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Conflicts on Roma Settlements in Italian Cities: Normative Polarisation and Pragmatic Mediation

It should thus be said that, in general, there exist two ways in which to somehow recognise the Other: hierarchy and conflict

(Louis Dumont)

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to investigate conflicts against Roma settlements by considering not only the decision-making processes and relations of force, but also the complex dynamics of the attempts to define the assets that are the object of conflict wherein rules and authorities are both acknowledged and criticised. The main topic is related to the sociological debate on the normative polarisation concept, and this paper suggests an analytical method for defining normative polarisation that considers the state's active role in promoting the racial exclusion of Roma. Evidence for this study originates from ten fieldwork case studies in Italy. We will analyse two cases (Rome and Milan) in which conflicts led to the disintegration of social ties and the polarisation of normative positions; a compromise has not been reached because these conflicts have not contributed in any way to mediating institutions. Case studies in small Italian cities will be subsequently introduced. In these cases, institutional mediation played a role in their respective conflicts' dynamics by linking the actors and involving them in

regulation issues concerning resource allocation and coordination for delivering collective goods. The main theoretical results focus on the central role that groupings of objects, rules, and conventions play with both a performative power as law and public policy instrumentation within these conflicts' dynamics.

Keywords: *Sociology of the State; Ethnic Conflicts; Roma; Mediation; Polarisation; Exclusion.*

1. Sociology of the State and Ethnic Conflicts

In the introduction to his book on the rhetoric of reaction, Albert Hirschman ponders the bewilderment often felt with regard to certain social groups' actions. With particular reference to ethnic groups, Hirschman (1991) observes how the isolation of entire social groups is a much more troubling phenomenon than is the isolation of anomic individuals repeatedly studied by sociologists: 'to a certain extent, each group—within a horizon of total disorientation and often of mutual rejection—will come to ask the following question with regard to the other: "But how is it possible for them to have become like that?"'

Indeed, how is it possible? Societies appear to have broken up into several 'fragments' or heterogeneous groups that do not communicate with, understand, or accept one another. Observations such as this may be found at the heart of much contemporary thought in both the social sciences and political philosophy. Intellectual engagement reacts to this fragmentation and attempts to explore the identity tensions and ethnic polarisations flooding the news and alarming the public.

The re-emergence of seemingly irresolvable ethnic conflicts in Europe towards the end of the 1990s encouraged various observers to declare their deep concern regarding institutions'

incapacity to work towards a compromise between irreconcilable positions.[1] However, the way sociologists conceptualise the link between ethnic conflict and institutional mediation is not shared and thus presents numerous difficulties. Particularly, the role of institutions in mediating rather than exasperating contention is often elapsed, which is not something new to say. In his daunting book, Horowitz (1985: 95) indicates how 'the obstacles to a theory of ethnic conflict are formidable. Until lately, conflict theory has been an impoverished category of analysis in the social sciences. […] Among the elusive elements in ethnic conflict theory is an acceptable definition of conflict'. Thus, the points of tension to be found within different theoretical formulations of ethnic conflict in sociological research must be discussed.

This paper specifically attempts to discuss the links between ethnic conflict and institutional mediation in Italy—with a specific reference to Roma settlements. In order to analyse these links we acquire recourse to the basic methodological distinction between *explanans* and *explanandum*. Sociology has come to embrace very different theoretical formulations according to whether the polarisation has been considered an *explanans* or an *explanandum* of the conflicts.

Firstly, the literature that has attributed the polarisation of ethnic conflicts to its causes will be discussed. According to such an approach, a conflict's outcome depends upon the irreconcilable, prescriptive positions of the parties involved.

[1]Albert Hirschman (1995: 148) shrewdly underlines that, during the 1990s, many social scientists could not come to believe that 'those involved (in a conflict) could be so closely attached to the issues which are the object of the conflict': thus, 'faced with the emergence or re-emergence of nonnegotiable arguments, we hear the exclamation: "May God bring the class struggles back!"'

Secondly, another approach in which the possible polarisation between the rivals' surfaces from the conflict's dynamics rather than causes will be illustrated. Thirdly, evidence related to various Italian cities will be introduced to explain the variation using a configurational and dynamic approach. Lastly, I will return to the questions raised by Hirschman and examine the reasons why it is necessary that ethnic conflicts be examined in relation to the forms of institutional mediation.

2. What Is Institutions' Polarisation in Ethnic Conflicts?

Observing very different phenomena, Geertz (1985) expressed deep concern with regard to institutions' difficulty with asserting social ties. As a result of the formation and protection of collective identities, Geertz (1999: 10) perceives the world to have become fragmented or torn to pieces due to the multiplication of ethnic and religious conflicts; '*a world in pieces*,' encourages circumscribed, intensely specific, intensely felt public identities that simultaneously fracture, in their turn, the received forms of political order that attempt to contain them —the currently most notable form being the *nation state*. The projection of religiously defined groupings and loyalties onto all aspects of collective life from the family and neighbourhood outward (Giorgi & Itçaina, 2016) is thus involved in a general movement quite notably larger than itself: 'the replacement of a world tiled with a few very large, ill-fitting, analogous blocks by one tiled, no more evenly and no less completely, with many smaller, more diversified, more irregular ones'. Forms of ethnic conflict are characterised as clashes between groups or world conceptions that present themselves as totalising cultural universes in the hope of carving out their own specific identities.

2.1 Polarisation as Explanans of Ethnic Conflicts

Aside from Geertz, however, an entire field of study seems to have been sketched out that (1) automatically qualifies contention as 'ethnic' without questioning how and why conflicts become ethnic (Wimmer, 2013) and (2) focuses its attention upon ethnic conflicts, taking the concept of identity as a starting point without considering state re-composition logic (King, et al., 2017).

The first reason for considering identity as a starting point is that the action of conflict reveals social belonging. In the same direction, while reconstructing the process of ideology decline, Bell (1960) indicates clear evidence regarding the tendency to recover ethnic identities and the importance of identity as a factor that structures collective behaviour. According to this view, it is the tendency to make tribal, religious, or national identities absolute that provokes relentless massacres and apparently insurmountable conflicts. For this reason, it should be necessary to acknowledge that 'inevitably, there are cultures which are incompatible with one another: cultures of the dogmatic and integralist type will never be capable of finding a ground for conciliation with those cultures which are aware of their relativist nature' (Crespi, 1996: 267). This is the thesis of 'incommensurability' and 'untranslatability' (Benhaibib, 2002), centred upon a holistic and essentialist vision of cultures that assumes cultures constitute totalities that are clearly describable, that a relation of correspondence exists between cultures and population groups, and that it is possible to execute an indisputable description of a group's culture; thus, there exists no room for analysing the role of public administration in these contentious dynamics.

Many dynamics of conflict at the urban level are additionally interpreted in this direction. Such dynamics are described as ethnic conflicts between natives and immigrants wherein certain authors attempt to analyse how ethnic and cultural diversity in urban societies translate into contentious politics. The international literature on this topic is extremely vast and provides an accurate indication of the spread of ethnic conflicts wherein citizens come to oppose an absolute and indomitable enemy identified as a foreigner. From this may be derived not only the mobilisation of citizens through the so-called district councils, but also the self-segregation of the more well-to-do classes who are prone to reside in protected and separated places (Cousin & Naudet, 2018; Andreotti, et al., 2018).

Some authors studying ethnic conflict as a dispute between social movements have also assigned the concept of identity central importance; for instance, the recent studies conducted by Oberschall (1994) are emblematic. Identity upholds all four dimensions through which collective action may be analysed: (1) discontent and grievances, (2) beliefs and ideologies, (3) the capacity to act collectively (mobilisation), and (4) political opportunity structures (Vitale, 2015). For this reason, 'identity is a central organizing concept of ethnicity' (Oberschall & Kim, 1996: 67) that allows us to explain polarisation in ethnic conflicts; given that individuals wish to pursue the fulfilment of their own identity, it is possible to calculate their 'identity-producing function' (*ibidem*) and estimate the outcomes of polarisation in an ethnic conflict by applying a formal model. We may—to a certain extent—consider that, in this approach, ethnic conflict is explicitly characterised as a 'normative conflict'. According to Kaufmann (1998: 85):

> Normative conflicts are defined as those conflicts in which there is a question not only of conflicting interests but also of conflicting 'principles' that permit no compromise and the pursuit of which may outlive any possible defeats in the process of political decision making or judicial scrutiny. At the root of normative conflicts lie different values and, arising from this, different evaluations of the situation, which prevent the rivals from recognising one another's point of view. Normative conflicts are therefore insoluble in principle: direct confrontation may lead at best to their being avoided, defused, mitigated by a third party, or suppressed, but never to their being solved.

Normative conflicts are disputes emerging in a scenario of fragmentation and division wherein each party acts within the public sphere and along the lines of a defensive logic with respect to each possible 'contamination'. Given these conditions, conflicts take on cultural and symbolic forms and content and thus clash with the field of identities, bringing into play values that appear incompatible and non-negotiable.

Thus, normative nature—displayed by ethnic conflicts in various authors' conceptualisations of this first approach (polarisation as *explanans* of ethnic conflicts)—is derived from a conflict's *causes*. When searching for a conflict's *potential*, the important consideration in this approach involves discussing both *where* this potential resides—in the economic structure, socioeconomic structure, the fabric of relations, culture, infrapsychic tensions, or the social groups' inner characteristics, among other areas—and the weight acquired by the normative dimension in this regard.

In this approach, it is the actors' *normative positions* and absolute normative structures that make conflict both 'ethnic'

and 'normative'; in this sense, it is the presence of identity-producing actors which, within the dynamics of a conflict, makes the greatest reference to rules and values. The positions' normativity within each party involved is the cause of the conflict's nature that, for this very reason, can be considered normative: the conflict's actors and object are taken as data. In this sense, the polarisation of identities is the *explanans* of the conflict that thereby explains its very nature. Actors dispute over their values from irreconcilable positions, and for this very reason, they dispute over conflicting interests. In this body of literature, such disputes are shown to inevitably develop in such a way wherein what happens is nothing more than what was predicted. In this way, any autonomous driving force of the conflict's *dynamics* is denied, which is also the same for the public administration's constituent role in terms of contentious change.

Therefore, the only element that seems to be assigned any importance is 'what came first'—an approach that is developed by 'attaching' the social *actors* to a cultural identity or assigning the *agents* a position within the social space. Everything would thus depend upon the relations existing before the conflict, whilst nothing unexpected would occur within the conflict itself. In this sense, the literature defers or disregards the action's uncertain nature in the contentious dynamics and considers both the actors and their motives data items.

On the theoretical level, this first approach limits the importance of contentious processes' micro foundations, which would otherwise require close observation of the relevant action in order to explain its developments both in terms of the strategic action's unexpected consequences and in terms of learning in the case of radical uncertainty (see also Jobin, 2013).

In this sense, the normative dimension becomes a single causal factor that determines the action, whilst the individual loses his or her ability to act rationally alongside his or her capacity to confront contradictions and moral dilemmas. Worded another way, this approach offers no room for explaining what happens in relational terms and denies the fact that interaction embraces a dense set of robust generative mechanisms.

The expression 'ethnic conflict' thus runs the risk of becoming 'a kind of shortcut term used to refer to any type of conflict among individuals living in the same country' (Bowen, 1996: 3), thus considering at least three assumptions valid that are far from having been proven: (1) ethnic identities are ancient and immutable, (2) these identities provide motives for persecution and murder, and (3) ethnic diversity *per se*, inevitably gives rise to violence. However, as Donald Horowitz (1985: 684) writes: 'there are recurrent tendencies to ethnic cleavage and identifiable patterns of conflict, but the outcomes of conflicts are various rather than uniform. […] Even in the most severely divided society, ties of blood do not lead ineluctably to rivers of blood'.

Therefore, the inherent risk of this first approach involves considering ethnic conflicts as 'aut-aut' conflicts wherein the object at stake is indivisible—a type of conflict that is completely opposed to the 'more-less' conflicts in which room for negotiation exists. As Hirschman (1995) notes:

> Ultimately, we should learn something from the sad outcome of the previous attempt to distinguish between constructive and destructive conflicts […]. I suspect, for example, that the category of non-negotiable 'aut-aut' conflicts mainly constitutes a convenient label for a wide range of new and

unfamiliar problems, presenting various degrees of manageability.

Hirschman's position is certainly not an irenic one; he does not share the viewpoints of a certain naïve sociology that affirm conflicts always reach positive outcomes in spite of any other factors and that such conflicts produce integration and recognise a common normative territory. Conflicts may lead to social laceration; this, however, is an outcome, and one should try to understand if and how outcomes emerge. For this reason, Hirschman (1995: 141) criticises authors such as Helmu Dubiel (1990) and Marcel Gauchet (1980) for their insistence on the positive virtues of conflict 'without going on to closely examine the conditions on the basis of which the paradox of conflict, and the crisis which subsequently engenders progress, can effectively present itself'. Hirschman (1995: 116–117) clearly acknowledges that conflict is, historically speaking, an 'effective creator of integration and cohesion', but nevertheless disapproves of the fact that, rather than being considered the outcomes of a delicate institutional mediation process, the conflict's positive virtues are conceptualised as a constantly effective role or spontaneous mechanism: 'their paradoxical and miraculous process has a lot in common with Adam Smith'' theory of the 'invisible hand' (*ibidem*: 142).

2.2. Polarisation as Explanandum of Ethnic Conflicts

The approach just presented is certainly not the only one used in sociology to account for the possibly tragic outcomes from tearing up social bonds in conflicts. Another approach is possible to pick up on a conflict's *normative production* and thus on the role the state plays to influence the dynamic of contention and the effects of exclusion. In this second approach,

conflict is conceptualised as a generative process—that is to say, in conflict, 'something happens'. Thus, the normative polarisation we saw conceptualised in the previous approach as a cause of conflict is now considered, on the contrary, as the *result* of the conflictual processes: social laceration and polarisation occur where ethnic conflicts, from a normative viewpoint, do not generate institutions or mediation.[2] In this sense, conflict is not 'normative' *a priori* in the sense defined above; it may become normative, yet the outcome of the conflict is exactly what needs to be explained (this being precisely the *explanandum*). Similarly, conflict is not 'ethnic' *a priori*; rather, the fact that conflict is qualified as ethnic is something at stake in the contentious dynamics, and actors can push or pull into this or another qualification (Stavo-Debauge, 2005).

The underlying hypothesis in the second approach is therefore the idea that the characteristics of an emerging conflict depend upon its dynamics and that these dynamics explain those characteristics—in other words, the conflict is *explanans* of its normative production.

As a matter of fact, we owe to Simmel the idea that conflicts should be studied as *configurations* within their own *dynamics* that, as such, always possess institutional dimensions that should be observed, for the only way to understand whether the issue that generates conflict allows association or gives rise to the tearing of social bonds is to examine the way in which 'objectification' occurs. Simmel uses the term *streit* (struggle) to refer to a form of interaction (*wechselwirkung*) that is of interest to him due to its intrinsic dynamism. He draws attention to the

[2]As an example, this approach takes into account the fact that murderous ethnic cleansing is rarely initially intended by the perpetrators; see Mann (2005: 503).

importance of a conflict's normative production and connection with the formation (or rupture) of social ties. Society is populated by constant tensions among 'attracting and repelling forces' that are not only natural to social life, but essentially allow society to be built.[3] Simmel's intuition is that conflicts can act upon separative factors to avoid the polarisation of social groups. By this perspective, conflict may become a 'reparative movement against dualism' that transforms antagonistic elements into social ties. Furthermore, social ties are created via the recognition of a *third party* standing outside the conflict and mediating within its dynamics.[4] This normative *third party*—that is, the institutional dimension—presumes the existence of a consistency in the common rules. More specifically, whilst submitting to the 'control' of common rules, the rivals allow that the same rules be adapted to new situations and that their legitimacy be renewed.

There exist two reasons why a normative production may emerge from a conflict. Firstly, if awareness of values and rules is raised and the different parties thus integrate and become accustomed to recognising a common reference to a normative universe, 'people unite in a common struggle, and struggle under rules and norms recognised by both parties' (Simmel, 1908: 228). Secondly, a normative production may emerge if the parties involved in the conflict acknowledge that, in order to reach a solution, it is necessary that they execute objectification

[3]'Society takes shape as a result of both types of action' (Simmel, 1908: 215).

[4]Pizzorno (2000) clarifies the analytical meaning of the concept of recognition—a meaning that brings together both possible acceptations: recognition as a 'condition of possibility' for individual action and for an individual's aims to be formed in society, and recognition as 'motivation of status'—that is, the motivation to be included in a respected circle.

actions and norms production.[5] During the course of a conflict, each party establishes norms and follows the rules that already exist—a fact that allows 'the bilateral acknowledgment that the decision [favouring whoever should solve the conflict] should only derive from the objective weight of the motives' (Simmel, 1908: 230); consequently, individuals and groups become aware of a normative dimension's presence and simultaneously sense the practical possibility of intervening therein. The struggle's unifying force is therefore linked to processes of *objectification*, whether this involve the modes of conflict (objective common rules; e.g., laws), the modes of whatever is at stake (i.e., the 'ethnic' qualification), or the modes of the conflict's objectives.

Nevertheless, as Simmel observes, conflict can play a positive role as a constructive factor of social ties exclusively in the presence of certain conditions. According to Simmel, types of conflict additionally exist that favour the disintegration of social ties. On one hand, the complexity and diverse nature of social organisation may render societies 'rigid'—that is, incapable of tolerating conflict or valuing the normative knowledge conflict creates—while on the other hand, the plurality of conflicts in a society and the interdependence among the rivals constitute the major factor that prevents dissolution outcomes. If multiple axes of conflict cross societies, it is unlikely that destructive polarisations will arise. In this case, individuals join together and enter into confrontation depending upon the object of conflict, where they subsequently develop different senses of belonging in a procedural fashion and multiply the links among those senses. A normative *third party* 'forces the building of

[5]According to Pizzorno (1993: 193), Simmel's view of conflict as a generator of rules is reminiscent of the concept of institutional innovation employed by Machiavelli.

bridges', and individuals can thus play on their own multiple, interrelated partisanships frivolously and erratically regardless of their differing social statuses and 'ethnic' origins. On the contrary, where the axes of conflict tend to decrease, overlap, and coincide, the great danger arises in that conflict develops strong and constant partisanships, links based on 'similarity', and 'essential equalities'.[6] Individuals become 'total persons' in that everything about an individual can be predicted based on a single detail, and conflict releases an individual's entire potential for fragmenting social ties.[7]

After Simmel, many sociologists have looked at rules and identities emerging from a conflict's dynamics. In Europe, the religious wars following the Protestant Reformation were

[6]According to Simmel and Coser, in 1957, Dahrendorf considered the need to create regulations capable of allowing conflicts to manifest themselves without 'overlapping each other'. In the same direction, Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno believe that the institutionalization of conflict 'consists in the isolation of conflicts from one another thanks to institutional structures, ensuring that conflicts do not feed each other and creating a state of civil war where control is entirely absent' (Crouch, 1999: 23).

[7]In addition, Simmel introduces a vital distinction between individual interests and collective interests by explaining the degrees of brutality detectable in a conflict. In the case where individual human beings fight for a supra-individual cause, stimulated by a collective interest, a depersonalization effect is produced (as we have observed above). However, Simmel maintains that, in the dynamics of conflicts brought about by ideals extending beyond the individual, collective objectives remove the personal element from the struggle, thus producing a depersonalization of the conflict itself. By virtue, conflict occurs of the objectification of reasons into a collective 'cause' that, with respect to those fighting, remains external and allows the very struggle to inflict all its harshness and cruelty without affecting respect for the adversary, thereby favoring the recognition of belonging to a common humanity.

contained alongside peace in Westphalia through the well-known principle of *cuius regio eius religio*. Today, on the other hand, normative conflicts cannot *exclusively* be dealt with by coercively imposing the normative order of one's own 'sovereign ruler' upon a territory's residents without leaving a margin such that groups may return to other hierarchies. On this point, Peter Berger (1998) highlights the close relationship linking the pluralism of values and beliefs to the modernisation process. Modernisation hindered the project of building a unified system of rules shared by the majority of the population and simultaneously raised pluralism itself to a normative point of reference—to an ideal of civil cohabitation among individuals possessing differing values and beliefs. On the other hand, the pluralism achieved in everyday 'multicultural' societies is inextricably linked to effects of the particularistic fragmentation of partisanships and collective identities as well as to the consequent phenomenon of community closure among exclusive identity groups governed by forms of 'community totalitarianism'.

One additional reference is Ralph H. Turner's emergent norm theory (1996). This theory draws attention to a specific manner of coordinated action and is founded upon three ideas: the emergent norm, the key motive (or *keynoting*), and the situation definition. Regardless of how well-organised collective action may be, the collective behaviour's central activity is the redefinition of the situation, thus facilitating avoidance of 'normative confusion' and the emergence of normative innovation.The main assumption of Turner's theory is that the majority of those taking part in any intense collective behaviour experience a normative pressure that does not need to be internalised. The emergent norm theory identifies the

circumstances wherein a normative production arises within a collective action in relation to a principle of dependence upon risks—that is, when the sense of an acceptable risk suddenly changes. In Turner's theory, emergent social norms simultaneously possess a cognitive and emotional dimension and thus include both moral sentiment and ethical beliefs. Turner (1996: 9) states it in general terms:

> Emergent norms arise, provided other conditions are conducive, when the sense of normally acceptable risk is greatly intensified or greatly diminished. If it is intensified, the emergent norm will either define previously tolerable conditions as intolerable or call for a harsher, more prompt, or surer imposition of negative sanctions upon the deviant(s), or both. If the sense of risk is diminished, the emergent norm will pronounce previously proscribed behaviour as acceptable.

Given this picture, it is possible to consider the full meaning of the assertions made in recent research concerning ethnic conflicts; these assertions demonstrate how those taking part in a conflict follow a rhetorical strategy in an attempt to reduce relations' multidimensionality by making one dimension appear entirely important. The most extreme strategy is the perpetration of atrocities to polarise relations (Banton, 2000: 496).

In this sense, Ruane and Todd (2004: 227) propose a way of explaining the persistence of solidarity, ethnic opposition, and ethnic conflict 'without hypostatizing ethnic groups or treating ethnic bonds as foundational'. Consequently, ethnic conflict cannot be considered a social form, which is different than other types of conflict: 'ethnic conflict thus remains on a continuum with other types of conflict, rather than being qualitatively distinct from them' (*ibidem*). Along the same lines, as John

Bowen (1996) highlights, the acceptance of negative stereotypes, the fear of another group, and the motto 'kill before you are killed'—far from being 'ethnic tensions of the permanent type'—are the products of both a political process and conflictual trend that can be produced just as quickly as they can be erased (Claverie, 2004).

Additionally in Wimmer's (2013) work on ethnic boundary making, actors and motives are activated by the conflict and not by their partisan belongings, whilst normativity is no longer related to the causes of the conflict but, on the other hand, is an effect arising from the dynamics of any conflict between unequal parties over power and resources. The 'ethnic' qualification is also not a starting point, but rather a way to specify the contention during its dynamic in this sense, thus eliminating any normative conflicts or conflicts of interest. This distinction fails because, in conflictual processes, *combinations* of desires and interests are *always* at play, while in a Weberian sense, actions are at once based on rules *and* interests. Each combination depends upon the kind of interaction in a specific, empirical dynamic of contention wherein the state (its agency and choices) plays a relevant role (Olzak, 1992; but for comparative empirical analysis at the urban level, see Cremaschi, Le Galès, 2018).

3. Conflict Data on Roma Settlements in Italy: Metropolitan Areas

In Milan and Rome, municipal administrations tried to make the presence of Roma and Sinti groups—whether they be composed by Italian citizens or by new immigrants—even less visible than in other towns. In the research we performed on the choices executed by the municipalities of Milan (centre-right)

and Rome (centre-left) between 2003 and 2007[8], a quite homogeneous picture of local policies surfaced (Vitale, 2008), defined by ten main traits:

1. The reifying usage of the category 'nomads' that flattens a very heterogeneous 'minorities galaxy' into a homogeneous identity (see also Sigona, 2003);
2. An ethnic connotation that clearly splits these groups from the rest of the population (on the moral level, as well, see Acton, 2016; Kóczé & Rövid, 2017; Mayer et al., 2018; Mc Garry, 2017; Pasta & Vitale, 2018; Picker & Roccheggiani, 2014; Powell, & Lever, 2017; Tremlett et al., 2017;).
3. The negation of any exchange and negotiation possibility; in other words, the failure to recognise a legitimate representation (Vitale & Boschetti, 2011);
4. A continual curtailment of the variety of used public action instruments (see also Hansson & Mitchell, 2018);
5. The overall fatalism characterising public action on the issue (see also Beluschi-Fabeni, et al., 2018);
6. A strong spatial segregation in the intended housing (see also Aguilera & Vitale, 2016);
7. A different administrative treatment regarding residential construction and urban standards (see also Manzoni, 2018);
8. The production of unhealthy conditions that jeopardise health and tragically lower life expectancy[9];

[8]For updates about local policies towards Roma in Milan and Rome, see Maestri & Vitale (2017); Armillei (2018); Daniele et al. (2018); Pasta et al. (2019).

9. The cyclical resort to the device of evacuation, used without proposing alternatives (see also Cousin, Legros, 2014);
10. The splitting of partners and the separation of children from their parents during housing emergencies (Daniele, et al., 2018).

This public policy scheme poses relevant political consequences driven by a demagogic style towards consensus building and a minimalist reduction of Roma rights defence organisations' expectations (see also Lièvre, 2014).

The problem with these policies is not merely their incapacity to attack issues, advance social harmony, or provide collective endowments useful for promoting and protecting every individual, including the weakest; rather, the point is that these policies move along consensus-building logics that possess a very strong generative effect on instrument selection methods (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007b), local policy implementation practices, metropolitan internal competition (Galimberti, Pin, 2016; Del Fabbro, 2017) and public opinion dynamics whose stereotypes they bolster (see also Morales & Castelli Gattinara, 2017). Therefore, we shall more precisely determine the assumptions of this demagogic model with the following items.

a) The first assumption is generic although no less important; it is the idea that social policies do not draw electoral consensuses.

b) Keeping issues open and fuelling them is typical for demagogic strategies to perpetuate the sources of inconvenience that facilitate token actions aiming to obtain the consensus of one side.

[9]To go beyond the model and see how it is effective to interpret empirical cases, see Rosa (2018).

c) The assumption takes for granted that consensuses may only be built through initiatives whose happiness conditions exclusively occur on a considerably short term or are even better 'now'—that is, through actions whose success is determined by the simple fact that they are performed and not assessed by their consequences.

d) A naturalised principle states that a consensus is obtained through public media that justifies actions on the grounds of binary and Manichaean logic with no structure upon a continuum.

e) Such a principle deems that simple and unique interventions that lower the range of arranged and used public action tools favour the obtainment of positive feedback because such feedback is more easily sold to the media.

f) The following idea is a corollary to what was previously exposed; individual politicians can improve their reputations more easily through their physical presence in places of hardship rather than through the enactment of poorly visible yet effective or resolving interventions.

These ten logics are not demonstrated, and no feedback of evidence states that following them to the letter is the only way to reach a consensus for a local policy regarding Roma and Sinti groups. These assumptions are widely adopted by part of the local political class. To be more precise, they form a prevailing ideology with the meaning given by Luc Boltanski and Pierre Bourdieu (2008) in that they are widely implicit schemes likely to generate masses of colloquial, rhetorical productions and practices tuned to various situations; an evidence of good sense is assigned to these schemes, thus allowing the legitimation of the idea that the only effective action is that aimed towards following a direction predetermined by social change. In other

words, their aim is to demonstrate that, if one wishes to perform an action to entail change, a consensus may only be reached in the event that these precise assumptions are accepted. Whereas the municipal majority seeks a consensus on the basis of the outlined logics, furthering those devices such as Nomad camps (sometimes labelled also as Roma camps) and evacuations favour an institutional context in which alliances within anti-racist actors are difficult to ascertain and rarely practised; these include both the coalitions between associations or movements of support with trade unions and cooperation centres as well as broader alliances with some socio-professional categories, such as social workers, teachers, artists, lawyers, local police officers, and journalists.

4. Data on Innovative Forms of Institutional Mediation: Small and Middle-Sized Cities

The determinism of this interpretative scheme is nearly asphyxiating; while important, its outlining would be improper to regard as the only valid scheme that covers the comprehensive set of local policies towards 'gypsy' groups in Italy. Aside from its political and moral implications, the point is essentially cognitive.

During 2008, we performed a reconnaissance of other local Italian policies[10]. The picture that appeared allowed us to upset the above scheme and deny a single interpretation by providing counterfactuals.

The first point, the assignment of a homogeneous identity, remains undetermined by the instances of Trento, Rovereto, and

[10]On the comparative method adopted here, and its way of dealing with a model, to problematise and complexify it, please see Vitale & Tosi (2019); see also Citroni (2018) and Le Galès (2018).

Mantua and is capable of precisely recognising the difference within the various groups in their territories. The case of Trezzo sull'Adda is interesting in this regard because it administered a long social survey to become familiar with each group and each family and subsequently listen to them.

The second point, ethnic connotation as a factor of moral discrimination, is plainly undetermined by the case of Pisa in that Roma and Sinti are neither *a priori* connoted as perverse nor inclined to exhibit illicit behaviours, while the lessons learnt about the importance of mediation during the *Città sottili* programme are applied to the remaining citizens. The universal reach of the acquired knowledge favours institutional learning useful to all citizens. In Trezzo sull'Adda, social services develop their interventions towards Roma with no specialism, but rather within the established—if difficult—horizon of service 'integration' (Boisseuil, 2018).

The third point, the lack of representation and speech capability recognition, is undetermined by the instance of Modena in that even the case study drafting process directly allowed the Sinti to speak and build an ad hoc collective dialogue. Even the interventions carried out in Mantua, Buccinasco, Settimo Torinese, and Padua describe the viable co-designing paths within the direct and constant exchange between the measures' addressees.

The fourth point, the reduction of available devices, is undetermined by the instance of the region-financed project of Arci Toscana. The instance of Bologna heads in the same direction, as interventions for work placement and the support for regularising residence permits were joined by multiple housing interventions backing Roma families in their ability to enter private renting markets with the support of their

reputational capital. Although it lacks institutional support, the experimental project carried on by *Casa della carità* in Milan additionally follows in this direction; moreover, the aim is to enlarge the set of available devices to thereby favour savings and prevent dependence traps.

The fifth point, fatalism, is undetermined in most collected cases. Consider the remarks made by Lucatti on the social services she encouraged and the instances of Buccinasco, Mantua, Padua, and Venice that, in the aftermath of 2007, undertook brave choices during a period when stopping anti-gypsy mobilisations seemed impossible and newspapers insisted that helping 'gypsies' meant losing elections[11].

The sixth point, the strong spatial segregation, is undetermined firstly by the case of Bologna regarding the placement of private housing spreading into various neighbourhoods and municipalities; this segregation is secondly undetermined due to the Padua instance wherein the micro-area for those Sinti who wanted to live in close proximity to their extended family was established in a non-isolated area rather the middle of nowhere or in the middle of a motorway exit (see also Semprebon & Vicari, 2016).

The seventh point, differential bureaucratic treatment, is undetermined not only by all the collected instances of housing policies that do not set up settlement areas unfit for human habitation, but also by law-compliant solutions that are inhabitable by anyone, not only 'nomads'. Social projects in healthcare and education were finalised to extend the fruition of territorial opportunities to Roma and Sinti rather than realise

[11]For a broader discussion on the links between universalism and inclusionary policies in an age of new exclusionary nationalism, see Crouch, Vitale (2019).

separate interventions with a sole target head (Bravi, 2019) in the direction opposite of differential treatment.

The eighth point, unhealthy conditions, is undetermined by all programmes that overcome nomad camps as well as by measures that improve health. One instance appears particularly interesting to us, although we had to mobilise it ad hoc by finding it outside Italy. This instance is the extremely interesting interventions case executed by Lyon to upgrade shanty towns that was judged as a 'lesser evil' (Boltanski & Vitale 2006). Shanty towns are certainly evil because they are illegal land occupations that do not allow adequate living conditions and worsen social disadvantages. Facing this situation with the long-term aim of gradually overcoming it, the administration committed to damage reduction by delivering some minimal services and guaranteeing a few fundamental rights (e.g., water rights).

The ninth point, the evacuations cycle, remains undetermined by both Tuscan and Emilian cases. The main point is not the fact that some cities do not resort to evacuation in their repertory, but rather that some local authorities do not use evacuation in a recursive, cyclical manner or for the sake of evacuation, instead allowing that the very same area be reoccupied in order to implement another evacuation with media coverage. On the contrary, comparative research reveals that evacuations are a few cities' last resort that are organised to honour international conventions and accommodate alternative solutions for everyone without destroying personal effects, transferring the problem elsewhere, or postponing the process for a few days.

The tenth point, the splitting of family units during housing emergencies, remains undetermined by the cases of Bologna, Florence, and Trento, which report that it is possible to maintain

family units intact whilst facing housing emergencies by arranging temporary shelters for whole family units rather than for mere individuals or women and children exclusively. Moreover, these shelters are specialised not in caring for 'gypsies', but in caring for all people in need.

Thus, the relativized scheme reveals its significance even further; it is not only justified on the constitutional level, as it honours European legislation and human rights, yet it is neither justified on the political level. Fatalism continually surfaces in statements made by politicians and administrative managers who perpetuate policies founded upon extreme segregation and periodic evacuation: 'It is not our will, as we would like to do otherwise, but we cannot with these ones'. Rather, the selected cases exemplify that it is possible to do otherwise.

Above all, choices lie at the basis of nomad camps and evacuations' policies because the two devices work together. Furthering these policies is a choice; according to political sociology, this choice is demagogic insofar as the public opinion dynamics are essentially moved by political and moral entrepreneurs with no verification of the performed policy's success (Prasad, 2006). Clearly, this choice is partly guided by previous decisions or procedural routines in the public administration's appropriate sectors that build small-status revenues and tend to preserve themselves by their inertia (de Leonardis, Vitale, 2001). However, the political, electoral, and economic costs of distancing oneself from that model are lower than how they may initially appear.

Finally, the ten-point interpretative scheme that appeared while studying the cases of Milan and Rome turns out to be relevant for gathering many local policies' traits. However, the herein cited cases allow that the scheme be de-naturalised

because it holds but is not necessary; it holds but does not synthesise the body of empirical cases, and it holds but is not the only scheme of enacted policies. In other words, we used the case studies to render the analysis sensible to contextual elements.

4.1 Institutional Mediation and Consensus Building

The crux of the relationship between local integrated policies for Roma and Sinti as well as political consensuses must be explored with great care. We observe traces of another modality by observing the mechanisms of consensus building in those municipalities that, in recent years, attempted and implemented integrated policies to prevent Roma and Sinti exclusion. In Northern Italy, the most relevant cases include Venice and Padua in Veneto, Settimo Torinese in Piedmont, Buccinasco, Bergamo, and Mantua in Lombardy.[12] This sufficient number of cases convey various magnitudes, thus allowing the recognition of some traits common to a model of *incremental* consensus building around one's own actions. Surely, each municipality in this group had to face protests—sometimes highly pitched—against their policies towards Roma and Sinti groups specifically when localising areas for housing welfare but much less frequently when regarding education, literacy, and work placement policies (see also Benarrosh-Orsoni, 2011; Ciniero, 2013).

Therefore, we will abstract the main assumptions at the basis of consensus building through the integrated policies negotiated with Roma and Sinti.

[12]Other interesting cases can be located in the literature, with particular reference to a few municipalities in both Tuscany (Fondazione Michelucci, 2004) and Piedmont (Franzese & Spadaio, 2005).

1. The first assumption is that consensus building is a process that must begin before an actual intervention; it must continue during realisation and after the intervention has ended, and the temporal horizon of consensus building is longer than that of the planned interventions.
2. The second assumption follows the incremental ways to build a consensus. Local administrators plan by acting in concentric circles and creating gradual alliances—firstly with those who are easy to involve due to their strong sympathy towards the implementation proposals, and secondly by slowly discussing and negotiating with interest groups further away from the former's sensibilities and attention (see also the conclusion of Biorcio & Vitale, 2016).
3. The third assumption involves the strategical management of communications. Herein analysed local authorities greatly emphasise small achievements and results coherent with planned objectives (see also, Polizzi, et al., 2013). They do not rule out resorting to communication tools built around individual paths of Roma or Sinti people interested in the interventions; thus, the need for obtaining short-term successes is satisfied by reporting small ongoing changes and intentionally building the idea of an active, virtuous path. In other words, forms of objectivity and proofs of reality are built (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) to demonstrate and prove evidence of one's own action by explaining its criteria of effectiveness and efficacy.[13]

[13]With this meaning, the sought-after legitimation is typical of communication and information devices; it is thus based on both decision

4. It is foreseen that the opposition's dissent and protests will be tough and capable of mobilising many citizens. To this end, places and devices are arranged to listen to citizens' issues that are often not relevant to the intervention towards Roma and Sinti groups. Attempts are made to discern and administer separate answers to ordinary citizens' needs as well as keep distinct issues disjointed (Ciniero, 2019). Those elected with local authority and responsibility often appear where citizens protest, proactively searching for dialogue so as to contain squabble about absence and abandonment.
5. There exists a tendency to pluralise the used public action devices to obtain new funding clearly aimed towards these groups, thus explaining in great detail that the corresponding funds are supplementary rather than entail resource reduction among the population as a whole.
6. One shall work on the mediation to favour the access of Roma and Sinti to current universal services (Olivera, 2016; Clavé-Mercier & Olivera, 2018). Without activating dedicated and specialistic services, one shall negotiate the sustainable involvement of the beneficiary Roma and Sinti in the expense budget. One strengthens

explicitness and actor responsibility (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007a: 107). However, it is worth pointing out that research regarding other public action areas noticed a certain behaviour in those administrations that were interested in social innovation (see Matras, et al., 2018). When they reflexively understand that efficacy and effectiveness criteria—coherent with their own action logics—do not attain adequate communication devices, they support ad hoc initiatives that both reduce their policies' complexity and make their efficacy and effectiveness criteria discrete rather than continuous. For more detailed observations, see Pasta et al. (2019).

public communication regarding such improvements in terms of recognition adjusted to co-responsibility and activation in addition to savings with regard to previous law and order expenses (Bonetti, et al., 2010).

These elements are in no way proffered as the ingredients of a magic formula with the ability to obtain and reproduce political consensuses on social and urban policy choices that support Roma and Sinti groups. Nothing here is proposed in the sense of blueprints for best practices or mere design principles. What is at stake involves describing the normative frame—which always regards what must be done—that actors express in their attempt to discuss and negotiate integrated policies with citizens (see Bortone & Pistecchia, 2019). This does not automatically implicate a fall in idealistic volunteering, as if local, political decision makers were able to accomplish everything they planned and their choices were marked solely by their political culture, their ethical conscience, and the interests to which they answer. Decision makers face not only a balance of forces in a given interaction, but also institutional and normative constraints that stiffen public action, judicial, technical, and accounting laws, budget constraints, technical instruments, and devices possessing their own automatisms. What we have demonstrated reckons the fact that everything is not always negotiable, which merely implies that, in actual situations, there is always room for action and manoeuvring—both among political decision makers and among other concerned actors, including addressees.

5. Conflicts, Institutional Mediation, and Normative Production

The contradictions opened by the Roma and Sinti groups' presence fall on local authorities who lack the adequate tools to address them; moreover, these contradictions are rarely backed by public authorities on higher levels. However, room for action and degrees of freedom are present on the local level, allowing that policies be bent in many possible directions. Public policy choices that can be exerted on the local level strongly circumscribe opportunities of action regarding primary and secondary education, work placement, healthcare, sociality, and, above all, housing. These choices can either favour or hinder conditions of these communities' 'recognition' (Pizzorno, 2007: 275–295) in a 'necessarily complex and self-contradictory' social order (Jobert, 1998: 25).[14]

The institutional mediation of conflicts against Roma in Italian cities is always the result of a situated interaction game between various actors with different interests and within common constraints (see also Le Galès, Vitale, 2015). Despite having stressed the crucial role of policies and their instruments' inertia (especially the 'Nomad camp' device, see Daniele, 2013), it is nonetheless possible to explain the other variables important for understanding and interpreting conflict dynamics; these variables firstly include those regarding the behaviours of political parties and entrepreneurs as well as the interactions

[14]Reflections by Ambrosini (2008: 212) are particularly interesting from this perspective. It is therein noted that, in the case of Roma, conflicts surface within 'territorial mobility practices of transnational minorities and social benefits still regulated by bonds of affiliation to nation states, whose result is to dig deep inequalities within the various groups that constitute Roma and Sinti complex'. See also Bergeon (2015) and broadly Vacca, et al. 2016.

between political entrepreneurs, local associations, and the media (see Boussaguet & Halpern, 2018), and secondly, the stereotypes and prejudices that consolidated in the long term towards Roma populations and can or cannot be activated and mobilised in the public arena (see also Mantovan, 2016; Giorgi & Vitale, 2017; Mantovan, 2018a).

These interactions' outcomes are unforeseeable. The experimental reality of Italian cities presents a certain variety of dynamics and methods of Roma and Sinti treatment that do not exclusively reference the scheme of eugenic roots outlined in the paragraphs above. Public action does not exclusively enact heinously differential treatment, and government styles' actions are different than those that set various communities against themselves (mainstream and Romani) in a standing and polarised conflict (Ciniero, 2017; see also Bellè, 2015). We additionally observe government and public action forms that aim towards mediation and the realisation of integrated interventions that set themselves medium-term deadlines to evaluate effectiveness and that are not crushed on short-breath consensus objectives (de Martino, 2019; for a broader picture, see also Bussu & Galanti, 2015; Pais, et al., 2019). They mobilise a rich and varied juridical culture (Mantovan, 2018b). Above all, these forms aim to exchange and negotiate with the Roma themselves through the representation they assign themselves in autonomy, maintaining a dialogue with NGOs and humanitarian associations too.

To fully grasp and conceptualise the role of institutional mediation in these empirical cases, we must revisit the connection between conflicts, mediations, and normative production; in terms of classical sociology, this connection is what Simmel (1908: 255) called 'problems of governance of

plurality'. The point is that, through this empirical research—albeit restricted to ten cities in Italy—we have witnessed that the state is effective in reducing polarisation when its forms of institutional mediation produce a *compromise*, made possible by a shared judgment on the object of dispute and based on a common scale of equivalence that often emerges as a by-product during the conflict and renders the disputed assets divisible.[15]

Let us elaborate on this point—so to say, on the relevance of the common scale of equivalence (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006); through policy instruments, planning choices, service localisation, and resource allocation, institutional mediation introduces not merely shared rules (as a Coser functionalist reading of Simmel would have underlined), but rules with stakes recognised as mutual. Indeed, what is at stake has not merely involved all rivals in a political process or the coercion of different groups to agree on fundamental values. Normative conflicts defy the potential for mediation not quite on the basis of efficiency, but rather on that of the mediation processes' quality through which social matters are designated in relation to themes, problems, rules, and standards. The cases we have studied exemplify the relevance of the *pragmatic* mediation form—a non-coercive process of mediation wherein each party pursues a compromise by relying on the presence of a third party. Our evidence reveals that the possibility of translating individual interests into a collective interest is no longer a question of objectifying the conflict and producing the

[15]As Simmel (1908: 255) points out: 'for certain objects, compromise by division is out of the question. [...] Nevertheless, struggles for indivisible objects are susceptible of reaching a compromise when these objects are substitutable'. See also the concept of compromise as elaborated by both Boltanski and Thévenot (2005) as well as Vitale, 2007 and Vitale & Podestà (2011).

acceptance of common rules, but rather introducing flexible normative structures and assigning greater value to each party's capacity for self-expression—precisely on the regulation issue of how resources should be allocated and how the delivery of collective goods should be coordinated at the very local level.

Our research's main theoretical results have illustrated the central role that both groupings of objects, rules, and 'conventions' (Borghi, Vitale, 2007) with a performative power as law as well as public policy instrumentation play in these conflicts' dynamics. This role does not maintain that actors do not possess normative competences or their own value derived from socialisation and driven exclusively by external dynamics; indeed, considering how these normative competences emerge along a conflict's dynamic, it may be useful to understand through what kinds of processes ethnic cleansings become accepted by perpetrators as 'moral murders' when no antecedent streams of violence and socialisation co-occur.

Each conflict is unique, and thus any resolution is likely to depend upon particular institutions (Persico, 2015), contentious processes, and time-specific circumstances (Banton, 2000). In order to study the state's role in structuring extreme ethnic exclusion, we have reconstructed this conflict's dynamic by analysing the sequence of interactions, paying particular attention to if and how legitimate mediation mechanisms actors commonly recognise or accept emerge within each individual conflict's dynamics or if, on the other hand, polarisation outcomes arise because both the normative devices are incapable of linking the various parties and the state's exercising of its sovereignty has been factionalised. Along the same lines, polarisation has been defined as the outcome of a failure to

produce normative devices capable of reaching a stable compromise among all parties involved in a particular situation.

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