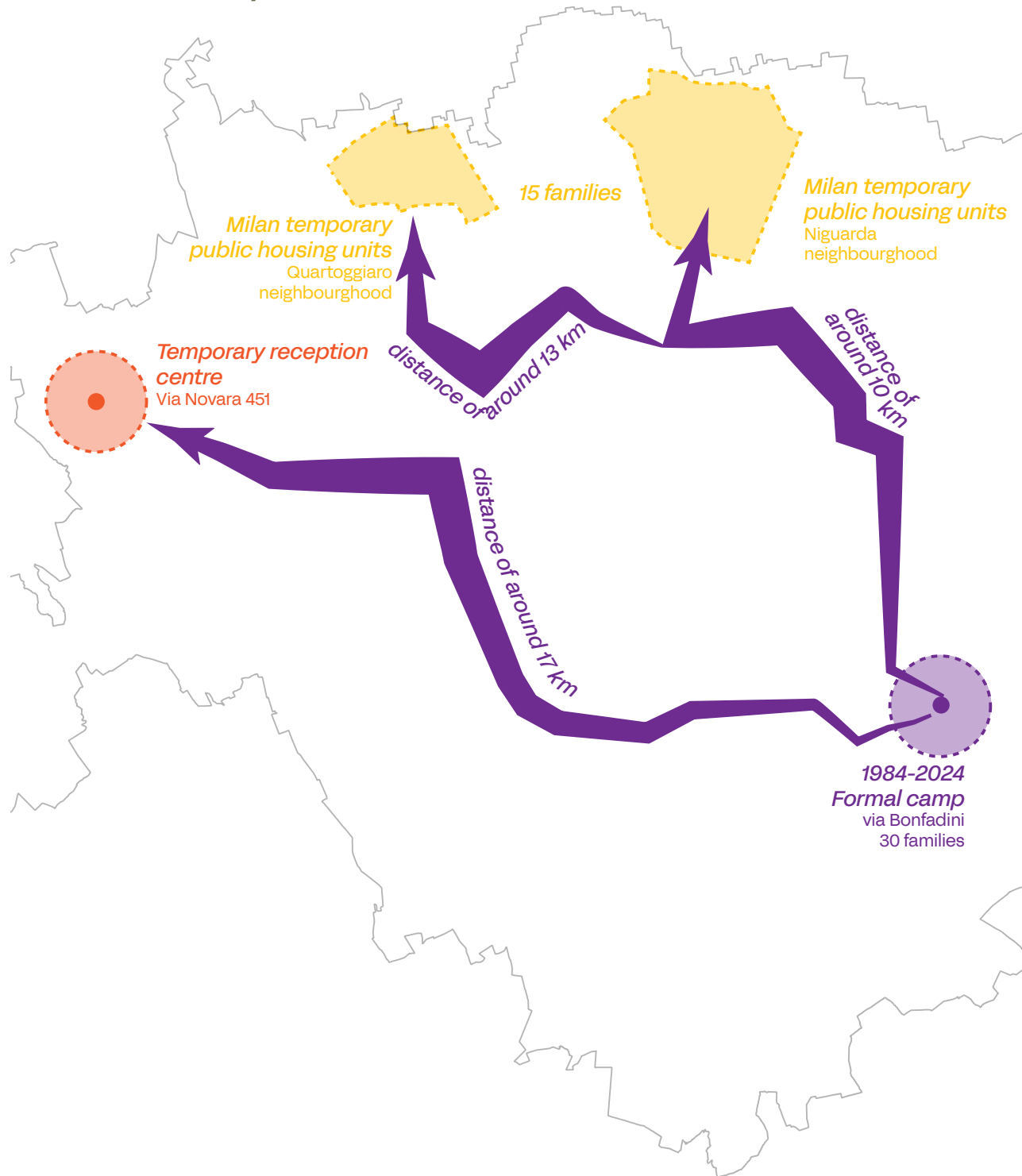
The Roma camp in via Bonfadini, located in the Molise-Calvaire-Ponti neighbourhood of Milan (Municipality 4), has been one of the city's most long lasting authorised settlements, active for almost four decades, and a symbol of the Roma community management policies in Italy. It was born in a context of housing emergency for Italian families considered nomads, it has mainly housed Sinti families from Abruzzo, evolving into an area marked by degradation, illegality and social tensions, until its final closure in 2024. This reflects the municipal strategies to overcome the camps, prioritising housing integration and urban regeneration.

The camp was established by municipal resolution in 1985, in response to the need to provide temporary housing for

Italian Roma communities, in a peripheral triangular area between three railway lines with, as the only way of access, a two-way underpass that floods when there is heavy rain (Cavalli et al. 2021). Formally opened in 1987, it occupied a triangular plot of land owned by the municipality, initially managed by Sogemi (Società per la Gestione dei Mercati) and intended for around 30 families (90 residents, including over 30 minors). It represented an 'authorised camp' model typical of the 1980s, aimed at containing the expansion of squatter settlements in dense urban contexts.

In the 1990s and 2000s, under different administrations (including the centre-right one from 1993 to 2011), the camp turned into a self-sufficient but degraded 'fort', with

Table 15. Movements of the via Bonfadini camp inhabitants.
Source: elaboration by the author.



squatter extensions, precarious houses and structural problems such as the lack of heating and inefficient sewage systems, even though it was a formal camp and therefore electricity and water connections were provided by the municipality.

Monopolised by a few families, it became notorious for systematic thefts of cars and motorbikes, burning of carcasses (with toxic fumes) and illicit trafficking, fuelling protests from the neighbourhood residents and reports of organised crime. Despite the 2012 municipal guidelines to overcome the camps, it persisted as a closed enclave, hindering integration and fostering hygienic-environmental degradation, also due to institutional neglect (Milano Pavia TV - Canale 78 2024).

In 2015 Architetti Senza Frontiere Italia⁹ (eng: Architects without Borders Italy) reached out to a third sector organisation that was working within the camp, the Somaschi Fathers Foundation¹⁰, with the idea of getting to know this complex reality through the voices of those who lived there (Interview with Silvia Nessi, 2026). The reality they found themselves facing was of deep isolation and stigmatization by the neighbourhood, and it intensified in 2016 with the establishment of a temporary reception centre (CAT) at the intersection of via Bonfadini and via Sacile, just a few dozen meters away.

Figure 39. Aereal view of via Bonfadini camp surroundings. Source: elaboration by the authore based on Google Earth snapshot.
Figure 40. Via Bonfadini camp aerial view. Source: elaboration by the authore based on Google Earth snapshot.

Managed by Fondazione Casa della Carità, the CAT primarily housed around 130 Roma individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds (mostly families evicted from informal settlements) who have entered a social integration agreement with the municipality as the first step toward accessing social housing. In addition to the intensification of tensions with neighbours, the CAT's presence created tensions, mainly due to the ethnic difference, between those who lived there (mainly Romanian Roma) and the inhabitants of the camp of via Bonfadini (Italian Roma), who, if not for the education of their children, had no relationship with each other (Cavalli et al. 2021).

From 2018 onwards the via Sacile temporary reception centre (CAT) was affected by the beginning of an eviction process which ended in 2019. Part of the residents were relocated to the via Novara temporary reception centre (CAT) while others settled near the regular camp of via Bonfadini or in the adjacent informal one.

Likewise, after years of toleration, an eviction notice reached the inhabitants at the beginning of April 2024. The procedure had started months earlier with the verification of the presence in the area: the monitoring, carried out by the social services and the local police, had revealed the presence of 30 Italian families, about 90 people, of



⁹ Architetti senza Frontiere-Italia (ASF Italy), is a non-profit organisation founded in 2000 and based in Milan, works in marginal contexts using architecture as a tool for local development, in this case in partnership with organisations such as Fondazione Somaschi and Casa della Carità.

¹⁰ The Fondazione Somaschi Onlus carries out work with minors and activities related to new forms of poverty (addictions, mother-child, victims of trafficking, single men, Roma) in the Lombardy-Veneto and Liguria-Piedmont provinces. Specifically, it takes care of Roma and Sinti families and provides educational support (Fondazione Somaschi Onlus, n.d.).

whom more than 30 were minors. In July of the same year, the people still present in the camp, about half of them, had been served with an order instructing them to leave the area. Having assessed their situations of vulnerability by the Social Services, fifteen families accepted the offer of alternative temporary housing solutions in SAT accommodation, according to the regulations in force, proposed in time for the start of the 2024/2025 school year, in order not to compromise the continuity of attendance for minors (Il Giorno 2024).



Figure 41. The only entrance to the Via Bonfadini camp via a passageway. Source: street view snapshot (2026).

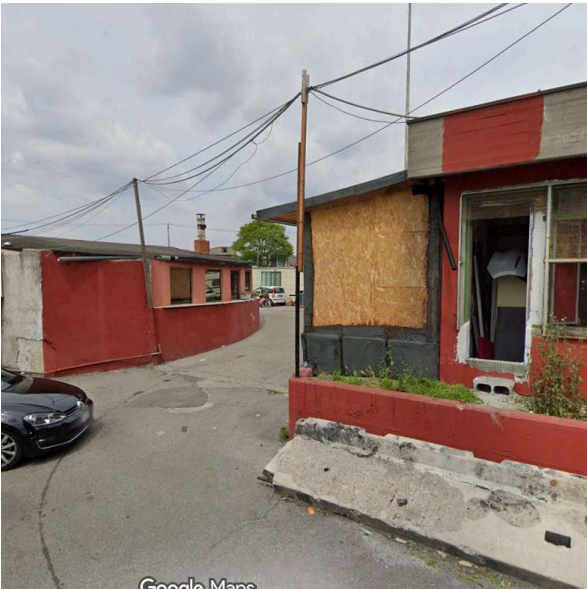


Figure 42. Entrance to the via Bonfadini camp. Source: street view snapshot (2026).

Table 16. Diagram of via Bonfadini camp boundaries. Source: elaboration by the author.



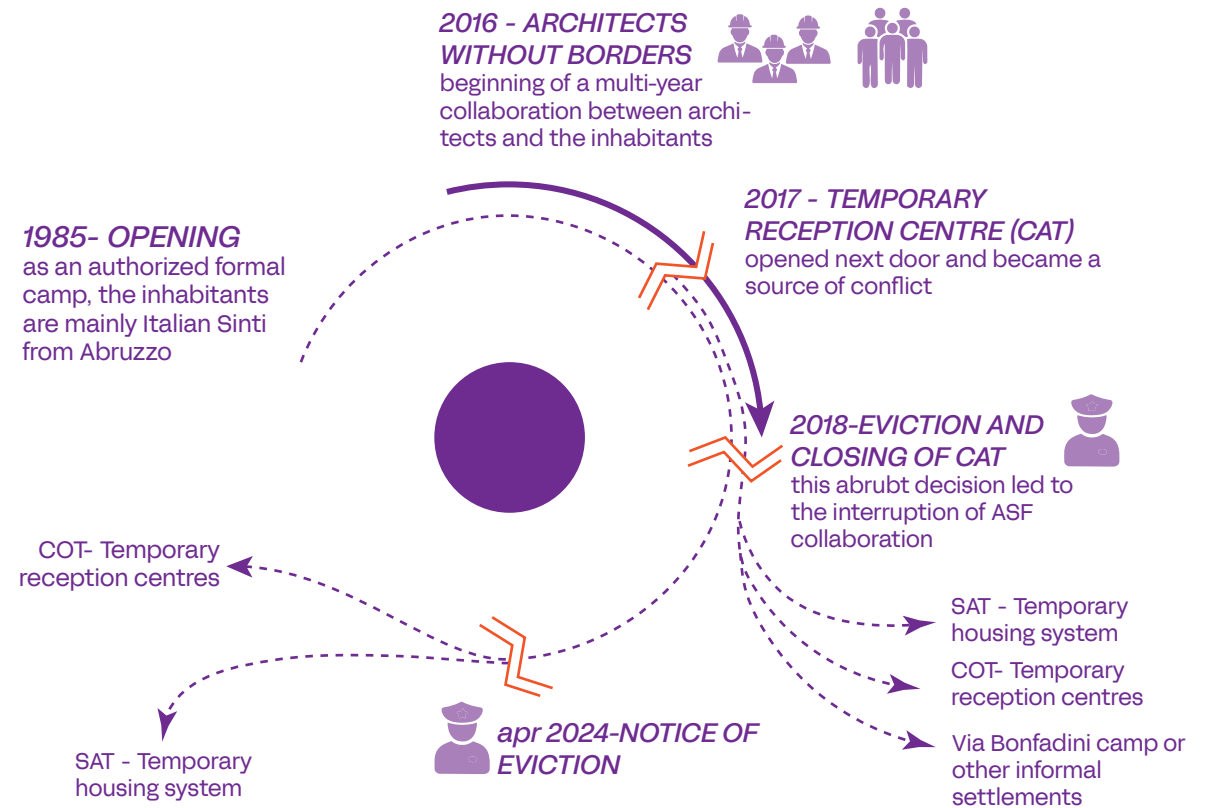
04.1.4 ErsiliaLab.: the intervention of Architetti Senza Frontiere Italy to build relationships

The relationship between Architetti Senza Frontiere Italy and the formal camp of via Bonfadini began almost by chance. In fact during our interview, Silvia Nessi (president of ASF Italy) told me: “I passed by that triangle while I was on the train, probably because I was on my way to Mantua, and then I saw from the train that situation of informality that was in the triangle between the railway tracks, so I went on Google Maps to search for that location. I then said to myself-I want to understand what this is because it's outrageous that people live in a situation of limitation between the railway tracks- and therefore I got interested. Then I did some research and discovered quite quickly and easily that it was a Roma camp, not an

illegal one, but an official one, which greatly increased my curiosity, my interest, and that it had social administrators, and that these social administrators were the Somaschi Fathers Foundation, which had been dealing with that and other informal or semi-informal situations for years.” (2026, my translation).

The Ersilia project, promoted by Architetti Senza Frontiere Italia (ASF Italy), represented an innovative participatory architecture intervention in the Roma camp of Via Bonfadini in Milan, aimed at overcoming the socio-spatial segregation of Sinti communities through the co-design of shared spaces and what they call ‘architectural incursions’(Archit. Senza Front. Ital., n.d.). Launched in 2016 in the Molise-

Table 17. Timeline of via Bonfadini camp's history. Source: elaboration by the author.



Calvairate-Ponti neighbourhood (Municipio 4), it involved Roma residents of the Bonfadini camp and the adjacent temporary reception centre (CAT) of via Sacile together with the ‘gadje’ (non-Roma people), culminating in 2018 with the realisation of ‘ERSILIAlab - La Biblioteca delle Relazioni’ (eng: ERSILIAlab-The library of relationships), a mobile pop-up carriage that was collectively built as an itinerant place for the exchange of Roma knowledge and culture (Ibid. n.d.).

As previously mentioned, the reality encountered was very complex and of extreme spatial isolation, furthermore the lack of collective spaces was evident, specifically for kids and women who were spending most of their days in the camp.



Source for all images: ErsiliaLab Facebook page.

Top row figures:
Figure 43. Participatory design of Ersilia carriage
Figure 44. Constructing Ersilia carriage
Figure 45. Kids inside Ersilia carriage

Bottom row figures:
Figure 46. Kids’ drawings from a workshop on ‘home’.
Figure 47. Constructing Ersilia carriage
Figure 48. Ersilia carriage around the city of Milan



The isolation was also worsened by the neighbourhood’s mistrust of the camp’s inhabitants (Cavalli et al. 2021).

Ersilia therefore responded to the housing and relational emergency analysed in the camp in order to promote processes of territorial regeneration that could interweave Parco Alessandrini and neighbouring areas. The main objectives included overcoming spatial segregation through inclusive relational networks between Roma and gadje, the dissemination of Roma culture through shared spaces, community empowerment with a focus on women and minors.

In order to realise the above objectives and after reflecting on the nature of the spaces in which the camp was located, enclosed in the railway triangle, the Architetti Senza Frontiere Italia team came to the conclusion that in order to realise something strong, it was essential for the project to be located outside the camp, an intermediate space for relationships (interview with Silvia Nessi 2026).

ERSILIAlab emerged as the centrepiece of the project: a physical and relational travelling library, designed and built by Roma and gadje people in Alessandrini Park, serving as a starting point for community events and territorial cohesion. In April 2017 though, before the start of the implementation phase of the project, representatives of Municipio 4 began to strongly oppose it.

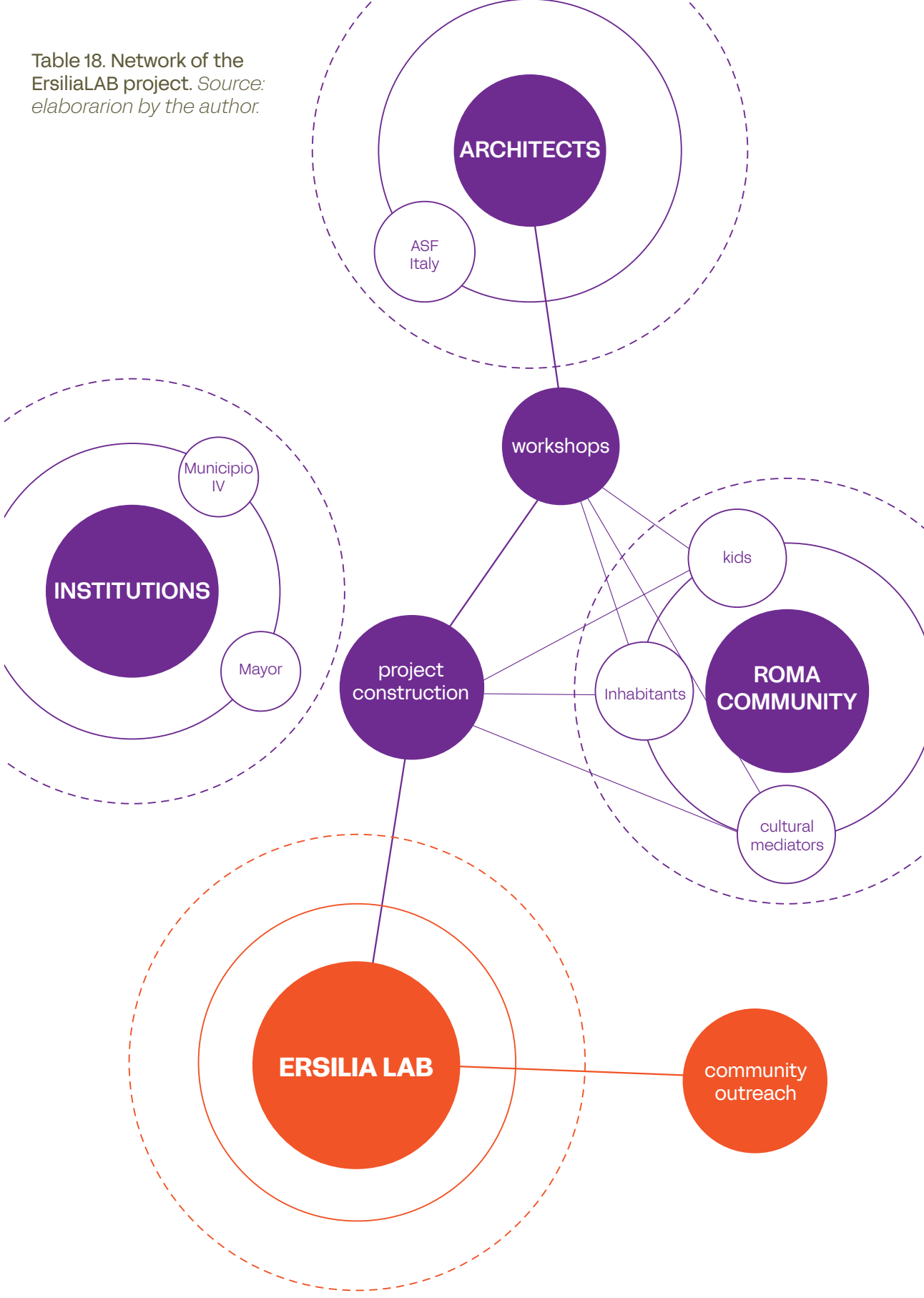
To avoid the project being born in a hostile

climate and thus losing its strong objective of building relationships with the gadje community, ASF Italy decided to opt for an awareness-raising project. The focus then shifted from the architectural project itself to the process, that would lead to the construction of an eventual artefact, and the construction of relational bridges in the meantime. The relationships established in the creation of what later became Ersilia’s cart were very strong because, as Silvia Nessi tells me in our interview (2026), they made possible to overcome the relational wall that existed between the camp inhabitants and the ASF Italia practitioners.

During the realisation of the carriage there were also moments of sharing with non-Roma citizens, and this contributed to make this experience very intense and strong (Ibid.). Precisely, from the end of 2017 until the beginning of the new year, the carriage and its mixed team, landed in several public spaces in Milan, with the Municipality authorisation. The travelling carriage through exhibitions and public debates aimed at introducing the Romani culture to the city (Cavalli et al. 2021).

The project ended in April 2019 due to the sudden closure of the CAT in Via Sacile and the subsequent relocation of the approximately 120 inhabitants to social housing buildings or other temporary accommodation centres, without them the project lost its main actors (interview with Silvia Nessi 2026).

Table 18. Network of the ErsiliaLAB project. *Source: elaboration by the author.*



04.2

Rome

*Self construction for
community emancipation at
Casilino 900 informal camp*

04 2

The early 1980s saw a glimmer of inclusion through the policies carried by two mayors (first Giulio Carlo Argan, 1976–1979, and then Luigi Petroselli, 1979–1981) who put some Abruzzesi Roma families from the Mandrione informal settlement in newly built public housing using the new Spinaceto District Plan (Bontempelli 2022; Careri et al. 2011).

Beside this isolated case, in the last decades of the 20th century, the situation in Rome was very similar to the rest of Italy. Segregating solutions started to being used, inspired by the recently adopted ‘Regional laws’ which instituted the ‘nomad areas’, confined areas aimed at respecting cultural diversity; Roma’s region, Lazio, was in fact the was the second region to adopt a regional law, specifically Law No. 82 of 21 May “Norme in favore dei rom” (eng: Regulations in favour of Roma)(Bontempelli 2022).

In 1994 the Rutelli administration pioneered a new ‘Piano Nomadi’ (eng: Nomad Plan), it was the first structured document regarding ethnical camps; it was designed to receive Roma fleeing from the former Yugoslavia and it aimed at concentrating them in peripheral locations, four new equipped areas were created, six existing Roma settlements were restructured and informal areas were cleared. This model though, as explained in section 02.5, failed to understand that these people were supposed to be recognised as refugees and thus started a process of ghettoisation, consolidating exclusive peripheral spaces that would obstruct social

integration. In addition to the ‘Nomad Plan’ Rutelli, starting in 1996, set a closed number to limit the presence of Roma in the Roman territory (Fantauzzi 2024).

The early 2000s saw the consolidation and expansion of large formal settlements to make room for families displaced from shanty towns and informal settlements. Later on, at the beginning of 2007, the ‘Villaggi della Solidarietà’ were created (eng: solidarity villages), they were a product of the ‘Patto per Roma sicura’ (eng.: Pact for Safe Rome) conceived by the mayor of the time Walter Veltroni.

These villages, that were in fact container camps, were thought and realised outside of Grande Raccordo Anulare, a high-speed ring road that visually separates Rome in the inner city and the outskirts. They were supposed to be four, to host 1000 people each, coming from the 23 formal camps of the inner city (Bontempelli 2022). The chosen areas also were often undeveloped and subject to various types of constraints, these new ‘villages’ were being built with urban planning parameters that should comply with the regulations for tourist villages but resemble more the standards set for emergency situations. In these ‘Solidarity villages’, the inhabitants had about 5 square metres per capita, more than the international minimum standard for emergency situations (3.5 square metres) but much less than the national legal minimum for housing units (14 square metres) (Careri et al. 2011).

In connection with the aforementioned ‘pact’ and with the ‘nomad emergency’ declared by the government (see section 02.6), one of the informal camps that ended up being dismantled, was the one of Casilino 900, which is also the case study that will be analysed in the following section. Casilino 900 was an informal camp that until the 1970s housed Italian ‘baraccati’, in the early 1970s there was a coexistence between the ‘baraccati’ and the first Roma citizens, and after the social housing laws (Law No. 865 of 22 October 1971, see section 02.4) it became a Roma-only settlement (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro, 2026). The camp grew to accommodate up to 1,000 people who had settled there, reproducing the Balkanisation of origin: Bosnia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia (Careri 2014) .

In 2010, the Alemanno administration, introduced a new ‘Piano Nomadi’ (eng: Nomad Plan) or ‘Alemanno Plan’ with the aim of concentrating 6000 people in 13 new formal camps, larger, more distant and more expensive for the municipality. The plan was essentially reproposing the Veltroni plan but emphasising even more the sections on surveillance and control. Furthermore, in order to access these villages, which were their homes, Roma people had to possess identification card to show to the police units that were constantly patrolling the entrances (Careri 2014).

Moreover, in order to reside in the camps, the residents had to be in possession of a card

called the DAST (Authorization document for temporary stay), which gave them the right to stay in the city of Rome for two years; however, in order to have it, they had to comply with a series of obligations: keeping their plot clean, paying the monthly fee and utilities, sending their children to school and not being able to receive guests from outside (Stasolla 2012).

It is worth noticing how in the 1990s the number of Romani people living in the camps was the same but the camps were 49 while, as of 2010, only 13; what was happening has been defined by architect, activist and scholar Francesco Careri (2014) as a ‘full-scale ethnic-based concentration’; moreover, the activist and founder of the NGO OsservAzione¹¹ Sergio Bontempelli (2022) defined this housing solutions as a sort of ‘correctional facilities’.

With the adoption of the National Strategy in 2013 things started to change. It all started from the European Union that requested, regarding the Romani population, to begin programming medium to long-term plans relating to home, work, education and health. Nevertheless the ‘camp system’ remained crucial. Some informal and tolerated camps got closed but, through evictions and partial relocation, most of the Romani people ended up in big, authorized camps. In the meantime, a growing number of people were beginning to criticise the camp system because of its elevated costs, its segregative nature and ineffectiveness in terms of inclusion.

¹¹ OsservAzione, founded in 2006, is a research and action centre for Roma and Sinti rights in Italy (Bontempelli 2007).

Table 19. Rome’s formal camp as of 2026

see annex 2026_03_Audero_02

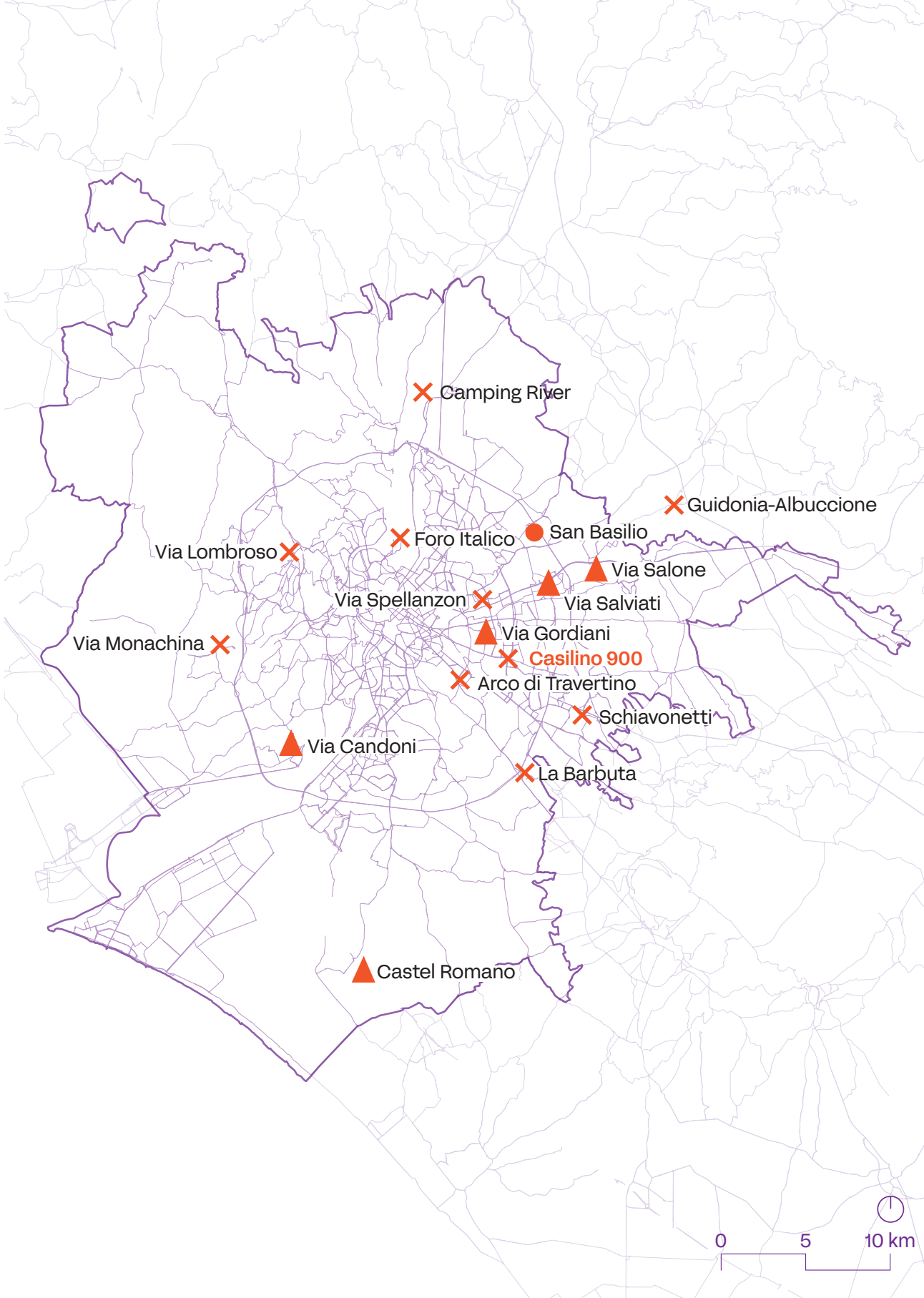
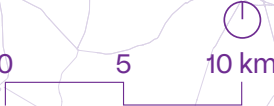


Figure 49. Booklet with Rome formal camps (and Casilino 900) with: camp name, date of opening, date of closing (if closed), Google earth aerial view. Source: elaboration by the author.

LEGEND

- open camps (2026)
- ✕ closed camps
- ▲ camps in the 'overcoming' process



Almost until the end of the second decade of the 2000s the camps became places of abandonment, with social programmes blocked after the Mafia Capitale scandal erupted. Mafia Capitale is the media name given to a vast system of corruption and illegal management of public funds in the city of Rome, which emerged between 2014 and the following years. In this system, Roma camps were one of the sectors through which contracts and public resources were channelled. Investigations have revealed connections between officials, cooperatives and entrepreneurs in the management of services related to these settlements, generating illicit profits and favouritism. In subsequent years, however, some of the most controversial judicial positions (particularly

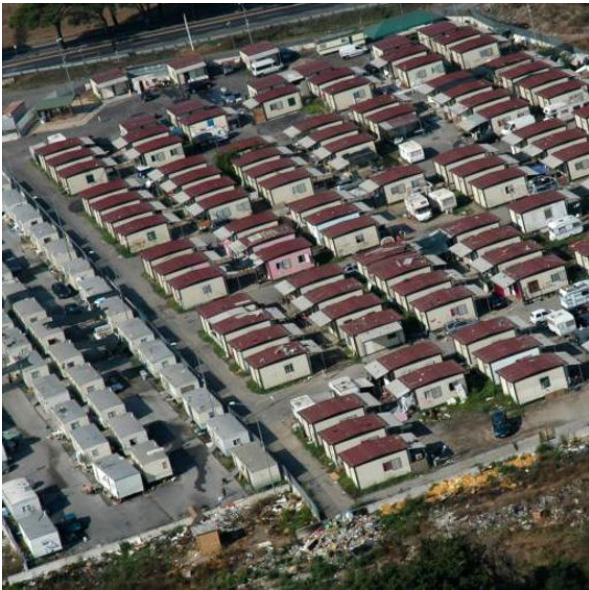


Figure 51. Formal camp of Castel Romano (Rome) aerial view. Source: RomaToday (2015).

those specific to the management of the camps) ended in absolutions in the Supreme Court (Associazione 21 Luglio 2014; Corriere della Sera 2016; Redattore Sociale 2014).

As of 2018–2019, there were still 15 formal camps for around 4,500 people and informal settlements. Following the National Strategy some formal camps were getting closed, but not always the residents rights were respected like in the case of the Camping River settlement. Camping river was a camp authorised and equipped by the municipality in 2005 on a privately-owned former campsite and home to approximately 420 people in 2017, the conditions were significantly better than the other ‘tolerated’ camps.



Figure 52. Formal camp of Castel Romano (Rome). Source: CanaleDieci (2022).

Following the expiration of the NGO’s management contract on 30 September 2017, residents were ordered to vacate the camp, and water services were terminated six weeks later. While the municipality framed this as an initiative to transition Roma residents into formal housing under the National Strategy (verbally promising rental subsidies contingent on legal leases) the plan was fundamentally flawed: landlords frequently rejected them due to anti-Roma bias or demands for financial guarantees that the municipality would only provide after a lease was signed. Consequently, many remained in the camp as “squatters” in their own long-term homes (Chiodelli et al. 2021).

The absence of oversight sparked concerns regarding unregulated new arrivals, leading the municipality to address ‘regulatory vacuum’ (which they created themselves) through aggressive policing. Starting in April 2018, a series of police operations resulted in partial evictions and a permanent security presence that restricted residents’ movement. In a desperate attempt to render the site uninhabitable, the city destroyed 17 of its own prefabricated homes (valued at €20,000 each) before the final clearance (Favale 2018). Despite an emergency stay from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) valid until July 27, the municipality cleared the remaining site a day early on July 26. This year-long process effectively criminalized a formerly legal, state-funded community. Ultimately, the ‘National Strategy’ failed: only

9% of residents found formal housing, while over half were rendered homeless, forced into precarious nearby camps or short-term shelters.

In the last years, with the Gualtieri administration, there was a course reversal and a new document has been adopted, the “Piano d’Azione del Cittadino 2023–2026” (eng: Citizen Action Plan 2023–2026).; it aims through the help of European funds, like PON Metro and PNRR, at closing all the remaining formal camps before 2026 while offering alternative housing solutions for all its inhabitants with the help of third sector associations (Comune di Roma 2024). An example of the adoption of the Plan was the closing in 2024 of the formal camp of via Lombroso. On the day the camp was closed, each of the 33 families present had already taken routes that would have relocated them to social housing complexes, temporary communal housing (SASST) or private homes. After the closure, the associations involved carried out projects to support each family, focusing on paths of inclusion including education, training, employment and access to services (Programma Integra 2024).

From the adoption of the plan to the time of writing, processes for the ‘overcoming’ of two other formal camps, Castel Romano and via Candoni, have been started and should be completed at the end of 2026 (Associazione 21 Luglio 2025a; RomaToday 2026).

04.2.1 Casilino 900: the biggest informal camp of the capital, hidden behind the woods

The area where the 'Casilino 900' camp stood is located on the eastern outskirts of the city of Rome, in one of the four corners created by the intersection of Via Casilina and Viale Palmiro Togliatti. The space was enclosed within a vast area of 120 hectares, uncultivated and undeveloped, which to this day contains buried Roman villas and archaeological finds, including remains dating back to the 6th century BC (Sovrintendenza Capitolina, n.d.).

In the 1960s, the area of the former Casilino was inhabited by underproletariat groups of Sicilians, Neapolitans and Calabrians and by families of travellers from Noto, Sicily.

In 1968, the first Roma arrived from Bosnia.

Over time, coexistence between Italians and Roma, never proved to be conflictual and by the mid-1980s, in addition to a small community of Sicilian travellers, there were many different ethnic groups in the camp. At the end of the decade, all Italian citizens were given public housing units (as mentioned in the previous section) and their homes were destroyed. The remaining Roma families then built new shacks using the floors of the demolished houses (Associazione 21 Luglio 2011).

Later on, in the 2000, the whole area was hit by a strong phenomenon of 'internal' migration consisting of many of the inhabitants of the Roma settlement Casilino 700, a nearby unauthorised settlement, being cleared out

Table 20. Movements of the Casilino 900 camp inhabitants. Source: elaboration by the author.

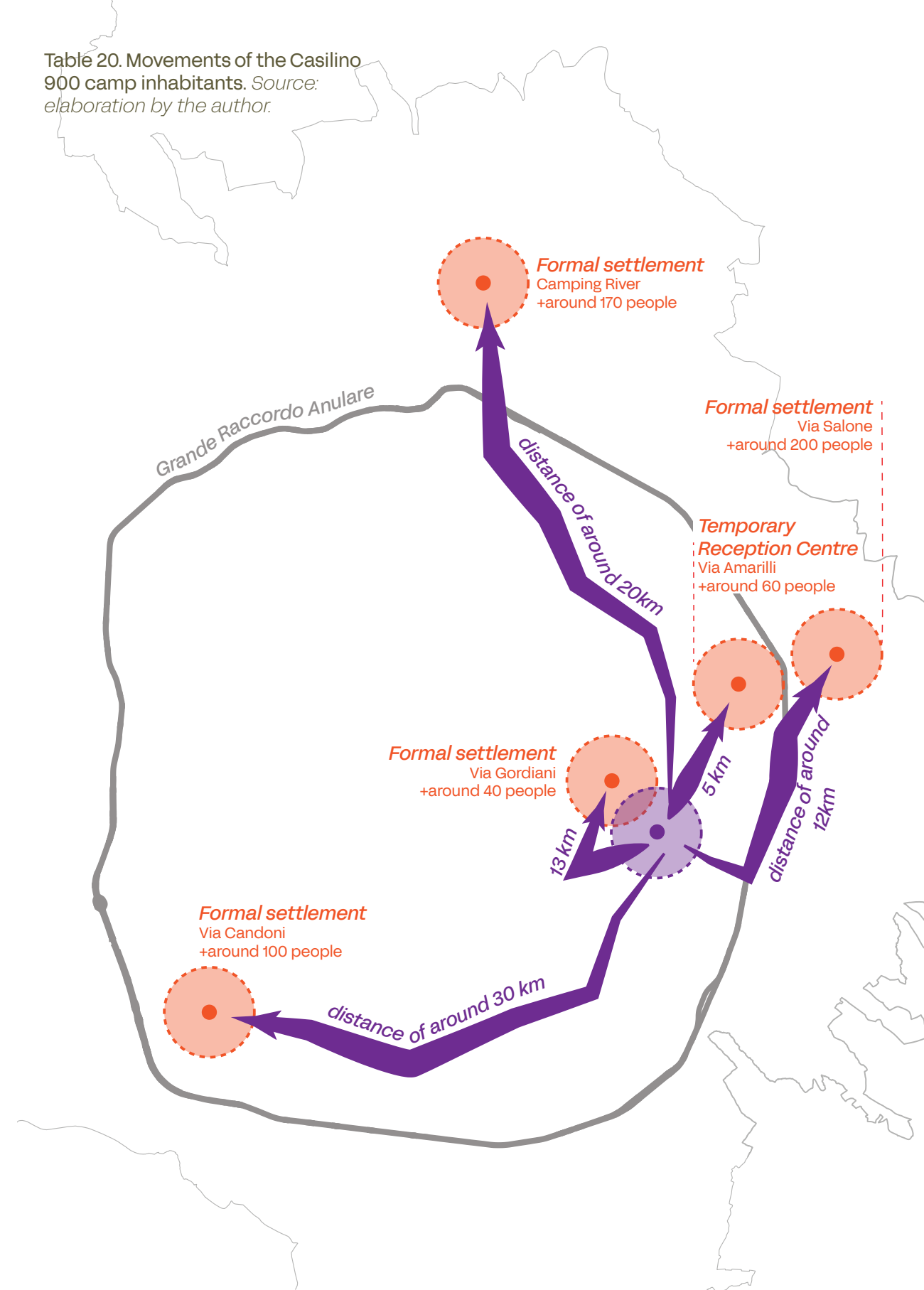


Figure 53. Aereal view of Casilino 900 camp surroundings. *Source: elaboration by the authore based on Google Earth snapshot.*
 Figure 54. Casilino 900 camp aerial view. *Source: elaboration by the authore based on Google Earth snapshot.*

on the 16 October because of the upcoming jubilee (Careri 2014).

In the 2001 census of camp, 703 inhabitants were registered (230 Bosnians, 110 Montenegrins, 60 Macedonians, 120 Yugoslavs, 160 Moroccans, families of Serbian, Croatian and Kosovar nationalities, a few Poles, Czechs and Italians). In the settlement, there were several drinking fountains, 130 chemical toilets and some families had water inside their homes. In addition, a dozen families had regular electricity and telephone connections (Associazione 21 Luglio 2011).

The topic 'Casilino 900', where 700 Roma had been living for years, was put on the table in the electoral debate and the political spotlight was shone on a space that had been forgotten for years. The eviction of the historic camp became, without its inhabitants' knowledge, a key pawn on which the 2008 election campaign to elect the new mayor of Rome was played out (Ibid.).

In July 2008, the Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade collective in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Roma Tre, as part of the research seminar 'Campus Rom- Plans&Slums', began a participatory process within the camp. The process, which was not without its setbacks, culminated in the self-construction of a housing prototype (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro, 2026).

Towards the end of November 2008, the

Roma community, in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture of Roma Tre and the collective Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade, organised the party 'Quando cadono i muri' (eng: when the walls fall). The mayor Alemanno also attended the event and therefore, the representatives of the camp, increasingly concerned about their future, took the opportunity to deliver a long letter to him in which they presented three realistic proposals for their future: an 'in situ' regeneration project, the creation of micro-areas within the VII municipality, or the project of a new settlement outside the VII municipality (Associazione 21 Luglio 2011).

On 19 January 2010, in the presence of the mayor Alemanno, prefect Pecoraro and councillor Belviso, the eviction operation began, involving 618 people (273 minors), who within a month were transferred to authorised camps such as Salone, Candoni, La Barbuta and Pisana using Red Cross vehicles, effectively dismembering the community that had been created over the years and without considering the proposals made by the latter, rather proposing a further segregating solution. The camps to which the municipality had the community moved were in fact part of the 13 camps planned by Alemanno, mentioned in the previous section (Ibid.).



Table 21. Diagram of Casilino 900 camp boundaries

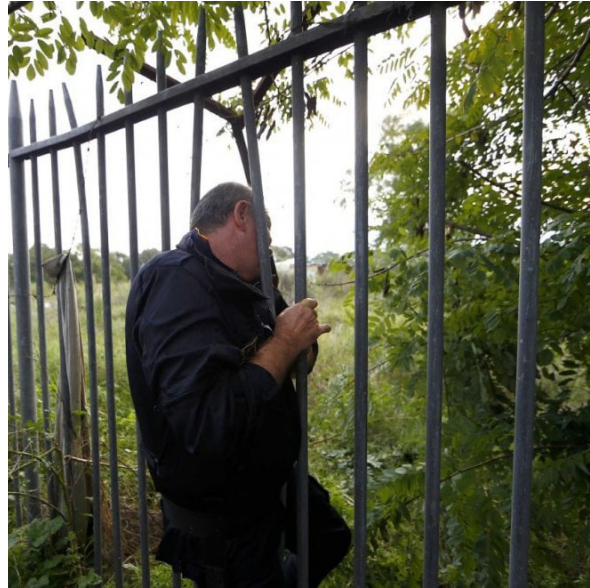


Figure 55. Casilino 900 fences. Source: *La Repubblica* (2018).

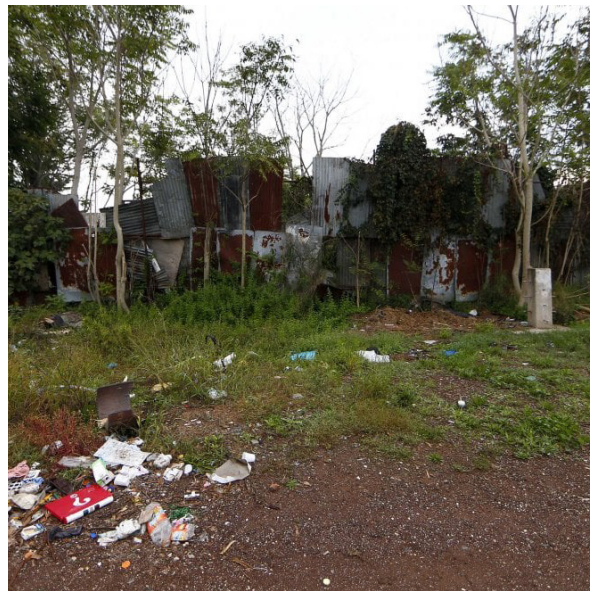
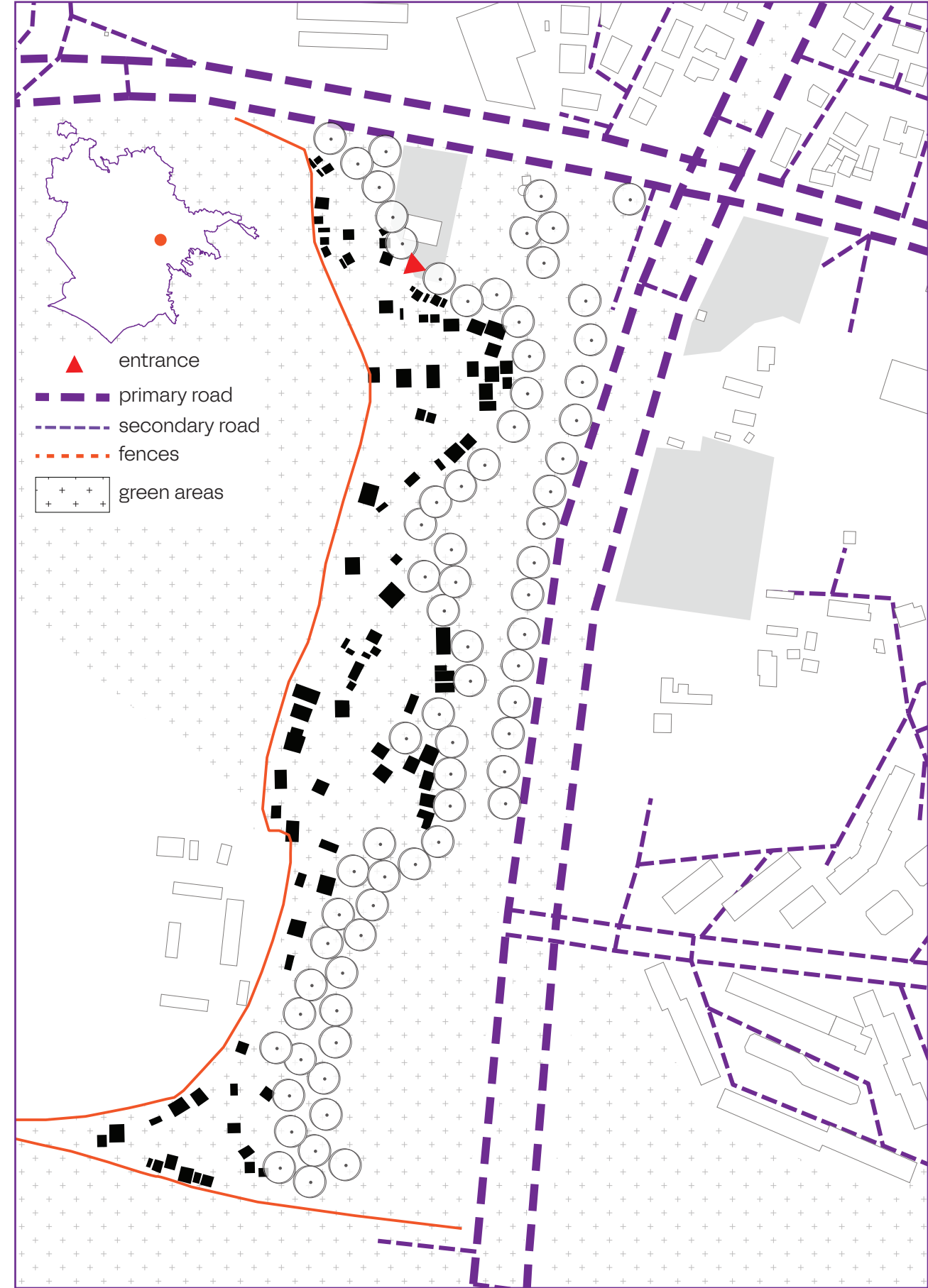


Figure 56. Casilino 900 fences. Source: *La Repubblica* (2018).



Deepening the topic of the eviction of Casilino 900, during our interview Azzurra Muzzonigro¹² adds:

“at Casilino 900 their (Roma people) little houses were placed according to their things, spontaneous, instead the camp (of Castel Romano) is much more compact, they are arranged in a grid and without any attention to the relationships between families, geographical and ethnic groups. [...] and precisely if at the Casino 900 there were 80 square metres for 8 people on average, so about 10 square metres per person, in the municipality's formal camps there were about 21 square metres for 8 people, so about 2 and a half square metres per person”.

Thus underlining how despite the slogans about the many needs to overcome the camps, in reality the community's housing issue ended up being worsened by the municipality itself.

¹² Azzurra Muzzonigro is an independent architect, curator and urban researcher. She is also co-founder, together with Florencia Andreola, of the social promotion association Sex & the City, which investigates the city from a gender perspective. She participated in the “Plans&Slums” project when she was an architecture student at the University of Roma Tre, in Rome. In relation to this project, she then decided to write her master's thesis on the Campo Casilino 900, which led her to go there every day to redesign each house so that she could better understand how they settled spontaneously and according to what relationships (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro, 2026).

Figure 57. Woman overlooking at the camp during a police control. Source: photograph by Stefano Montesi (2008).

Figure 58. Italian singer Mannarino recording the video of his song “Tevere Grand Hotel” in the Casilino 900 camp. Source: photograph by Stefano Montesi (2009).



04.2.2

Savorengo Ker: a self-built shack for Romani emancipation

As previously mentioned, the project was born from the collaboration between the Casilino 900 community, the collective Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade and the department of urban studies of the university of Roma Tre. The name 'Savorengo Ker' in the Romanes language means 'everyone's home' and was about the self-construction of an experimental house.

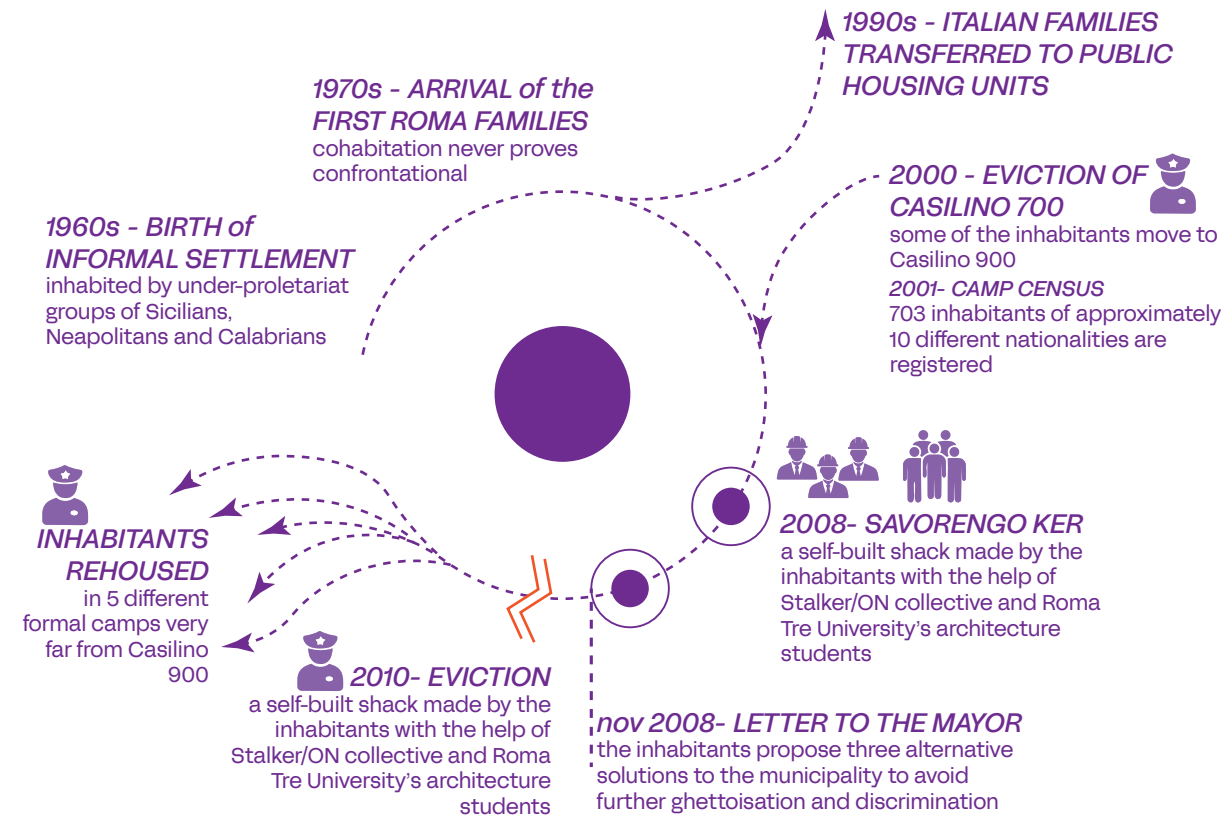
The experience of Savorengo Ker falls within a bigger project called 'Campus Rom/Plans&Slums', it was in fact an itinerant seminar where lecturers, students and researchers from dozens of different countries travelled through several 'nomad camps' and shanty towns in the city of Rome and then to former Yugoslavia. The goal of

the project was that of tackling the European dimension of the problem so to build a network between universities to address the issues of citizenship and the right to housing (Careri and Romito 2016).

In addition to the Campus Rom project, Triennale Milano (eng.: Milan Triennale) had invited Stalker to contribute to the exhibition 'Una Casa per Tutti' (eng.: a House for Everyone) and think about a housing prototype connected with the research they were carrying on regarding nomadic dwelling. (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro, 2026)

As previously explained, the camp had become a campaign object for both mayoral candidates in 2008; at that time, Stalker and

Table 22. Timeline of Casilino 900 camp's history. Source: elaboration by the author.



the students were carrying out a research on the houses of the Casilino 900 to understand who had built them, how, what typologies recurred, with how much money and what materials. In April 2008, after Alemanno's victory as mayor, who immediately promised that the Casilino would not be moved, Stalker together with the inhabitants, sketched out some guidelines regarding a possible project that could be realised within the camp: the text was called 'Casilino 900 da Campo a quartiere' (eng. Casilino 900 from camp to neighbourhood). No concrete answers were ever received from the municipality and this led to an initial stalling phase due to the fact that no confirmation to work within the rules had ever arrived (Careri and Romito 2016).

It is precisely in the mentioned text that the idea of building a 'house for all' appears, something that could meet the demand for housing of Romani people and that would be built by the Roma themselves. In this context, Stalker/ON and the students did not approach it with a desire to impose a specific design, but rather "...we only put limits in terms of building regulations and so on. As a matter of fact, the goal, the real issue, was to get the documents. And so, we can describe it as an experimental house, an open and indeterminate process, in which the form of the house is the product of the encounter between different cultures" (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro, 2026). In fact, the container, which at that time was the only solution proposed by the municipality,

does not qualify as habitable and this was an additional obstacle for the Roma community when it came to obtaining documents, so Savorengo Ker, if it wanted to present as an alternative to the container, had to comply with the regulations.

The intention was then that it would also become a meeting point, a point of hybridisation and contamination between the camp and the neighbourhood, it would help the camp begin to stop being a camp, a new place of cultural emancipation. As Francesco Careri recounts in the book 'Stalker/ON Campus Rom': "While we were building it and talking about it, it became from time to time a health centre, an after-school centre for children, a Balkan restaurant, the headquarters of the building cooperative that would reclaim the camp, in short, we had dreamt of many things and there were people who wanted to do them." (2016, 111, my translation).

The materials were purchased with university funds intended for research. The day on which the materials arrived at the construction site, however, the police also arrived, to ask for building permits despite the fact that there had been an agreement, only verbal, between Stalker and the president of the municipality, who had also given the patronage; in addition, the mayor and prefect had also been notified. From a purely legal point of view, the construction of Savorengo Ker began without written permission because despite requests,

Figure 59. Savorengo Ker structure. *Source: Azzurra Muzzonigro (2012).*
 Figure 60. The whole community participate to the construction on Savorengo Ker. *Source: Azzurra Muzzonigro (2012).*



Figure 61. Casilino 900 inhabitants constructing Savorengo Ker. *Source: photograph by Simona Caleo, Max Intrisano and Michele Carpani in CampusRom (2016).*
 Figure 62. Savorengo Ker after the fire. *Source: frame from Savorengo Ker documentary by Fabrizio Boni and Giorgio De Finis (2011).*



Figure 63. Savorengo Ker work commencement flyer. Source: Graphic design by Ilaria Vasdeki and Francesco Careri in CampusRom (2016).

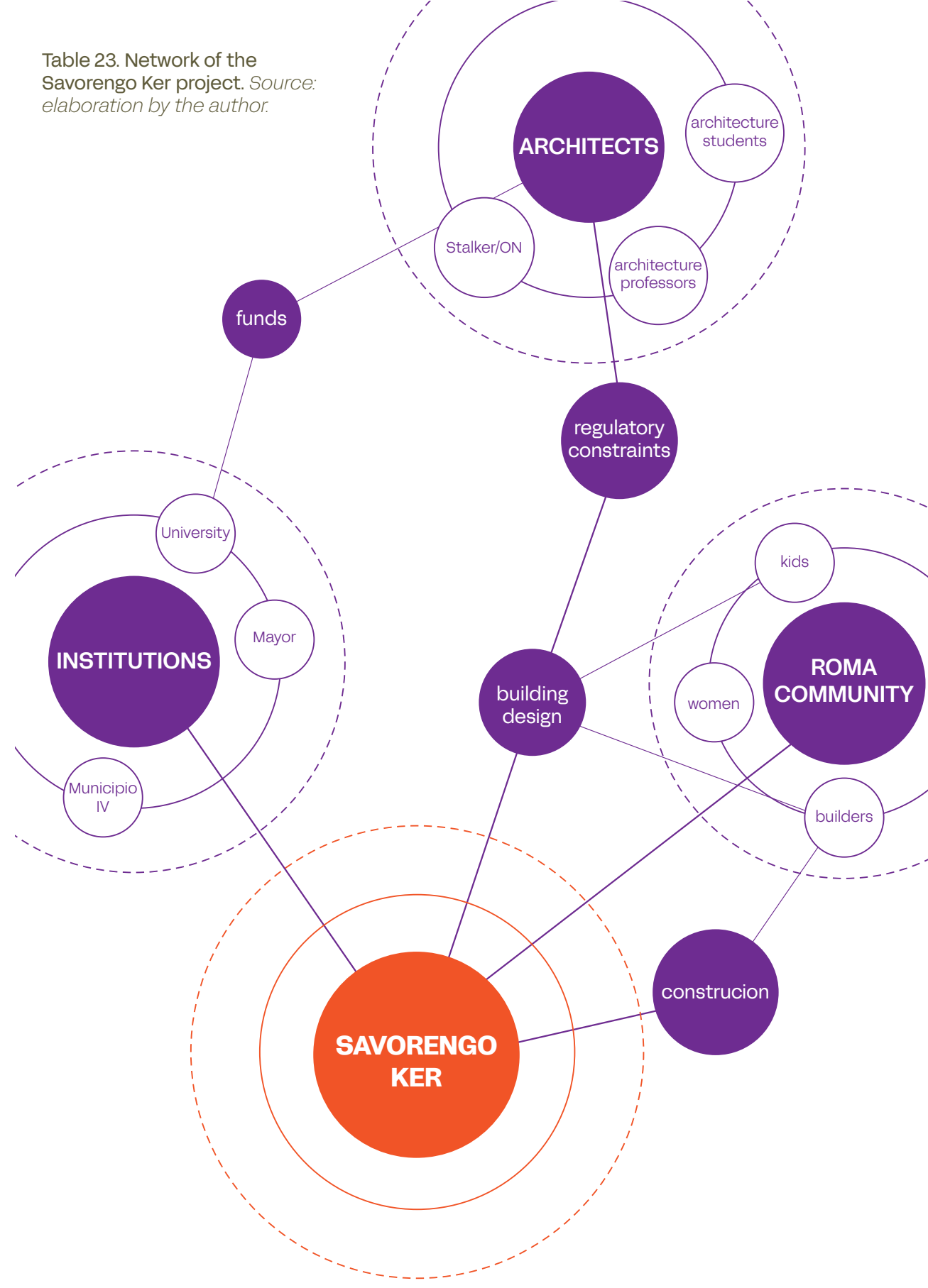
Table 23. Network of the Savorengo Ker project. Source: elaboration by the author.

no institutional response ever arrived. Only after the inauguration, a request to produce documents, in order to obtain a permit to unblock the situation, arrived. And despite the fact that within a week all the documents were presented (e.g. the clearance by the Italian multinational energy company ENI, which owned the land), this led to nothing, because even then there was never a response from the municipality, until on the morning of the 11th December 2008, the inhabitants woke up and the ‘shack’ was reduced to a skeleton because of a fire erupted during the night before (Careri and Romito 2016).

Inside the camp, the start of the construction sites was publicised through a flyer inviting everyone “to the first self-construction and reciproCity workshop”. (Ibid. 2016, 113). The construction supervisors and founding pillars of the project were Mirsad and Senad Sedjovic, two Montenegrin cousins who had built the most beautiful houses in the camp, Klej Salkanovic, Najo’s cousin (the camp representative), then Hakija Husovic, a Bosnian who lived in a two-storey house with an external staircase, a model for Savorengo, and finally Bairam Hasimi, from the Kosovar-Macedonian community. The only sketch that was drawn by the architecture students was purely functional in order to understand the amount of materials that needed to be bought, again Francesco Careri in the book ‘Stalker/ON Campus Rom’: “Our only demand was that the house should be of two storeys,

to consume less land and increase the density of a hypothetical new settlement. They asked us for the measurements of the floor plan, 6 x 4 metres, in a few minutes they built the walls and erected them, assessed that it was too small, and the next day added a bay to expand it to 6 x 6. In short, they knew what and how to do it” (2016, 115, my translation).

From day to day, in the evening at dinner, through discussions open to everyone, after the workday was over, they would talk about the progress and what was needed for the next day. Azzurra Muzzonigro told me: “this



process had in fact involved the whole community, the construction site went ahead and it was a really beautiful place; the children were there all the time and drew, others built, the women prepared lunches for everyone, big bonfires where decisions for the next day were taken, in short it was a beautiful process” (2026, my translation).

The completion of the work and the inauguration of Savorengo Ker was another moment of great tension as no institutional figure showed up and subsequently the house was sealed, thus making it unusable. The ‘house of everyone’ therefore remained there, in the camp, abandoned, until one day in December, as mentioned earlier, they found it burnt down by a fire, whether arson

or not, has never been clarified, and so “the idea went up in smoke, the dream of a Roma community that could self-determine in some way” (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, regarding the lessons learnt Francesco Careri said: “I’d say that the most important thing that we all learnt is that the space of integration can be produced through an act of collective creation, on the construction site, building one’s house together, eating in the evening in front of the fire and thinking together about what to build the next day.” (Careri and Romito 2016).

Figure 64. Group picture with Savorengo Ker. Source: photograph by Giorgio de Finis (CampusRom 2016).



“I’d say that the most important thing that we all learnt is that the space of integration can be produced through an act of collective creation, on the construction site, building one’s house together, eating in the evening in front of the fire and thinking together about what to build the next day.”

-Francesco Careri, my translation

04.5

Naples

*Ma.Rea project, a
glimmer in the story of
abandonment of Giugliano
settlement*

04 3

As already mentioned in section 02.2, the first Roma arrived in Italy around the 15th century, settling in various areas, including Naples and southern Italy. This gave rise to the community of those who in the local dialect are called the 'napulengre' (i.e., the Roma from Naples) who distinguished themselves by their deep integration and significant contribution to Neapolitan culture. Over the centuries, the napulengre have developed their own cultural identity, distinct from other Italian and international Roma communities.

In spite of this positive window in the history of the Roma community in Naples, to date, the metropolitan city of Naples, as far as the Italian panorama is concerned, is the area with the highest number of people in housing emergency, about 3,000 people, which is equivalent to 0.11% of the metropolitan city of Naples, against a national rate of 0.03% (Associazione 21 Luglio 2024b).

As the rest of Italy in the last two decades of the 20th century, Naples and its metropolitan area, were a destination of the Roma migrations first from the former Yugoslavia and then from Romania. There are no great informations about how the Roma community was addressed in Naples until the beginning of the 2000s. It seems though that in general the approach was that of creating segregated camps and using forced evictions as a solution to what was considered a problem.

The first 'housing solution' specifically targeting the Roma community was about the construction of a 'Solidarity village' in Secondigliano (a Neapolitan neighbourhood), next to a correctional facility. The newly built 'camp' consisted of 92 containers with outdoor toilets, water supply, gas and electricity connection. It was thought for welcoming a Romani community from another settlement. As mentioned in the report 'Segregare Costa' (eng.: segregating costs): "Between 2005 and 2011, the interventions implemented for the integration of the Roma community in Naples were, as far as infrastructure is concerned, aimed at housing solutions with exclusive approach (on an ethnic basis), i.e. the design and/or construction of new settlements or reception centres exclusively aimed at housing Roma families" (Berenice et al. 2012).

It is in fact in 2005 that the municipality, lead at the time by Rosa Russo Iervolino, inaugurated the first structure entirely dedicated to the Roma community called 'Centro di Prima Accoglienza' (eng.: Initial Reception Centre), for this purpose a former school was used. In 2010, half a million euros from European funds (PON) were allocated for the centre's renovation. Later on because of its temporary and segregational character it was heavily criticised by Amnesty International¹² (2019), which asked also for the intervention of the Council of Europe on violation of EU law with the creation of a 'mono-ethnic' environment.

In 2006 the guidelines for the realisation of Roma settlements in the Province of Naples were approved and applied. In 2008, the mayor of Naples Rosa Russo Jervolino, based on these guidelines, drew up a first project for the urban area of Cupa Perillo in Scampia (Neapolitan neighbourhood). The project used the structure of the 'camp/container', similar to the one in Secondigliano: an area equipped with prefabricated buildings to accommodate around 800 people. Unlike the Secondigliano case, however, this new project formalised a space that had already been inhabited by Roma communities for about 30 years. However, the plan was blocked the following year because part of the area set aside turned out to be privately owned and not, as initially believed, by the City of Naples (Associazione 21 Luglio 2024c).

Until the end of the 2010s there is a consolidation of a system based on monoethnic 'villages' and centres consisting of projects specifically dedicated to Romani people that still were not allowing them to access ordinary housing services.

In the meantime, encouraged by the publication of the National Strategy, the 'Laboratorio Abitare Cupa Perillo' (eng.: Living Cupa Perillo Laboratory) experiment was born, conducted through a process of active involvement of Roma and non-Roma people, thanks to the association 'Chi rom e...chi no'¹³ (eng.: who is rom...and who is not).

The laboratory first project culminated in the self-construction of a school in the camp of Cupa Perillo. Barbara Pierro, one of the leading figure of the association and lawyer, showed up the day of construction with a friend who was also an architect but the sketch they wanted to show was not even taken into consideration by the Roma community, she adds in an interview: "we were labourers, it was the Roma who told us how to do it"(Italia Che Cambia 2014, my translation). The project was born with the aim of triggering an osmotic process between the camp and the neighbourhood, so that the camp could no longer be a ghetto within the ghetto, being that Scampia was already a ghetto in itself. Once finished, the shack ended up being a place in which Roma and Neapolitan children and adults were attending workshops and blending together (Ibid.).

Regardless these positive experiences, in Naples metropolitan area, new formal camp were being built; it is an example the one in Masseria del Pozzo opened in 2013, that was supposed to house 384 people of which 218 were minors, and which was closed in 2016 through forced eviction due to complaints of human rights violations. Moreover, in May 2014, Mayor Luigi de Magistris approved a preliminary redevelopment project for the construction of a 'Roma village' in the Municipality VIII of Naples, in Cupa Perillo.

¹² Amnesty International v. Italy-Complaint No. 178/2019

¹³ Chi rom e...chi no is a social promotion association founded in Scampia, a northern suburb of Naples, in 2002. It has taken roots in the area starting from the creation of meaningful relations between the Roma and Italian communities of the neighbourhood and the city, through cultural and pedagogical interventions, working in the periphery understood as a place of experimentation and sharing of good practices. Chi rom e...chi no designs and realises workshops for minors, adolescents, women, in schools, in the Roma camp, in the neighbourhoods and in the public spaces of Scampia to activate concrete processes of citizenship and participation in social, personal and collective emancipation paths, for the positive transformation of an entire territory (Italia che cambia 2024).

Table 24. Naples and its Metropolitan Area's formal camp as of 2026. *Source: elaboration by the author.*

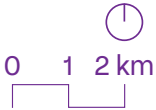
see annex 2026_03_Audero_03



Figure 65. Booklet with Naples formal camps with: camp name, date of opening, date of closing (if closed), Google earth aerial view. *Source: elaboration by the author.*

LEGENDA

- open camps (2026)
- ✕ closed camps
- ▲ camps in the 'overcoming' process



The project envisaged building temporary structures to house 409 people, half of those present in the settlement at the time, for about 75 dwellings on two levels. The project, which shared with the previous one the mono-ethnicity of the settlement, its temporary nature, its location on the edge of the urban fabric, and the absence of an integrated approach, immediately became the subject of a dispute between the municipality of Naples and some local and national associations, which advocate for Roma rights ('Associazione 21 luglio', 'Chi Rom e...chi no', 'European Roma Rights Centre' and 'OsservAzione') that highlighted its segregating character and questioned the European Commission about it. Despite the European Commission's contrary indications, the City of Naples nevertheless deliberated on the final project in December 2014, but in April 2015 the European Commission reiterated the same principles. After months of round tables and negotiations, the City of Naples lost the fund that had to be spent by 2015 and the new settlement was therefore not realised (Associazione 21 Luglio 2024c).

Since then, the Neapolitan administration has not acted on the issue of Roma communities until 2017, when a forced eviction was carried out in two big informal camps in the Gianturco area (around 1400 people) (Ibid. 2024c) and later on, a new container-camp was inaugurated (in the area of via Del Riposo) but with space for only 200 people; these actions were heavily criticised

by Amnesty International for violation of human rights and the continuous use of segregated solutions report (2019).

In other municipalities of the Metropolitan City of Naples, the situation was and is quite similar, characterised by the construction of mono-ethnic villages (the last in 2018 in Afragola) and the recourse to evictions without providing housing alternatives, like in the case of Giugliano in Campania settlement, which will be analysed as a case study in the next section (Associazione 21 Luglio 2024c).

As of today, Naples remains one of the cities with the highest number of Roma citizens in housing emergencies, both in formal and informal camps, where no serious processes have been initiated to overcome the camp situation. The Abramo project was launched in 2015 with the promise of using a large amount of money from European funds to foster solutions. The funds though were only partially used for some small project regarding the school sphere, with no transparency of the precise amount of money spent (Ibid.).

“When you live in a Roma camp you are used to moving, but not by choice. The first time we had to leave because they threw stones and firecrackers at us, then they set fire to the houses. The second time it was the police who evicted us. Now we live in a municipality camp, but I don’t have documents and I can’t get a legitimate job. In a few years I don’t know where I will be.”

-Floriana, inhabitant of the camp of via del Riposo (Facchini 2024)

04.3.1 Giugliano in Campania: the slum of via Carrafiello

From the ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) census of 2022, it resulted that the Roma people living in Giugliano were around 800, that is the 0.64% of Giugliano population that is 20 times the national average of 0.03% (Associazione 21 Luglio 2025d).

In Giugliano, besides the case that will be analysed in this paragraph, there are two other Romani settlements: one formal in the 'Zona ASI'¹⁵ (eng: ASI area), where the recorded living conditions are very poor, and an informal one in its proximities.

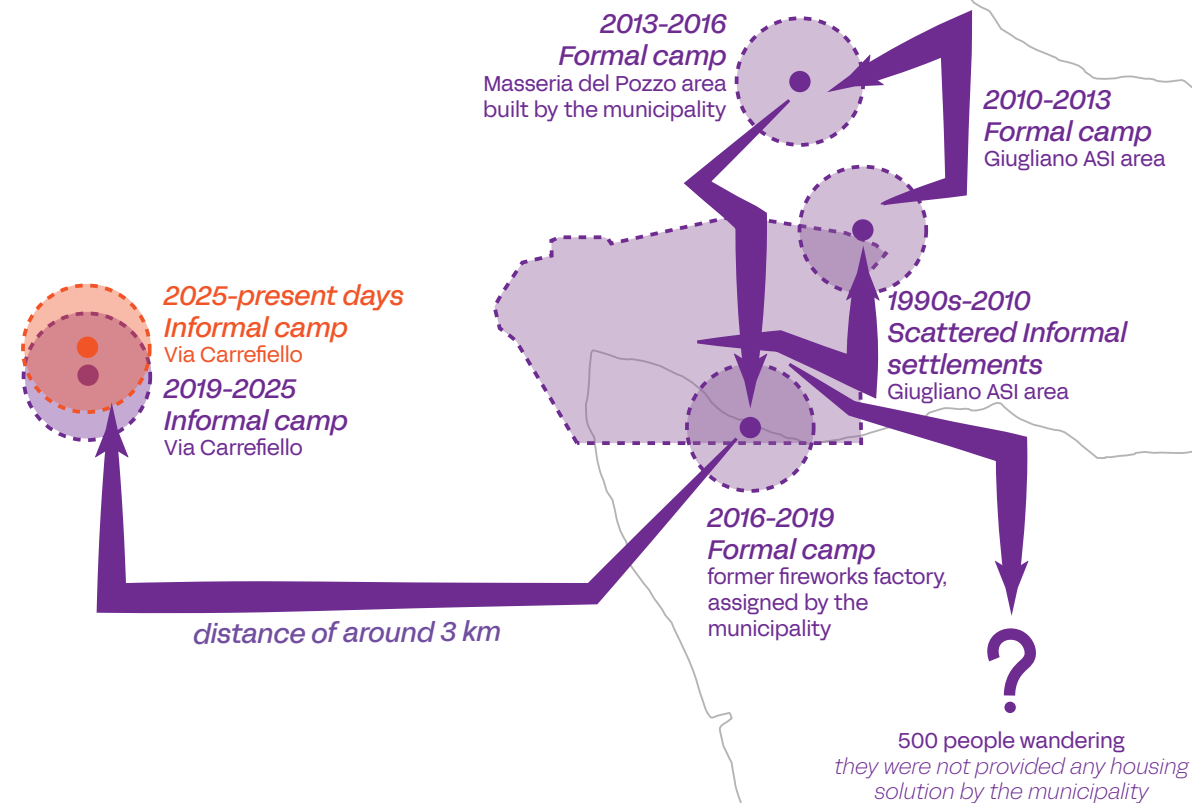
The ways in which the current situation of the informal camp in via Carrafiello in Giugliano in Campania has come about are emblematic of the management of the Roma community in the Metropolitan City of Naples (CMN), if not worse. The families that live today in the shanty town of via Carrafiello have been moving for over 30 years throughout the northern province of Naples, particularly in

the area from Giugliano in Campania to Lago Patria, around the 'Zona ASI' of Giugliano-Qualiano. The majority of the inhabitants, who are of Bosnian origin, fled the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Since those years, in the area ASI of Giugliano, there was a fragmented Roma community of around 300 units that that by 2010 had grown to 800 people (Ibid.).

In 2011 the community endured the first forced eviction that later led to the construction, in 2013, of what we already mentioned as the camp of Masseria del Pozzo. The camp was deliberately opened in an area where there was known presence of illegal waste disposal sites.

In 2016 the community was subjected to another forced eviction, and the only solutions provided by the municipality was to move them in an abandoned fireworks factory, therefore recreating another informal settlement.

Table 25. Movements of the Giugliano camp inhabitants.
Source: elaboration by the author.



¹⁵ The 'Zone ASI' are areas managed by the 'Consorzio per l'Area di Sviluppo Industriale' (eng.: Industrial Development Area Consortium); they are geographically delimited and specifically equipped to house production facilities, factories and logistics centres. The original objective (born mainly after the Second World War with the 'Cassa del Mezzogiorno', a key Italian public institution for financing infrastructure and industrialisation in Southern Italy) was to stimulate economic growth in less industrialised areas by offering ready-to-use infrastructure and facilities for companies (Adorno, n.d.).

In 2019, another forced eviction was carried out; at this point, it was the third eviction from the municipality where an alternative housing solution was not offered, the reason behind this eviction was the absence of proper sanitary conditions. After brief stops, the families settled down on a privately owned piece of land, in via Carrafiello, also in Giugliano in Campania.

In 2024, because of some exposed cables, a little girl died from electrocution. The tragic event sped up the procedures for evicting the settlement once again. In 2025, the municipality carried out the fourth forced eviction without alternative solutions and the community moved of only a few hundred metres, on another privately owned piece of land (Ibid.).

Associazione 21 Luglio, which has been fighting for the rights of the Roma community in Italy for 15 years (see footnote 2, section 01.3 ‘applied methodology’), is currently in the process of mapping the community of via Carrefiello in order to better understand their needs and later on find the best housing solution for each family. As of today, the conditions in the settlement are very poor and the main housing typologies found are shacks, caravans, camper vans, tents and vans. There is only one fountain with drinking water and no electricity; furthermore, on the main road there are five chemical toilets, which are not used, so the inhabitants created their own digging holes in the ground, enclosed by wooden boards or curtains (Associazione 21 Luglio 2025d, 2025c)

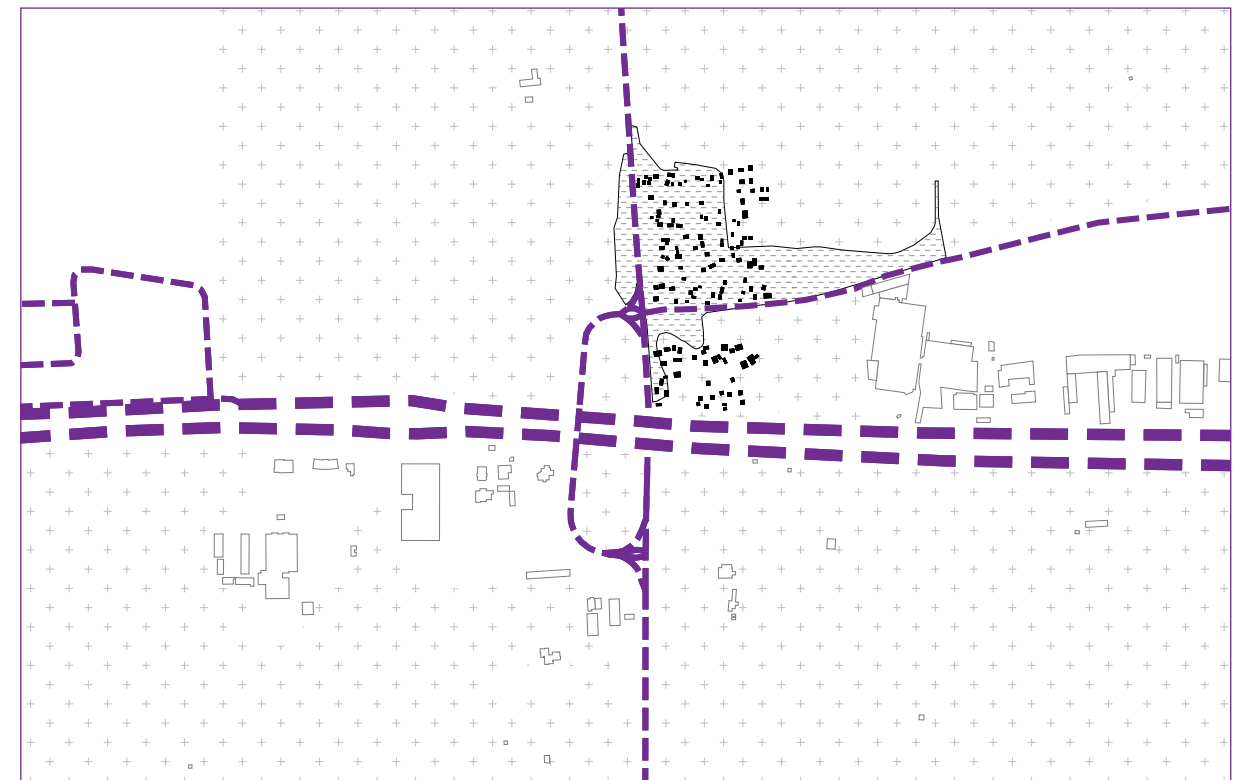
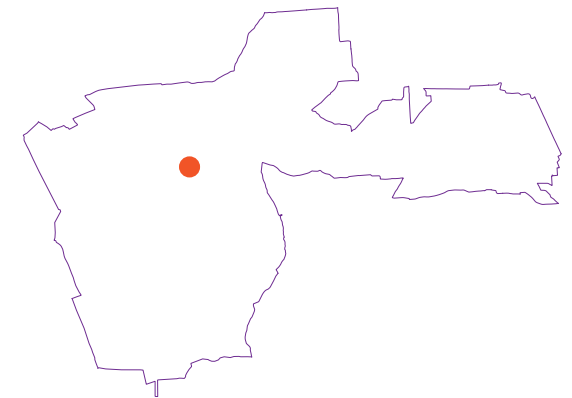
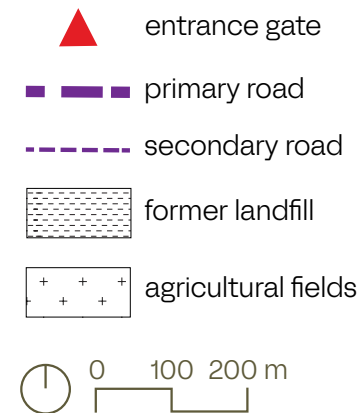
Figure 66. Aerial view of the Giugliano camp.
Source Il Mattino (Palumbo 2024).
Figure 67. Kid living in the Giugliano camp.
Source: Associazione 21 Luglio (2025d).





Figure 68. Aerial view of Giugliano camp surroundings. *Source: elaboration by the author based on Google Earth snapshot.*
 Figure 69. Giugliano camp aerial view. *Source: elaboration by the author based on Google Earth snapshot.*

Table 26. Diagram of Giugliano camp boundaries. *Source: elaboration by the author.*



04.3.2

Ma.Rea project and future possibilities

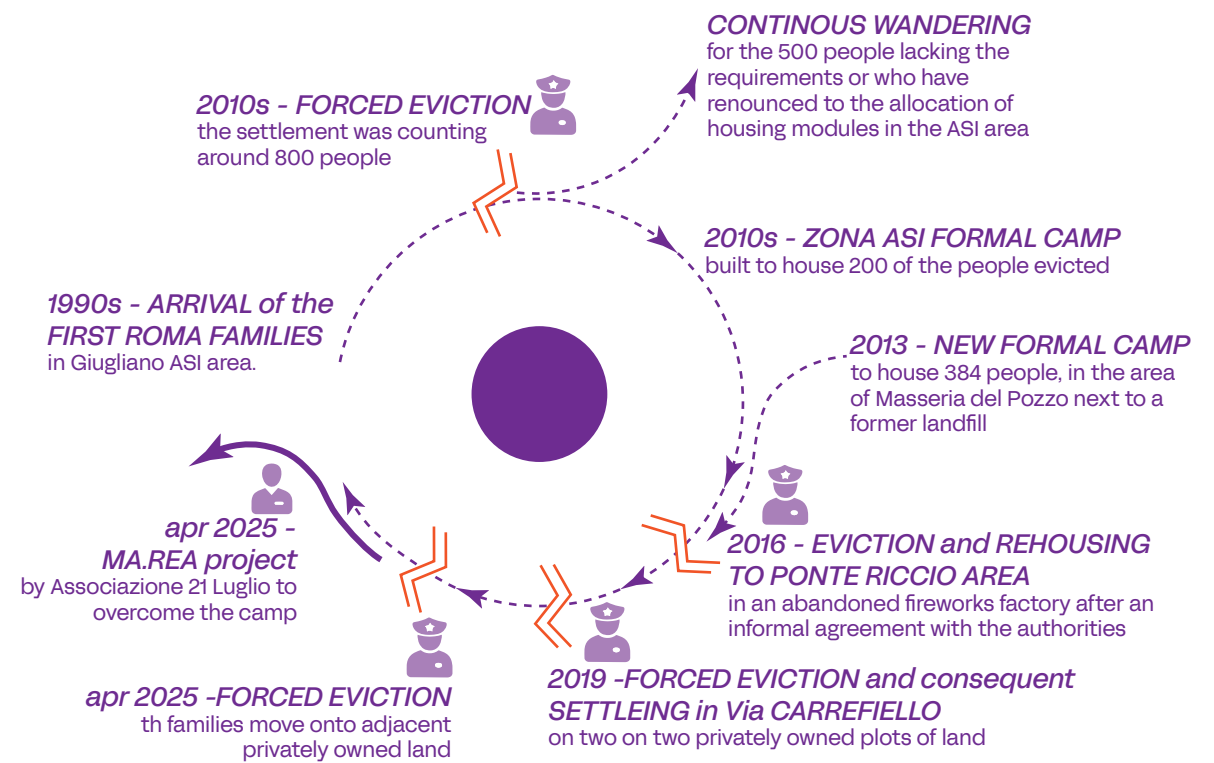
The Ma.Rea. (Mapping and Realising Communities) model, devised by Associazione 21 Luglio, represents an innovative approach to definitively overcoming Roma camps in Italy, proposing a structured alternative to simply closing settlements. The model is divided into 6 phases and 16 actions and rests on three fundamental pillars: overcoming the ethnic approach, the active participation of beneficiaries and the focus on interactions between the individual and the social system. The process begins with listening to the community and the creation of a ‘Gruppo di Azione Locale’ (eng.: Local Action Group), composed of settlement leaders and stakeholders, whose task is to draw up a ‘Piano di Azione Locale’ (eng.: Local Action Plan) with clear objectives and timeframes. This plan includes traditional housing solutions and customised inclusion paths, supported by a multidisciplinary task force

and a communication campaign aimed at building social consensus on the collective benefits of the operation. The model concludes with a monitoring and impact assessment phase, necessary to guarantee long-term sustainability and accompany families even after they have obtained a new home (Associazione 21 Luglio 2025b).

For now, in the via Carrafiello ‘camp’, phase 1 of the Ma.Rea model has been carried out and concluded (30 April-30 July 2025); it involved the collection and systematisation of useful data to get a complete picture of the community living in the camp. The listening campaign was carried out by a team of three experts from Associazione 21 luglio, supported by professor Flora Di Donato and six students from the ‘Statelessness Legal Clinic’¹⁶ (Legal Clinic for Stateless or Persons at Risk of Statelessness) of the Law Department of the University of Naples

¹⁶ The ‘Statelessness legal clinic’ project (scientific responsible Prof. Flora Di Donato) is part of a collaboration between the Department of Law of the University of Naples Federico II and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), on the basis of a partnership agreement (MOU) also involving the Universities of Roma Tre and Turin (IUUC). Its scientific head is professor of Philosophy of Law and Clinical Legal Training, Flora Di Donato. The aim of the project is: to provide support to stateless persons or persons at risk of statelessness in order to guarantee them protection and access to rights and services; to foster research and knowledge of issues related to the phenomenon of statelessness; to develop clinical-legal studies, promoting the training of students in this field; to encourage the strengthening of a network of academics with expertise in statelessness and the exchange of good practices related to the resolution of statelessness cases.

Table 27. Timeline of Giuliano camp’s history.
Source: elaboration by the author.



Federico II. The survey included periodic visits during which the settlement was mapped and the inhabitants were met in a capillary manner (Associazione 21 Luglio 2025d).

The picture that came out from the mapping, highlights the complex and diversified housing situation, 160 households for more than 500 people divided into 116 shacks, 41 camper vans and 2 containers. Also, as already mentioned before, there is only one fountain of drinkable water on the main street, no sewerage and rainwater runoff and no electricity connection, for these reasons the families use generators, propane gas cylinders to cook and wood-burning stoves for heating. The materials used for the shacks' construction are wood, iron or residual materials, which do not guarantee adequate hygienic conditions nor offer acceptable living conditions and above all safety, considering the methods used for cooking and heating explained earlier (Ibid. 2025d). Furthermore, the housing units are all without toilets, the absence of sufficient bathrooms for the community in the settlement and of a sewage system is also particularly alarming.

In addition to the objectively deprived conditions of the settlement, evident from direct observation and the Associazione 21 Luglio's inspections, there is a further health hazard, less visible but just as serious: prolonged exposure to toxic substances and waste in the area. The shanty town,

in fact, located near toxic waste dumps, has been suffering the negative effects of this proximity for about 30 years. The inhabitants are allegedly subjected to the daily inhalation of harmful substances with serious repercussions on their general health.

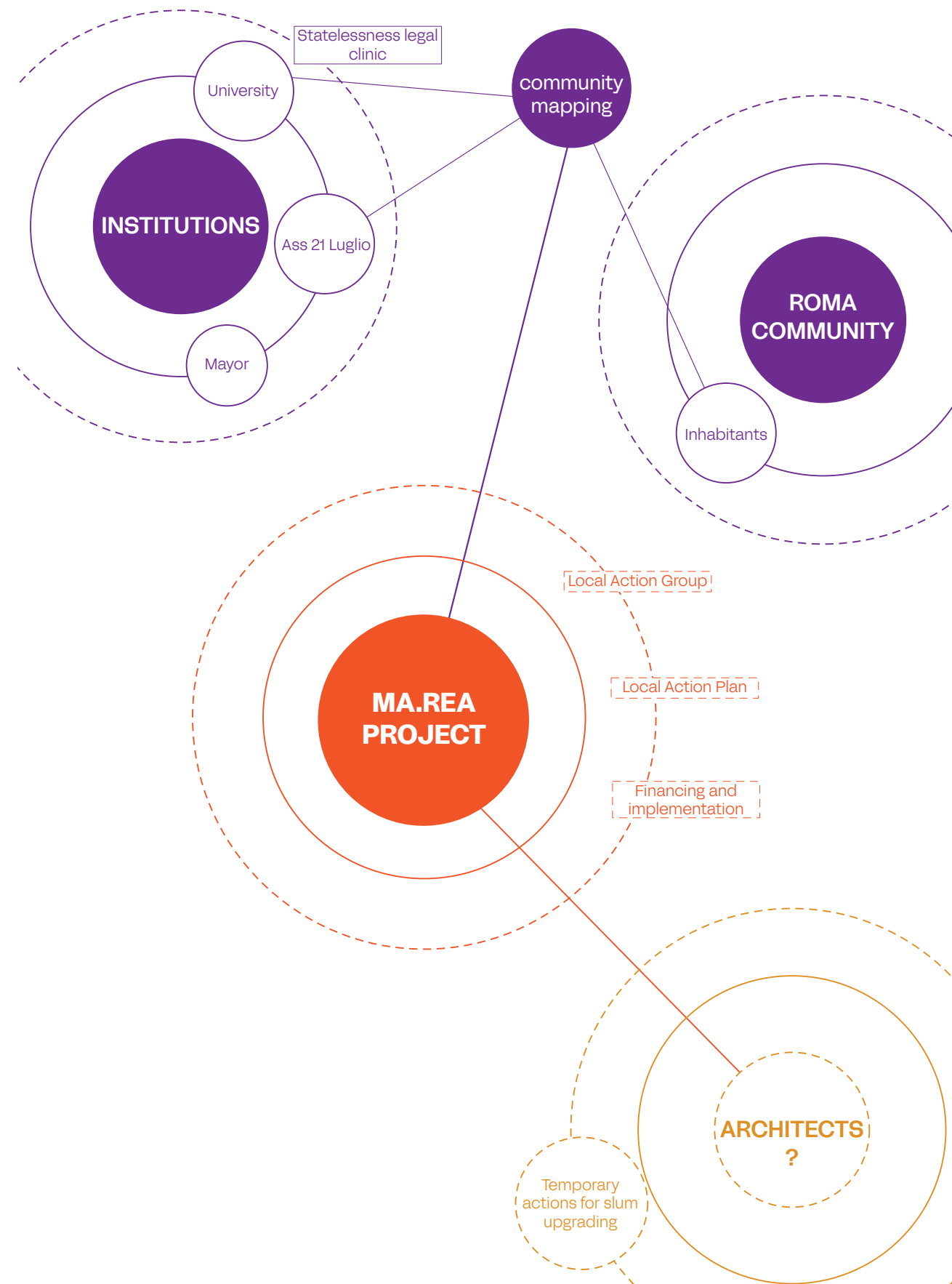
Finally, thanks to the collaboration of Associazione 21 Luglio with the Statelessness Legal Clinic, which contributed to analysing the legal and social condition of the families present while providing legal assistance, the trust in the team has increased. The enthusiasm aroused by the legal orientation and primary training activities generated a form of positive demand and expectation, with an insistent request for help and attention, the result of a desire to finally see their rights recognised and imagine a concrete change in their lives (Ibid. 2025d).

During our conversation, Carlo Stasolla, president of Associazione 21 Luglio, explained to me that so far, because of the way the Ma.Rea model is structured, there were never any architects or planners included in their task forces. He proceeds to explain that in complex situations, like the one just described of Giugliano, where the institutional and cultural framework of the area contributed and contributes to the slow pace of operations, the overcoming of the camp could happen in a time frame of years. Therefore Stasolla, after stressing the importance of proceeding case by case, suggests: "I could say that the science of

“I sleep in this **filthy shack** and all my children and grandchildren live with me. The houses here are all made of wood, everything is dirty: what are we supposed to do? **It makes me ashamed to sleep in a dirty shack but in the end I have to sleep there!**”

-30 years old men living in the via Carrafiello settlement
(Associazione 21 Luglio 2025b, 21)

Table 28. Network of the Ma.Rea project and future possibilities.
Source: elaboration by the author.



architecture might be useful in a dimension where there are settlements in which the overcoming becomes very complex and lasts for years, in this phase, where one is in an extremely precarious condition, one can find in architecture hints for housing improvements, which however are always transitory because then the final solution as far as we are concerned is a conventional dwelling” (2025, my translation).

Starting from Carlo Stasolla’s suggestion, we can then reflect on how we, as architects, could help in situations of extreme degradation, such as the one just described, by implementing temporary solutions that fall within the category of slum upgrading.

When talking about the importance of slum upgrading, specifically regarding children, Silvia Nessi of Architects without Borders points out: “3 or 4 (years) for an adult is not a huge amount of time, for a child going from 6 to 10, from 10 to 14, it is a huge amount of time, it is a extremely important part of life” (2026, my translation).

Therefore, the implementation of temporary solutions, should the process of overcoming the settlement take years, would bring significant improvements to the lives of the people living there, also given that minors in the Giugliano settlement are 42% of the total population (Associazione 21 Luglio 2025d).

05

DISCUSSING ARCHITECTS' AGENCY IN ROMA'S DEMAND OF THEIR 'RIGHT TO THE CITY'

05

- 05.1 Participation
- 05.2 Outside relationships
- 05.3 Conflict management
- 05.4 Spaces involved
- 05.5 Process vs Result

The following chapter moves from a case-by-case analysis to a transversal discussion of themes, common to the analysed case studies, trying to unravel the agency of architects in these cases, so as to try to understand how an attempt was made to break the socio-spatial segregation that characterises Roma living.

The case of via Chiesa Rossa was chosen because, with its evolution over time into a village, it represents a unicum in the country; moreover, it is also an almost singular example for the proposals made to overcome the camp, as its inhabitants support an alternative to public housing.

The case of via Bonfadini, on the other hand, also a formal camp, is an even more glaring example of spatial and urban segregation. The Ersilialab project, carried out by Architects without Borders, also shows how, in such delicate situations, it is essential to be able to easily adapt to the obstacles encountered in order to preserve its success. Finally, as Silvia Nessi (2026) stated in our interview, it has been a success in weaving relationships between Roma and gadje.

I deemed the case of Casilino 900 and Savorengo Ker important because: unlike the first two cases, it is an informal settlement, the culmination of the project was the participatory self-construction of a housing prototype, and it also shows a different management of conflict in comparison to Ersilialab.

Finally, Giugliano in Campania emerged as an interesting case following the valuable conversation I had with the president of the Associazione 21 Luglio, Carlo Stasolla (2025). It too is an informal settlement, characterised by a complex history, extreme housing degradation and a total institutional absence. Following Carlo Stasolla's suggestions, I thought it might be interesting for reflecting on the potential of temporary slum upgrading and in general on the agency of architects in such cases.

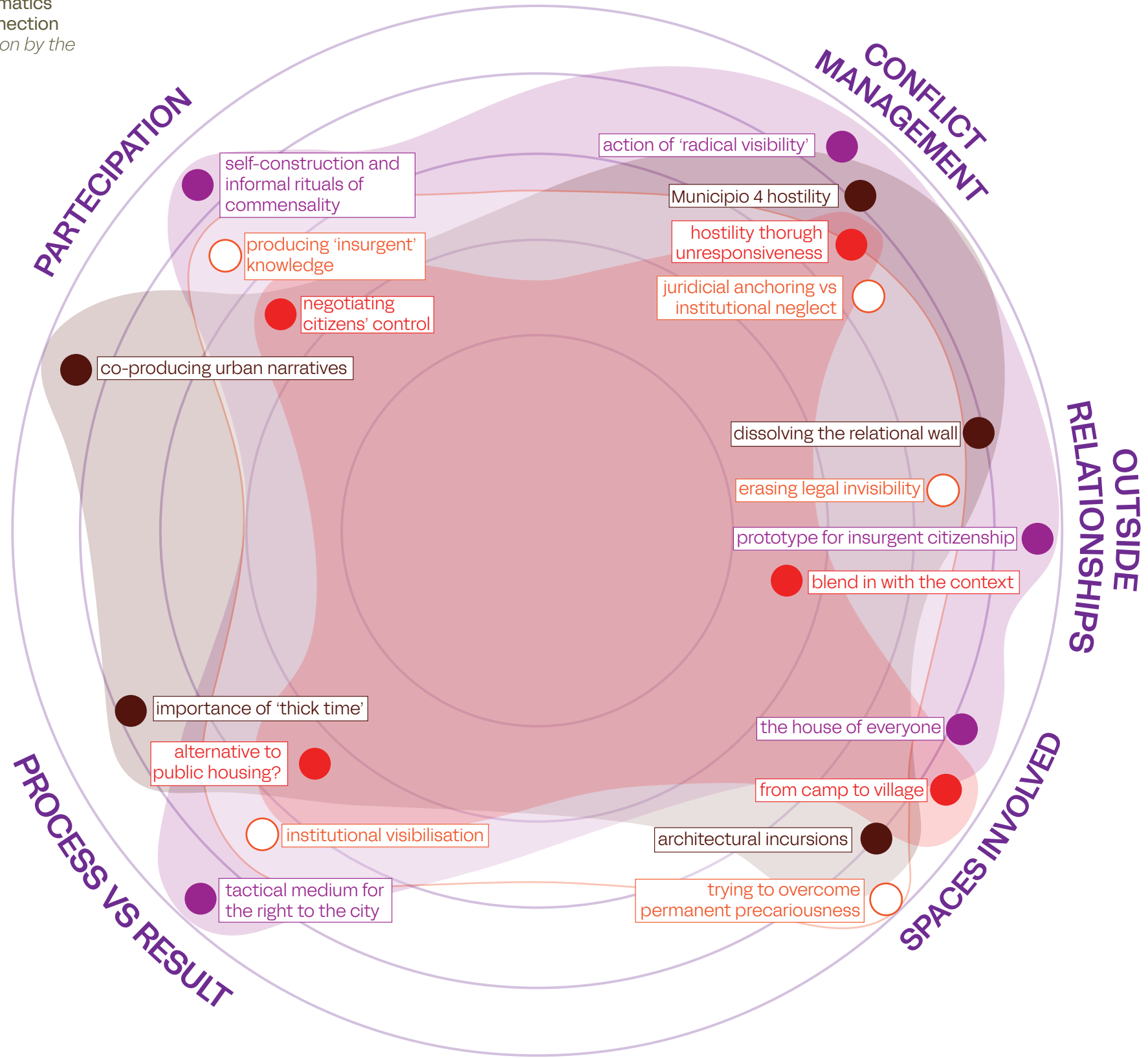
The themes I will shortly introduce have emerged as a result of the comparison of these case studies, but also in light of the theories analysed in the theoretical framework; furthermore, they will be functional in maintaining analytical rigor across these geographically and temporally distinct cases:

- **Participation:** Investigating the shift from 'invited' municipal concessions to 'insurgent citizenship', where inhabitants move from passive occupants to active co-producers and therefore what is the architect's role in enabling these processes.
- **Outside Relationships:** exploring the porosity of the settlements and how architects act as a bridge or a shield in the relationships between the Romani community and the gadje city.

- **Conflict Management:** analysing how projects navigate institutional absence, neglect, and the 'post-political trap', transforming antagonistic evictions into agonistic encounters.
- **Spaces Involved:** deconstructing the physical and virtual materiality of the sites to better understand the importance of variation in these very diverse situations.
- **Process vs. Result:** evaluating whether the success of an intervention lies in the finished artifact or in the durability of the social and legal process it ignites, and furthermore the role of the architects in its achieving.

These lenses allow us to see how the role of the architects evolves with the projects and their importance of being contextually embedded: going from builders under the directives of the Roma community of Casilino 900, to relationship facilitators with Ersilialab, to technical help at Chiesa Rossa, to possible agents of urban resilience in Giugliano. By applying this consistent framework, the research aims to prove that the 'right to the city' is not a static destination but an incremental process of spatial and political reclamation.

Table 29. Diagram illustrating the thematics analysed in the chapter and the connection to each case study. Source: elaboration by the author.



05.1

Participation

05.1

This section will explore the previously analysed case studies—Chiesa Rossa, Ersilia (Bonfadini), Casilino 900, and Giugliano—in order to understand how the different Roma communities navigated the spectrum of urban participation in these projects. Moving beyond top-down ‘invited’ spaces, these projects demonstrate a shift toward insurgent citizenship, where the act of building, mapping, and inhabiting becomes a political tool for self-determination.

The following sections therefore will try to examine how these communities transitioned, if so, from passive occupants to active co-producers of their environment, utilizing various strategies to claim their ‘right to the city’, and in which capacities the architects were included.



Figure 70. Chiesa Rossa round table. From the left: architect Gabriele Rabaiotti, Giovanni La Varra, three inhabitants of the Chiesa Rossa camp. Source: *Il Messaggero* (Bottino and Oliva 2025).



Figure 71. Participatory talk between ASF Italia architects and via Bonfadini inhabitants. Source: *ErsiliaLab Facebook page*.



Figure 72. (top right) Inhabitants of Casilino 900 deciding on the main structure of ‘Savorengo Ker’. Source: *CampusRom book* (Careri and Romito 2016).

Figure 73. (bottom right) Gazebo positioned by Associazione 21 Luglio in the via carrafiello camp. Source: *Giugliano report by Associazione 21 Luglio* (2025d).



05.1.1

Chiesa Rossa: negotiating citizens' control

The case of the Roma camp of Via Chiesa Rossa represents a transition from 'invited participation'—where the municipality granted a temporary, precarious concession—to 'insurgent citizenship' (Holston 2008), where the community seeks to formalize their presence in the public realm through the proposal of a housing cooperative. Through the strategy of the cooperative, it is possible to say that the inhabitants are trying to exercise the 'citizen control' Sherry Arnstein talks about in her "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969). With this proposition they try to gain a degree of power which provides them a full control of managerial and other aspects regarding the place they live in, therefore being able to negotiate the conditions under which 'outsiders' could try to change them (Ibid. 1969).

The partial formalization of the camp would contribute to the municipality's approval of the housing cooperative idea. Therefore,

if the Aravena principle of incremental housing, proposed by architect La Varra (see section 04.1.2), was to be adopted, the community would move beyond the passive role of 'occupants' and would enter the realm of 'co-production' (Ostrom 1996). In this framework, the architect does not act as a traditional designer but as a technical mediator, translating the community's informal spatial practices into a legible, legal framework of a 'half-house'.

Moreover, the community's participation would be twofold. Firstly, it would be political, because by proposing the creation of the cooperative and adhering to the restructuring proposal, thereby resisting the eviction notice, the community is trying to produce their own space, asserting their 'right to the city' (Rossi and Vanolo 2012), subverting the relationship of exclusion and oppression produced by the municipality's management (Rocco and Silvestre 2024). Secondly, it would be spatial as they commit

long-term with their 'human capital', by proposing to build and manage their own 'second half'.

Finally, with these ideas, the residents would be leveraging the Global South's logic of incrementalism to navigate the Global North's rigid regulatory environment, arguing that their participation is the most efficient path toward both social integration and urban regularization.

05.1.2

Via Bonfadini: co-producing urban narratives

The evolution of the Ersilia project demonstrates a transition from spatial co-design to tactical resilience, where participation becomes a tool for navigating institutional and social 'exceptionality'.

By anchoring the initial phase in the community's desires, with specific regard on women and youth, ASF Italy moved beyond the community's 'mistrust' for the third sector, towards what Giancarlo De Carlo termed 'design as a continuous process' (De Carlo 2013).

In fact, while trying to deeply understand the needs of the community, very strong bonds of trust were created; Corabia, a Roma cultural mediator who at the time of the project was living in the CAT of via Sacile, when interviewed, in a very enthusiastic and at times nostalgic tone of voice, while we were talking about the relationship created through Ersilia said: "...as they (ASF Italy architects) were part of their (Roma

community) families, when she (Silvia Nessi, ASF Italia) came they didn't see her as a social worker, you know? they saw her as one of the family, you know?" (2026, my translation).

Thanks to these strong bonds, the active participation of residents in defining and implementing the project was widespread, from the initial project's conceptualization of the 'trading zone' in Parco Alessandrini, which initially sought a permanent stake in the public sphere, to the shift in 2017 toward a nomadic carriage. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that, thanks to the active participation of the various agents, the transformative intent proved to be "responsive and flexible" (Awan et al. 2011, 31) and at the same time creative, finding a non-traditional way for the community to claim their presence in the city (Holston 2008).

Moreover, in the face of political opposition from Municipio 4, participation was redefined

as a 'nomadic methodology': the lack of foundations for the carriage mirrored the community's own precarious urban status yet transforms that vulnerability into a strength.

Here, Ersilia carriage functions as a 'boundary object' defined by Star and Griesemer (1989, 393) as "an object both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing it, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites"; in fact, with the act of travelling through the city it allows the Romani community and the 'gadje' to co-produce a new urban narrative while staying truthful to the values of those who created it. This shift proves that true participation is not merely about building together, but about the collective capacity to reshape the process itself to protect the participants and their shared cultural identity.

05.1.3

Casilino 900: self-construction and informal rituals of commensality

Analysing Savorengo Ker through the lens of participation reveals a radical model of ‘insurgent self-construction’ that transcends the limits of institutional mediation. Unlike the relational focus of Ersilia, the collaboration between Stalker/ON, the architecture students and the inhabitants of Casilino 900 was rooted in technical sovereignty, utilizing the residents’ existing carpentry skills to reclaim the architectural process.

Precisely, the project achieved a profound ‘inversion of the gaze’, the Roma residents functioned as masters of the craft, while the ‘gadge’ volunteers took the role of apprentices, effectively dismantling the traditional power hierarchies of the participatory process. This intervention represents the highest rung of Arnstein’s (1969), ‘ladder’ as participation shifted from consultation to citizen control. By building a high-quality wooden structure in a site of state-imposed ‘exceptionality’, the participants practiced what Holston (2008) defines as ‘insurgent citizenship’,

using the act of home-making as a political claim to permanence and dignity.

Furthermore, the participatory framework was anchored in a ‘relational domesticity’ that transformed the construction site into a space of hospitality and collective governance. Beyond the technical labour of self-construction, the project thrived on the informal rituals of commensality—the nocturnal dinners, shared coffees, and oral storytelling—which functioned as the primary sites for decision-making and consensus-building. This approach aligns with Donna Haraway’s (1988) concept of ‘situated knowledge,’ where the design process is not an abstract exercise but one deeply embedded in the lived, sensory realities of the community. These domestic rituals created what bell hooks (2014) defines as a ‘homeplace’, a site of resistance where the act of breaking bread becomes a political statement against the dehumanizing conditions of the camp.

In this light, the ‘result’ of Savorengo Ker was a dual structure: a physical house of wood and a social architecture of shared narratives, where the ‘spatial excuse’ of the construction site allowed for a profound sensitization of the ‘gadge’ through the intimate lens of Romani hospitality but at the same time lead to the co-production of power through the physical labour of self-determination.

05.1.4 Giugliano: producing ‘insurgent’ knowledge

The participatory model in Via Carrafiello is so far built on a ‘rights-based’ diagnostic participation. Through the Ma.Rea project (see section 04.4.2), fostered by Associazione 21 Luglio with the help of the Statelessness Legal Clinic, the act of participation is redefined as the production of ‘insurgent knowledge’, where inhabitants collaborate to map their own health and legal vulnerabilities to challenge the state-imposed ‘state of exception’ (Agamben, 2005).

Within this framework, the suggestion for ‘temporal slum upgrading’ put forward by Carlo Stasolla in our interview (2026), would act as a pragmatic application of spatial agency, prioritizing the ‘right to life’ as a prerequisite for the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1968). Rather than waiting for a definitive residential result, participation would focus on incrementalism, using micro-interventions (fixing a water point, managing waste, fire safety), to manage the ‘bare life’ of the settlement while building the legal and social evidence required for long-term stability (Hamdi 2013).

Outside relationships

In this section the four case studies will be analysed to understand how architectural and social interventions can dissolve the ‘relational walls’ separating Roma settlements from the ‘gadje’ (being institutions, the surrounding neighbourhood, the broader city context or just the architects working within the camp). By shifting from models of exclusion and ‘othering’ toward insurgent citizenship and trading zones, these projects tried to redefine the camp not as an isolated enclave, but as a site of active urban transformation and civic performance.



Figure 74. Architects illustrating the proposal for the camp restructuring. *Source: Il Messaggero (Bottino and Oliva 2025).*



Figure 75. Workshop in the Alessandrini park where both Roma and Gadje participated. *Source: ErsiliaLab Facebook page.*



Figure 76. (top right) An Italian musician sings and plays for Roma children during the ‘Quando cadono i muri’ event. *Source: photograph by Stefano Montesi (2008).*
Figure 77. (bottom right) Law students from the Statelessness Legal Clin gathering informations from the community. *Source: Giugliano report by Associazione 21 Luglio (2025d).*

05.2.1

Chiesa Rossa: a proposal to blend in with the context

The proposal for a housing cooperative at Via Chiesa Rossa, and later on the possible implementation of the Aravena principle, could function as a mechanism for ‘spatial and social de-stigmatization’. By shifting from a municipal concession—which reinforces the status of the ‘temporary guests’—to a cooperative ownership model, the community would engage in ‘designing urban transformation’ (Inam 2013). This transition moves the settlement from an inward-facing enclave to a porous urban block and if we add La Varra’s suggestion of making the settlement an entry point to the area of ‘Parco Agricolo Sud Milano’¹⁷ (eng.: Agricultural Park of Southern Milan) (2025), the relationship with the ‘outside’ would become even stronger.

If this utopian idea of the ‘Villaggio delle Rose’ came to be realised, the existing relationships would evolve to include the surrounding neighbourhood; by regularizing their settlement into a formal architectural

typology, the community goal is to provide a ‘legible’ urban form that reduces the ‘othering’ typical of segregated camps (Mianews 2025a).

At the time of writing, however, nothing has materialized and the residents are still waiting for a response from the municipality, thus preventing them from pursuing their desire to establish positive relations with the community.

05.2.2

Via Bonfadini: dissolving the relational wall

Analysed through the lens of external relationality, the Ersilia project functions as an experimental ‘threshold space’, designed to dissolve the ‘relational wall’ separating the Via Bonfadini camp from the surrounding Milanese fabric while creating connections between people and prompting accidental encounters (Kimmel 2022; Christie 2021).

It is possible to conceptualize the project as a ‘trading zone’ (Galison 2000), meaning a platform where a complex topic is made simple with the goal of exchanging information in a specific local context characterized by different sub-cultures (Balducci 2011); with the initial desire of creating this ‘trading zone’, ASF-Italia shifted the participatory site from the secluded interior of the camp to the public visibility of Parco Alessandrini, transforming the act of construction into a shared civic performance. This move aligns with Doreen Massey’s (2005) notion of space as a product of interrelations, where the ‘outside relationship’ with the ‘gadje’ is not a byproduct but the primary architectural

material, and also of space “as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity” (Ibid., 9)

When institutional opposition from Municipio 4 threatened to turn a static structure into a target for hostility, the project’s transition to a nomadic carriage represented a shift toward ‘agonistic pluralism’ (Mouffe 1999), utilizing mobility to navigate a contested public sphere. The resulting mobile carriage acted as a ‘relational trojan horse,’ employing spatial agency (Awan et al. 2011) to infiltrate the city’s squares and challenge socio-spatial segregation.

Ultimately, the participation of a heterogeneous team of Roma and non-Roma individuals demonstrates that the ‘outside relationships’ are also co-produced through shared labour, turning a nomadic object into a ‘boundary object’ (Star and Griesemer 1989), that bridges the gap between marginalized communities and the broader urban collective.

¹⁷ The Parco Agricolo Sud Milano (South Milan Agricultural Park) is a vast regional protected area of over 47,000 hectares surrounding the city of Milan in a semicircle, established in 1990 to safeguard the agricultural landscape, waterways and historic farmsteads. It is one of the largest agricultural parks in Europe, characterised by intensive cultivation, water meadows and a dense network of canals.

05.2.3

Casilino 900: a prototype to perform ‘insurgent citizenship’

The construction of Savorengo Ker, intertwined with the initiative ‘Quando cadono i muri’, represents a radical act of socio-spatial visibilization. The project sought to dissolve the ‘walls’ of prejudice, upheld by the neighbourhood, by replacing the negative narrative of the camp demonstrating the excellent construction skills of the residents of Casilino 900.

By building a formal, high-quality artifact, the inhabitants utilized the construction site as a ‘performative stage’ to demonstrate to the neighbourhood and the city that they were not merely passive recipients of aid, but capable agents of urban transformation and they were asking for their way of living to be recognized (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro 2026).

This aligns with Holston’s (2008) ‘insurgent citizenship’, where the quality of the wood and the precision of the carpentry served as a material argument for the community’s right

to permanence. The outside relationship was thus redefined through a ‘pedagogy of the artifact’: the house became a medium of communication that ‘spoke’ to the city, forcing the ‘gadje’ to confront the camp’s internal agency.

In fact, thanks to the construction of Savorengo Ker and the visibility it gave the camp, which did not necessarily lead to a positive result (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro 2026), the city in the form of its representatives (mayor Alemanno, prefect Pecoraro) physically entered the camp, leading to an important confrontation where the community was able to propose alternative solutions to the camp (see section 04.2.1). In this context, the rituals of commensality and the shared labour of the initiative acted as tools for a ‘relational de-bordering’, where the physical demolition of symbolic walls was achieved through the indisputable evidence of the community’s technical and creative capacity.

05.2.4

Giugliano: erasing legal invisibility

The Ma.Rea project reconfigures the ‘outside relationships’ by transforming the Via Carrafiello settlement from an isolated ‘black hole’ on the urban map into a site of external institutional advocacy. Through the mediation of Associazione 21 Luglio and the Statelessness Legal Clinic, the community bypasses local institutions’ hostility to engage directly with the ‘juridical outside’. This strategy utilizes what Sassen (2005) calls ‘the global city’s logic of rights’, where the residents’ legal invisibility is challenged by connecting their localized struggle to national networks of human rights.

Before Associazione 21 Luglio came into play, the community’s relations with the ‘outside’ were limited to those of an oppressive nature, as it was subject to constant evictions by the authorities.

Therefore, in the case of Giugliano, creating outside relationships is more a defence mechanism. By building a network of lawyers,

doctors, and activists, the community creates a ‘relational shield’. This shield makes it much harder for the state to simply ‘bulldoze’ the camp, as the community is now connected to the outside legal world.

05.3

Conflict management

05 3

This section will analyse how the four projects navigated urban conflict through spatial and legal interventions. Utilizing Alessandro Pizzorno's (1994) framework, these cases highlight a 'conflict of recognition', where communities struggle to be seen as legitimate urban actors. By applying Chantal Mouffe's (1999) theory of agonistic pluralism, this section explores how architectural projects attempt to transform 'enemies' into 'rivals', moving beyond the 'post-political trap' of bureaucratic silence.

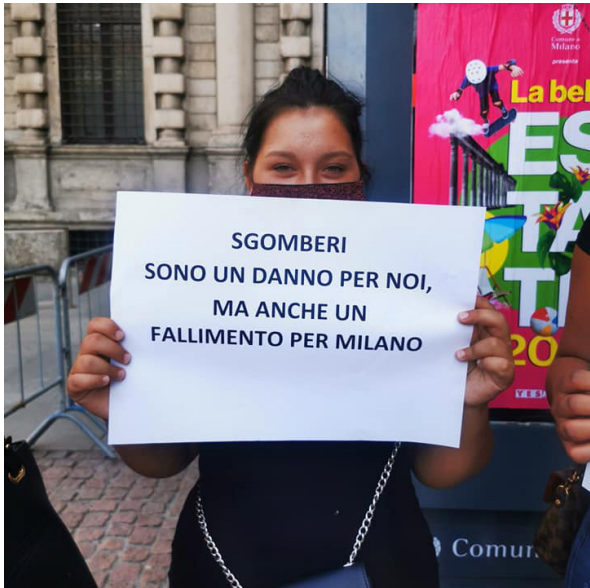


Figure 78. Chiesa Rossa inhabitants demonstration at the Milan townhall. The sign reads: "Evictions are a damage for us, but also a failure for Milan". *Source:*



Figure 79. Group discussion on the construction of the Ersilia carriage. *Source: ErsiliaLab Facebook page.*



Figure 80. (top right) Ipolic seals after the burning of Savorengo Ker. *Source: frame from Savorengo Ker documentary by Fabrizio Boni and Giorgio De Finis (2011).*
Figure 81. (bottom right) Associazione 21 Luglio presenting the results of the first phase of the Ma.Rea project at the Giugliano in Campania townhall. *Source: Associazione 21 Luglio Facebook page.*

05.3.1

Chiesa Rossa: hostility through unresponsiveness

Italian Sociologist Alessandro Pizzorno (1994), in his essay “Come pensare il conflitto” (eng: How to think of conflict), theorises three different categories of conflict: the conflict of interest (o economic-utilitarian), which concerns the allocation of resources through compromise, the conflict of identity (or recognition), which concerns the assertion of one’s existence as a legitimate collective subject, and the conflict of ideology (or values), which is based on the need to establish which value system should be hegemonic in society.

The conflict between the municipality and the inhabitants, using the aforementioned categories, falls perfectly in the one of ‘recognition conflict’ being that with their proposal they are asking to the institutions and to the ‘gadje’ in general the recognition of their identity (Pacchi and Pasqui 2015).

Furthermore, it can also be analysed through Chantal Mouffe’s (1999) theory of agonistic

pluralism (see section 03.3.2): a system that, through a questioning of the relationship between power and democracy, rejects what is called ‘deliberative democracy’ to make room for a model according to which the other is no longer considered an ‘enemy’ (antagonistic) but a ‘rival’ (agonistic) to be confronted on equal terms, accepting that absolute consensus is an illusion.

The housing cooperative proposal thus acts as a vehicle to transform antagonistic relations, where the state views the Roma as a ‘problem’ to be removed, into agonistic ones, where the community is recognized as a legitimate urban actor with a right to differ. Nevertheless, the municipality seems to struggle or has no intention to legitimize the Roma community and consider their proposal with the seriousness it would require. During the round table with the architects the councillors kept insisting that it was more important to fix the electricity and sewage networks first, on the

condition that those who were outside the boundaries established by the municipal concession would re-enter them (La Varra 2025, interviewed by Sofia Ferrazzi), thus not valuing the community’s attempt at self-determination, as mentioned above. Furthermore, the Municipality’s non-responsiveness highlights the ‘post-political’ trap (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2014), where technical or bureaucratic protocols are used to silence political demands for the right to the city.

Moreover, the adoption of the Aravena principle could therefore serve as a strategic conflict-mitigation tool; it would address institutional anxiety regarding safety and ‘slumification’ by providing a formal architectural framework. In this context, the architect would function as a mediator-advocate, using the ‘half-house’ logic to translate a social struggle into a viable urban project, thereby forcing the institution to engage with a community it would otherwise prefer to render invisible through displacement.

05.3.2

Via Bonfadini: overcoming the Municipio 4 hostility

Viewed through the lens of conflict management, the Ersilia project exemplifies a transition from a 'consensus-based' model to one of 'agonistic pluralism' (Mouffe 1999).

The intervention faced a dual conflict: the systemic, long-term mistrust between the Roma community and the 'gadje', and the acute political hostility from Municipio 4.

With the aim of breaking down the mistrust the inhabitants had towards third sector workers, ASF Italia placed itself in a listening position and then built trust not through promises, but through the shared labour of co-design, proving the architects' commitment to the project.

Subsequently, by acknowledging that a fixed structure in Parco Alessandrini would become a 'vulnerable target' rather than a place of dialogue, ASF Italia practiced what Miessen (2011) describes as 'disinterested' mediation. Instead of forcing a confrontation that would jeopardize the participants'

safety, the architects utilized the hostile climate, nurtured by the Municipio 4, as a creative catalyst, pivoting from a permanent building to a nomadic carriage. This shift represents a 'tactical urbanism' strategy (Lydon and Garcia 2015), where the lack of 'foundations' allowed the project to bypass political blockages through 'architectural incursions'.

By obtaining city-wide authorizations to 'land' in various public squares, the carriage transformed conflict from a localized barrier into a mobile platform for public debate, effectively de-escalating neighbourhood tensions by replacing static proximity with controlled, itinerant encounters.

05.3.3

Casilino 900: an action of 'radical visibility'

Through the lens of conflict management, Savorengo Ker represents a model of 'agonistic' persistence, where the act of building served as a tool to expose institutional negligence (Mouffe 1999).

In the face of systemic 'passive-aggression' from the Municipio council, which withdrew its patronage mid-project and delayed essential legal documentation, the community and Stalker opted for a strategy of 'radical visibility' rather than withdrawal.

This conflict was exacerbated by the 'calculated absence' of State actions, specifically the Mayor's unfulfilled promises regarding water and electricity, which sought to maintain the camp in a 'state of exception' (Agamben 2003).

By continuing the construction under these conditions, the project managed conflict by politicizing the artifact; the house became a material indictment of the city's refusal to recognize the Roma's spatial agency.

Nevertheless, the Savorengo Ker experience 'culminated' in the burning of the housing prototype, at the hands of who was never known; what is certain is that this event came at the end of a project that had brought discontent both within the camp, due to the visibility and increased surveillance that had resulted from the construction of it, but also outside, with whom conflicts had always existed (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro 2026, Careri and Romito 2016)

Ultimately, the final eviction, which occurred despite the inhabitants' concrete proposals for their future, highlights the limits of participatory architecture when faced with a structural 'nightmare of participation' (Miessen 2011), where the State utilizes its power to erase the physical evidence of community self-determination.

05.3.4

Giugliano: juridicial anchoring against administrative calculated neglect

Spaces involved

In the context of Via Carrafiello, conflict management is redefined as a strategic resistance against administrative attrition and the state-sanctioned cycle of chronic displacement.

where the legal intervention serves to freeze the cycle of displacement and establish a 'time-space' for the community to transition from 'bare life' (Agamben 2003) to recognized citizenship.

For over fifteen years, the municipality has managed the Roma presence through a policy of 'calculated neglect' and repetitive evictions, a form of 'serial displacement' (Yiftachel 2009) designed to prevent the formation of territorial 'roots' or legal residency. In response to it, the Ma.Rea project and the Statelessness Legal Clinic employ a strategy of 'juridical anchoring'; they manage the conflict by inserting the community into the legal system to challenge their status as 'disposable' subjects, therefore fostering resistance and the ability of the subaltern residents to struggle against exclusion from the cities they inhabit (Bhan 2016b).

At the time of writing, the conflict management has moved away from the 'clash' of police versus residents, toward a 'consultative' framework, but the underlying conflict remains unresolved because the housing alternative (the final goal of the Ma.Rea. project) has not yet been fully realized.

The conflict management in Giugliano can also be seen as an exercise of 'chronopolitics',

This section will analyse how the four projects utilize diverse spatial logic and architectural typologies to transition from isolated enclaves to integrated urban actors. By examining these cases through the lens of spatial agency and the production of space (Lefebvre 1997), we can see how formalizing ‘camps’ into ‘villages’ or constructing mobile carriages challenges, in different ways, the state-imposed ‘state of exception’ (Agamben 2003).

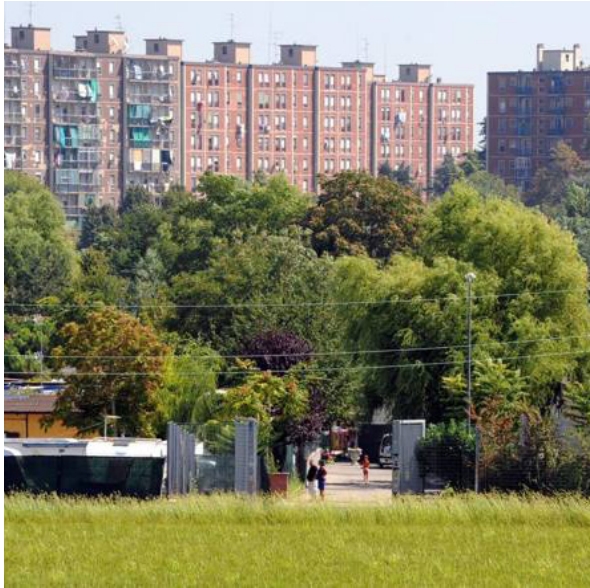


Figure 82. Chiesa Rossa camp fences. *Source: Corriere della Sera (2014).*



Figure 83. Ersilia carriage occupying the squares of Milan. *Source: ErsiliaLab Facebook page.*



Figure 84. (top right) Savorengo Ker construction. *Source: Azzurra Muzzonigro (2012).*



Figure 85. (bottom right) Giugliano camp. *Source: Google Streetview snapshot (2026).*

05.4.1

Chiesa Rossa: from camp to village

Analysing the Via Chiesa Rossa case through the lens of spatial configuration reveals a shift from 'camp morphology' to 'urban typology'. Should the housing cooperative be realised, the 'formalisation' of the settlement would be crucial and vice versa (La Varra 2025, interviewed by Sofia Ferrazzi).

From an urban perspective the model of the housing cooperative, and the subsequent transformation from 'camp' to 'village', seeks to dissolve the 'enclave effect' of the camp by creating a 'porous interface' with the city. The cooperative proposal effectively 're-territorializes' the municipal land, moving it from a state of 'exceptionality' (Agamben 2003) to one of 'civic permanence'.

Architecturally wise instead, the adoption of the Aravena principle would introduce a dualistic spatial logic: the 'institutional half' would act as a structural and regulatory backbone that satisfies Milan's rigid building codes, while the 'informal half' would

provide a zone of 'spatial agency' (Awan et al. 2011) for the Roma community. Letting each resident construct a part of his home, allowing for a culturally specific 'dwelling practice' that standard social housing fails to accommodate.

By fixing the structural frame and the public areas, the architect ensures urban order, while the community's incremental infill serves as a continuous act of spatial participation, asserting that the right to the city is not just the right to an enclosure, but the right to transform it.

05.4.2

Via Bonfadini: Ersilia's architectural incursions

The spatial logic of the Ersilia project operates as a series of 'architectural incursions' that challenge the socio-spatial segregation of the Via Bonfadini camp. In fact, with the camp being enclosed by railway infrastructure, a 'non-place' is thus created, which is physically visible but socially inaccessible.

Initially, the project sought to establish a 'trading zone' in porous environment like Parco Alessandrini, a fixed threshold space designed to break the camp's isolation by creating a physical bridge with the Molise-Calvairate-Ponti neighbourhood. However, the architectural response shifted significantly when faced with political hostility, evolving from a static structure into a nomadic 'safe space'.

This mobile carriage, characterized by its 'lack of foundations,' led to a dynamic modification of what Bill Hillier (1996) describes as 'spatial configuration', he refuses the idea of space as a container and identifies 'spatial configuration' as a set of relations which take account of other relations in a complex. Each Ersilia stop, temporarily altered the configuration of that place, transforming a space of simple transit

into a node of interaction between different cultures.

Also, by being openable and itinerant, the carriage created a 'temporary autonomous zone', meaning the socio-political tactic of creating temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control (Bey 1991), within the city's public squares. It functioned as a protective envelope for Romani culture, where the interior of the carriage provided a secure environment for dialogue while its exterior acted as a medium for public display; it thus redefined the concept of 'safe space' achieving safety through transparency and mobility.

This spatial strategy mirrors Lefebvre's (1997) 'production of space', where the Romani community, traditionally confined to the 'railway triangle', reclaimed their right to the city not through the formation of a permanent settlement, but through the strategic occupation of urban voids and public plazas, transforming the architectural object into a resilient tool for territorial regeneration.

05.4.3

Casilino 900: the house of everyone

The spatial logic of Savorengo Ker represents an act of ‘architectural insurgency’ that sought to physically overwrite the state-imposed ‘state of exception’ of the Casilino 900 camp.

Architecturally, the project utilized high-quality timber and formal structural standards to create a ‘permanent domesticity’ in a site legally defined as temporary. This spatial quality was a direct challenge to the ‘bare life’ of the camp; the house functioned as a ‘spatial anchor’ that attempted to domesticate the urban void and transform the ‘non-place’ of the informal settlement into a legitimate residential territory.

Through the lens of spatial agency, the house acted as a safe space, not through mobility, as seen in Ersilia, but through the creation of a dignified, formal interior that resisted the ‘chaotic’ exterior of the camp.

At the same time, the house can be analysed

as a ‘threshold space’ that served as the interface where the camp and the city met (Stavrides 2016). With its architecture and later on the initiative ‘Quando cadono i muri’ it lured the neighbourhood inside, effectively de-segregating the territory.

By constructing a collective home that functioned as an urban landmark, the inhabitants practiced the Lefebvrian ‘production of space’ (1997) asserting their right to the city, by physically building the permanence they were denied by the municipality’s refusal to provide basic infrastructure like water and electricity.

05.4.4

Giugliano: trying to overcome permanent precariousness

The spatiality of Via Carrafiello is defined by ‘permanent precariousness’, where the architectural fabric is a direct mirror of the inhabitants’ legal invisibility. Analysed through the lens of urban and architectural spaces, the settlement exists as a ‘grey space’, a territory neither fully expelled nor integrated (Yiftachel 2009).

While the Ma.Rea project currently operates through a ‘virtual architecture’ of diagnostic mapping, in order to give visibility to the community, the proposal for ‘temporary slum upgrading’ would represent a shift toward ‘incremental urbanism’ (Bhan 2016a).

In this hostile environment, if the ‘slum upgrading’ was to be realised, the architect’s role would be redefined: instead of designing a permanent ‘result’, the intervention would focus on the ‘tactical remediation’ of the landscape. By prioritizing micro-infrastructures (water, waste, and path stabilization), the proposed upgrading could

transform the site from a ‘non-place’ of ‘bare life’ into a ‘transitional safe space’ (Agamben 2003).

In light of the 18-month eviction cycle experienced by the community, this spatial compromise would therefore highlight the importance of utilizing ‘light’ and ‘temporal’ solutions to provide immediate dignity while preserving the community’s right to a future stable solution.

05.5

Process vs Result

05 5

This final section evaluates the four projects through the tension between process and result, arguing that in marginalized urban contexts, the methodology of engagement and the duration of ‘thick time’ are often more significant than the physical artifact. Nevertheless, the ‘artifact’ is fundamental in order to achieve ‘result’ of overcoming socio-spatial segregation. By shifting focus from ‘finished products’ to transformative co-production, these projects challenge traditional urban governance and its ‘result-oriented’ logic of restoration and displacement.



Figure 86. The community representatives, architects and Roma activists presenting the cooperative housing solution to the Municipio 4. Source: *Il Messaggero* (Bottino and Oliva 2025).



Figure 87. Group picture with Ersilia carriage. Source: *ErsiliaLab Facebook page*.



Figure 88. (top right) Group picture with Savorengo Ker. Source: *photograph by Giorgio de Finis* (CampusRom 2016).
Figure 89. (bottom right) Associazione 21 Luglio presenting the results of the first phase of the Ma.Rea project at the Giugliano in Campania townhall. Source: *Associazione 21 Luglio Facebook page*.



05.5.1

Chiesa Rossa: an alternative to public housing?

In this specific case, the tension between process and result highlights a fundamental disconnect in urban governance. The Municipality's issuance of an eviction notice reflects a 'result-oriented' logic, where the primary goal is the restoration of formal order, the 'cleansing' of the site and the application of a one-size-fits-all solution (transition to public housing). Conversely, the housing cooperative proposal, framed through the Aravena principle, would prioritize a 'process-oriented' urbanism. Here, the 'result' of a completed housing block, would be secondary to the transformative process of co-production. As argued by Jeremy Till (2009), architecture is a 'contingent' practice; in this case, the process of forming a legal cooperative and the incremental labour of self-building are the true vehicles for social integration.

The 'Half-a-Good-House' model explicitly rejects the notion of the 'finished product', proposing instead a spatial framework that

evolves alongside the community's socio-economic capacity. Therefore, the success of the project should not be measured by the speed of construction (the result), but by the durability of the community's collective governance and their transition from 'temporary occupants' to 'urban co-creators' (the process).

05.5.2

Via Bonfadini: the importance of 'thick time' in order to succeed

The Ersilia project shifts the architectural focus from the object to the process, suggesting that in marginalized urban contexts, the methodology of engagement is more vital than the physical artifact, nevertheless the engagement has in fact been achieved because of the carriage's ability to adapt to different contexts, creating dialogue.

While the ERSILIALab carriage was a high-quality aesthetic result, its ultimate value lay in what Jeremy Till (2009) describes as 'thick time', the long-term, messy process of co-design and negotiation that preceded its construction. When the project was forced to pivot due to political hostility, the architects prioritized the integrity of the process over the completion of a static building, recognizing that a 'result' achieved through confrontation would sacrifice the safety and trust of the participants. This aligns with Giancarlo De Carlo's view of participation as a 'continual activity', where the architectural

result is merely a temporary crystallization of ongoing social relations.

Although the sudden closure of the Via Sacile CAT in 2019 led to the physical disappearance of many project's users, the processual result, the carriage of Ersilia Lab, persisted as a legacy of skills and altered perceptions among both the Roma and the 'gadge'.

Consequently Ersilia, being a 'spatial excuse' for social encounter, proves that the success of participatory design should not be measured by the longevity of its foundations, but by the transformation of the actors involved during the making, Silvia Nessi in fact emphasises: "with Ersilia we really went beyond the 'wall', it ended up being very important from a relational point of view both for us and for them (the Roma community), and in that context we were also able to bring inside (the camp) moments of sharing with some Milanese citizens" (2026, my translation).

05.5.3

Casilino 900: a tactical medium to assert the right to the city

The Case of Savorengo Ker demonstrates that in the context of urban marginalization, the architectural artifact functions as a contingent outcome of a deeper process of political subjectification.

Analysed through the lens of process vs. result, the house was not the ultimate objective (interview with Azzurra Muzzonigro 2026) but rather a tactical medium used by the inhabitants to assert their right to the city.

By choosing to build a formal structure, the community utilized the architectural process to perform their spatial agency, transforming themselves from passive 'objects of aid' into active 'producers of space'. Nevertheless, the construction of the house managed to demonstrate that thanks to their capacities, a whole city could be built, as in the past, where everyone's building skills contributed to the growth of entire villages (Interview with Francesco Careri 2026).

The true 'result' was the collective assertion of presence and the dismantling of the 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) through the ritualized labour of self-construction and commensality.

Consequently, the project's success was not invalidated by the physical destruction of the building; rather, its legacy lies in the irreversible empowerment of the actors involved and the creation of a 'social architecture' that remains as a historical indictment of the state's refusal to recognize the inhabitants' capacity for urban self-determination.

05.5.4

Giugliano: prioritizing institutional visibilisation

In the extreme precariousness of Via Carrafiello, the traditional dichotomy between process and result is inverted: the physical result is rendered secondary to the process of institutional visibility.

Given the 15-year cycle of what Yiftachel defines as 'serial displacement' (2009), any architectural result is inherently transient; consequently, the Ma.Rea project prioritizes a 'diagnostic process' that anchors the community within legal, medical and residency records rather than physical foundations.

Carlo Stasolla's proposal for architectural interventions finalised for 'temporary slum upgrading' reinforces this. If implemented, this suggestion would lead to incremental urbanism, where the 'result' is not a final housing product but a tactical improvement of the aforementioned 'bare life' conditions. In this light, the hypothetical 'result' would be redefined as the acquisition of time and legal

agency; the architectural intervention would function as a 'spatial excuse' to interrupt the 18-month eviction clock.

Finally, the case of Giugliano, can help us reflect on how in cases of 'bare life' and 'forced mobility', characterised by a calculated ignorance on behalf of the institutions, the first goal is perhaps to make the community aware that their assertion of their right to the city can still be achieved. This, as the Ma.Rea model is showing us, is not necessarily achieved only through the implementation of architectural solutions but through the intersection of different spheres related to asserting one's 'citizenship', meaning in this case "belonging to the realm of public inclusionary argumentation" (Rocco and Silvestre 2024, 2).

In Conclusion: Diverse roles for a diverse context

The transversal analysis of these case studies reveals that breaking the socio-spatial segregation of Roma living requires a radical reimagining of the architect's agency. Across diverse contexts, from formal camps in Milan to informal settlements in Giugliano the architect's role extends beyond that of a designer of finished products to that of a dynamic mediator of socio-political processes, adapting as effectively as possible to the various 'states of exception' encountered.

By applying the lenses of participation, external relationships, conflict management, and spatial configuration, the following conclusions emerge regarding the architect's evolving role:

1. Architect as a technical mediator

In cases like the one of Via Chiesa Rossa, the architect acts as a technical mediator. Their agency lies in translating informal spatial practices into a legible, legal framework (both through the structuring of the cooperative and, if realised, also through the 'Aravena principle') that satisfies rigid urban codes while allowing for community-led incremental growth. Here, the architect provides the 'structural backbone' that enables inhabitants to transition from passive occupants to active co-producers of their environment.

2. Architect as relationship facilitator

The Ersilia lab project shows how the architect can also function as a facilitator of 'outside relationships'. By creating a 'boundary object' through the nomadic carriage, Architects Without Borders (ASF Italy), moved the participatory site from the secluded camp to the public sphere. Moreover, in order for the project to be successful and grounded in the community desires, through active listening, the practitioner 'unlearns' his own preconceptions to be guided by local knowledge, recognising the inhabitants as the 'territory technician'.

3. Architect as apprentice

The Savorengo Ker case offers a radical inversion of traditional power hierarchies. Architects (Stalker/ON) moved away from the role of 'expert' to become apprentices to the Roma residents, who functioned as masters of carpentry. By fostering a sort of 'pedagogy of the artifact', the architects helped turn a construction site into a 'performative stage' that challenged the state-imposed 'state of exception' through high-quality, formal craftsmanship.

4. Architect as potential agent of urban resilience

In the case of Giugliano, while no formal architectural program is currently in

place, the work of Associazione 21 Luglio and the Statelessness Legal Clinic lays the groundwork for a form of agency that prioritizes the 'right to life' as a prerequisite for the 'right to the city'. In this context, the architect's agency is not found in physical construction, but in the potential to support through light and temporal micro-intervention to manage the condition of 'bare life' and gain the time and legal agency necessary for a long-term solution.

Ultimately, these cases prove that in the analysed contexts, the success of an architectural intervention is not measured by the longevity of a physical artifact, but by the durability of the social and legal process it ignites.

Whether the physical structure remains (as with Ersilia's legacy) or is destroyed (as with Savorengo Ker), being the architect a 'recognised' actor in the current urban planning framework, its true contribution is the political subjectification of the community, empowering residents to claim their "right to the city" as active urban co-creators rather than passive objects of aid. Therefore contributing to what Miraftab define as 'humane urbanism', precisely "whereby life, not profit, is at the centre of urban development decisions" (2024, xii).

06

WE COULD START BY LISTENING

Concluding remarks

06

The initial objective of this thesis was to understand, through the analysis of projects implemented with Romani communities living in camps, how architects have helped to overcome the socio-spatial segregation of the communities they worked with.

The study of the history of the Romani communities, and the subsequent attempt to report it in this thesis were fundamental to gaining a complete understanding of the phenomenon. In this way, when I found myself analysing the chosen case studies, I was able to better understand the context in which they were set; as they all had different time frames, it was essential to be able to place them in one of the different ‘phases’ explained in chapter 3.

By building a specific theoretical framework for the issues addressed, I was able to interpret this Italian ‘phenomenon’ in a broader conceptual context related to the relationship with the ‘other’ and the relationship that the ‘Global North’ has with informality: a phenomenon often seen as concerning the Global South, which is therefore little studied in contexts such as Italy.

Subsequently, I analysed the management and history of the Roma community in Milan, Rome and Naples, going into the specifics of the individual case studies and their projects. This allowed me to understand how the situation is extremely diverse but, despite this, at the institutional level, a ‘one-

size-fits-all’ approach has been favoured.

In contrast to this, by analysing the projects and interviewing those who carried them out, it emerged that one of the key points common to all was the extreme importance given to the diversity that characterised these contexts; this, in fact, made it possible to tailor the project to the specific community with which it was interacting.

Finally, the cross-thematic analysis of my case studies helped me to highlight how the profession of the architect can be applied in different but equally functional ways. In fact, architects, through their knowledge and their ‘status’ as ‘recognised’ actors, were able to pursue ‘humane urbanism’ (Miraftab 2024).

It has therefore emerged that, in the analysed cases, architects have played or could play a fundamental role as initiators of processes that led to the creation of a ‘safe space’, broadly speaking, for the Romani communities. It also emerged that, thanks to these projects, the communities concerned were able to assert their ‘right to the city’, also due to the fact that the relationship with figures willing to listen may have led them to realise that their voices matter and can contribute to change (Rocco and Silvestre 2024).

Furthermore, the projects are united by the adoption of a participatory approach, where the architects never placed themselves in a position of superiority. Allowing the

communities involved to take control of their environment has been functional to the objective of territorial recognition and survival (Cruz and Forman 2022).

Moreover, specificity can be seen as a key lens through which analyse and understand the different projects. In fact, as I explained at the outset, the Roma community is extremely heterogeneous in terms of origin, customs, languages and dialects spoken. The acceptance of specificity as the foundation of the project was, in all the case studies, what enabled and will enable their success.

It is perhaps here that the biggest gap with the institutions becomes apparent. In fact, in studying and trying to better understand the ‘interaction’ between the Romani communities and institutions, what stood out was the latter’s refusal to engage in dialogue with the Roma, to listen to their history and the assumption that a single solution could work. It is clear that the Romani communities has never been considered an equal ‘player’ (unlike in the projects analysed), and this could be one of the causes that has led to the continuous recurrence of problematic situations (e.g. Amnesty’s Formal Complaint to the Council of Europe regarding the management of Roma in Italy, 2019). Furthermore, as Federica

Verona stresses in our interview: “as usual, the solutions found are often not those that suit the people for whom the solutions should be found, but are the solutions that would suit us if we were in that condition and they have never been precursors to anything” (2026, my translation).

One of the limitations of this thesis was certainly the impossibility of conducting a ‘site visit’ of the camps studied (Casilino 900 and Via Bonfadini no longer exist). However, the people I interviewed were fundamental to my work, through their stories, I was slightly able to experience the projects myself.

Another limitation was and is the difficulty in trying to form a complete and non-generalised idea of the Roma community and, also for the reasons analysed above, it was difficult to get in touch with community members.

Even if as the only voice of the Roma community, Corabia’s testimony was of vital importance (see section 05.1.2), since she is a cultural mediator who is not only internal to the Romani community but also acts as a bridge between the latter and the gadje, it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of this complex galaxy. The conversation with her was not only extremely important but also very valuable and moving: the happiness and pride with which she told me

¹⁸ Federica Verona is an independent researcher who, as an architect and urban planner, carries out research in the field of housing deprivation, active communities in peripheral neighbourhoods and the development of social housing projects promoting culture as a social engine (Verona 2013). In 2007, along Fabio Parenti and Cecilia Pirovano, she curated a section of the book “Milano. Cronache dell’abitare” (eng.: Milan. Chronicles of dwelling) by Multiplicitylab. The section title was: “Abitare in una baraccopoli” (eng.: Living in a shanty town) where through on site survey and interviews showed Romani dwelling at that time (Parenti et al. 2007).

about the Ersilia project underlines once again that architecture is not just about constructing buildings but, above all, about building relationships and sociality.

In conclusion, analysing these experiences has taught me that perhaps, even if only for a short time and with the necessary limitations, architects have helped and can help to overcome the socio-spatial segregation of the Romani community and therefore go ‘beyond the fence’.

At the time of writing this thesis, attention to the Roma community is almost non-existent, as Federica Verona said to me: “As a matter of fact, at a certain point, the problem resolved by itself, it was sufficient to stop talking about the Roma, it was sufficient to stop talking about the peripheries, in a while it will be sufficient to stop talking about housing and the problem will resolve itself” (2026, my translation).

Furthermore, while talking about my thesis to those close to me, I realised how deeply rooted prejudices still are, going beyond political, social and cultural beliefs. Therefore, to date, projects such as those analysed can still be fundamental in redefining the way as ‘gadje’ we think about this community, so distant from us yet so close.

A question I asked myself at the beginning of this journey, arising from a comparison between the ‘camp’ in Via Chiesa Rossa and the others, was:

“Can the ‘overcoming’ of spatial segregation happen even with the persistence of monoethnic camps?”

The ‘answer’ I gave myself, while concluding this thesis, was through another question:

“To overcome socio-spatial segregation, is it regardless more important to overcome mono-ethnic camps or to start by listening to and respecting the wishes of those who live there?”

My conclusion is that expecting this ‘overcoming’ to happen through a univocal solution is utopian, as Francesco Careri points out when interviewed: “my brother and I live, me in an apartment building and him in a townhouse, and neither of us would ever exchange” (2026).

So why have we always thought we could decide for the Roma community?



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