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# The disappearance of a Rom community and the rejection of the politics of recognition

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## Abstract

The politics toward Rom minorities in Italy is marked by a binary of recognition: on one hand, there exists the recognition of a nomad identity (present in various institutional practices), on the other a recognition of a cultural identity of Rom and Sinti (exemplified by many associations, either pro-Gypsy or Gypsy). But in the case of Melfi the predominant politics is a decisive refusal of recognition by Melfitani and Melfitani of Gypsy origins. The situation in Melfi should be read as the logical conclusion of a long process of assimilation which led to the dissolution of the historical Rom community.

## Keywords

multiculturalism, redistribution and recognition, cultural loss, Rom and Sinti, Italian governance of gypsies minorities.

## Introduction

In this article I present some reflections on the politics adopted in Italy towards Rom minorities during the last thirty years. Beginning in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, many western democracies, including Italy, abandoned policies that tended to marginalize or assimilate cultural diversity within nation-states, and meanwhile adopted politics of recognition that attempted to expand the rights of minorities by recognizing their cultural diversity (so called multiculturalism). The peculiarity of the Italian case is that the political rhetoric toward Rom minorities has been marked by a binary of recognition: on one hand exists the recognition of a nomad identity (present in various institutional practices), and on the other hand a recognition of a cultural identity of Rom and Sinti (exemplified by many associations, either pro-Gypsy or Gypsy). In the following sections I demonstrate how the aims and the practical political consequences of these two ways of recognition differ. Moreover, within this broader national context, the case of Melfi has emerged with its unique differences. The historical anthropology of the Rom community of Melfi demonstrates that, following a long process of assimilation, which fused this community with the rest of the town collectivity, the Melfitani and the

Melfitani of Rom origins reject today all politics of recognition. They in fact deny all attempts to recognize the existence of *zingari* or Rom or nomads in Melfi. The case study of the disappearance of the Rom community of Melfi leads me to propose finally some reflections on the possible risks of recognition and on the broader role of anthropology in the struggle for recognition.

### **The disappearance of the Rom community of Melfi**

The reflections presented here emerged from a research project on the historical anthropology of the disappearance of a Rom community in southern Italy during the last century, beginning with a phase of sedentarization concomitant with the unification of Italy in 1861 (see Pontrandolfo 2013). It focuses on an Italian Rom community with centuries-old roots in Melfi, in the Basilicata region. The disappearance of this community was determined by several historical factors that had a strong impact on the cohesion and coherence of the community, especially during the economic boom period from the end of the 1950s until the beginning of the 1960s. Until this period, many sources attest to a certain level of cohesion and coherence of the community, defined through various indicators like cohabitation in the same neighbourhood (the ‘Gypsy neighborhood’ in Melfi); the exercise of traditional professions tied to itinerancy combined with intermittent domicile in Melfi (trade in horses, the manufacture and sale of small iron utensils, fortune-telling, etc.); the diffuse use of the ‘gypsy language’ Romanes; or the predominant practice of endogamy (see Piasere 1989; Converso 1996). Beginning in the early 1960s, the Rom community in Melfi underwent significant social changes, for example: the dispersion of Rom families throughout all neighbourhoods; the abandonment of traditional professions; insertion into the non-Rom labour market (beginning with the mass emigrations of those, both Rom and non-Rom, who left their birthplace during the boom years and those following); the abandonment of Romanes; and the exponential growth of exogamous marriages between Rom and non-Rom partners, which has reached 90 per cent in recent decades. The profound social changes have led to a process of ‘dissolution/fusion’ of the Rom community in the town.<sup>1</sup>

It is only possible to speak of the ethnography of the disappearance of a community because archival research combined with ethnography allowed me to reconstruct a historical anthropology of the group through an analysis of various factors of social and cultural change.<sup>2</sup> The existence of the community, imperceptible to the eyes of the contemporary ethnographer, was revealed through a detailed historical examination of archival documents.

What remains inaccessible to the ethnographer is precisely the existence of a contemporary community, since the existence of that community is regularly denied by the people of Melfi themselves. The same phrase was repeated to me constantly during the course of my ethnographic research: ‘They are no

more ...', at which point the ellipsis was supposed to insinuate, 'They are no more ... gypsies'.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, beginning with my first encounters in the field, a highly complex and heterogeneous categorization of the Rom in Melfi emerged. What I sought at the beginning of my research was a Rom community, but what I found instead, in some cases, were Melfitani families with Gypsy origins. In the words, in the denials, and in the silences of my interlocutors the categories of Rom and Melfitani did not exist; instead there were Melfitani, and within that category, Melfitani and Melfitani of Gypsy origins, often linked by very close family ties, friendships or professional collaboration. The categories of Rom or Gypsies, if used apart from that of Melfitani, were perceived as absolutely inadequate at defining the complex reality of existing relationships between individuals and family groups. From the point of view of non-Rom, the Melfitani with Gypsy origins are integral parts of the community, while the residents with Gypsy origins feel fully Melfitani, in opposition to many other Rom groups in southern Italy or elsewhere. Clearly, this widespread characterization does not support the common ethnographic view that Gypsy identity is founded on opposition to the outside world: the difference between Rom and non-Rom is simply not as important in Melfi.<sup>4</sup> The very absence of the concept of 'divided humanity' leads me to believe that borders between Melfitani and Melfitani with Rom origins are not recognized, and that, in fact, it is exactly the solidarity between these two groups that has created a new unity – the town in its united collectivity.

### **The politics of recognition**

In light of this, I also point out that the assertions I have made here about the refusal to use the categories of Rom, Gypsies or nomads, referring to Melfitani families with Gypsy origins, takes us directly to the heart of a much broader political question, which influences the local context and which is absorbed by the local community in unique ways. The political question concerns, in a broader sense, the politics of recognition or redistribution within the nation-state and the minority rights movements, and, in a narrower sense, the politics of community visibility or invisibility in political actions of the Rom and Sinti in general and of the Melfitani Rom in particular.

Regarding the former issue, a key transformation of the past thirty years has been a change in the way the majority of western democracies have treated ethno-cultural diversity. In the past, that diversity was often considered a menace to the political stability of the nation-state and, as a consequence, it was discouraged by public policy. Immigrant groups, national minorities and indigenous populations were subjected to a vast array of policies intended to marginalize or assimilate them. However, in recent decades, many western democracies have abandoned those policies and refocused their efforts on a flexible policy towards ethno-cultural diversity. The shift is evident in, for

example, the widespread adoption of multicultural policies for immigrant groups, or the acceptance of territorial autonomy and language rights for national minorities, or the recognition of territorial claims and for the rights of self-governance of indigenous populations. Those policies, often defined as 'multiculturalism', go beyond the basic protections of political and civil rights guaranteed to all individuals in western democracies, seeking instead to expand those rights in the direction of a greater public recognition of ethno-cultural minorities and guaranteeing them the additional right of conserving their unique identity and practices within the nation-state.

There are a number of studies that document these policies: much of the philosophy, sociology, political science and law literature of the 1980s and 1990s was dominated by debates that assumed, on the one hand, the presumed philosophical contradiction between the principles forming the basis of these policies and the core principles of liberal democracy (the rights of social groups or communities versus the rights of individuals; the principle of equality versus a recognition of ethno-cultural diversity); and, on the other hand, the presumed contradiction in sociological terms between the welfare state and the politics of recognition (more accurately the presumed capacity of the politics of multiculturalism to jeopardize the entire network of redistributive welfare policies historically guaranteed in western democracies). In recent years, for the most part, the debate in the social sciences has focused increasingly on an empirical analysis of the real effects of the politics of multiculturalism and on the connections and relationships between multicultural policies and the national welfare systems. The necessity of empirical field research has grown because all of the western democracies, in different ways, have permanently integrated multiculturalism into their legislation, in their institutions, in their political practices, and in their rhetorics, as well as in their self-image.<sup>5</sup>

I do not intend to engage in an extended reflection on the politics and rhetorics of recognition and their effects; however, it aids in locating the rhetoric of self-representation of the Melfitani within the broader international and national context. The example of the politics and rhetoric of multiculturalism that I consider here, because it is most relevant, is that of the European cultural minorities, since the Rom and Sinti are often considered as members of those groups. A key point here is that within the last thirty years, not only have almost all of the European countries conceded greater recognition to national minorities in terms of territorial autonomy and linguistic protection, but also that those policies have been reinforced by international juridical norms, for example the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities promulgated by the Council of Europe in 1995.

Within the general politics of national minorities, only quite recently have the Rom and Sinti minority been taken into account by supranational and national institutions. The national and international recognition evolved gradually during the period following the Second World War and was initially advanced by lobbying groups (usually associations) headed by *gadje*,<sup>6</sup> who

pushed the Rom and Sinti to emerge from their traditional invisibility to embrace new, typically *gadje*, strategies of visibility. In the words of Piasere:

The obsession and the struggle for the recognition of identity in modern Europe has produced winners and losers: the winners have imposed their identity upon the nation-state, and the losers, when they have not been annihilated, have been relegated to the role of religious, dialectic, or cultural minorities or have not been recognized even as these. (2004, 106)

In these intensifying struggles, the European Rom and Sinti have typically maintained what Piasere calls a 'low profile', which is to say that they have adopted a strategy of political invisibility, disengaging themselves from any struggle for recognition. The struggles for the recognition of European Rom and Sinti as cultural minorities began relatively late, from the second post-war period, after the Holocaust, after the rejection of the idea of the existence of superior and inferior 'races', when the Rom began to ask new questions: should we officially, visibly enter into the struggle for identity or continue to maintain an elusive profile?

From the immediate postwar until today the politics of visibility of the 'Gypsies' favored by *gadje* has increased enormously. Beginning in the fifties and sixties, in various countries, numerous voluntary associations for their 'social promotion' have appeared; the states have worked for their educational attainment and associations of Gypsy teachers have emerged, and the nascent communitarian institutions of Europe have been particularly receptive to these efforts.... In all of these cases ... the push towards visibility is a *gadje* initiative, and the Rom do not always 'respond' in ways the *gadje* expect. Moreover, the Rom often react to these calls for visibility with traditional contrariety: by searching for invisibility. The 'development projects' fail, the educational success remains low, and church attendance remains spotty. With the end result that those who have been rendered visible are the heads of the voluntary associations, the educational directors, the chaplains. (Piasere 2004, 108–109)

On the European level, however, Piasere, in his reconstruction of the contemporary political situation of the Rom, emphasizes the existence of at least two powerful movements making claims for the recognition of the Rom people that, even if initially supported by *gadje*, are driven by the Rom themselves: the religious 'reawakening' of the 'Gypsy people' of the Pentecostal Evangelical Church and the political action movement of the International Romani Union (IRU). I will not linger on those identity movements that involve various Rom in different European states, but I will limit myself to pointing out that these movements, even if they are led by Rom, do not always succeed in building consensus, support and participation from the innumerable and diverse Rom

communities in Europe. By and large, the Pentecostal religious movement actively involves only the Rom who have ‘converted’, and the political movement of the IRU only actively involves a sparse group of Rom intellectuals (most of whom come from eastern Europe).

### **The politics of recognition in Italy**

Highlighting the work of these political actors aids in the contextualization of the struggles developing in Italy during the past few decades. In concordance with the international movements described above, the political rhetoric of recognition is an integral part of the Italian public arena. In this regard, I only mention the passage and implementation of Law 482 on the protection of national linguistic minorities (15 December 1999), the relevance of the themes of ‘devolution’ and ‘federalism’ and, in general, the claims for a broader regional autonomy in the contemporary political debate. While it is not necessary to discuss all of the legislation or the institutional changes relative to the recognition of Italian national minorities or other ethno-cultural groups (I leave that work to others), I argue that within this larger debate the Rom and Sinti minorities find themselves in a particularly difficult position. As is daily, and tragically covered in the newspapers, over the past thirty years, a particular politics of recognition (or of misrecognition, as I argue later) of the Rom minorities has developed.

Beginning in the 1980s, public condemnations of the state by the various pro-Gypsy associations led to the development of a new politics of recognition. Those policies, by and large, were founded on the recognition of an identity that was anything but neutral and emic, since the identity recognized for the Rom and Sinti in Italy was that of ‘nomads’ (a term used in many Italian regional laws intended for the protection of the Rom minority promulgated in the last thirty years.<sup>7</sup> Once again, owing to a distorted politics of recognition, founded not on an emic identity, but instead on an institutional construction of the ‘nomad’ identity, the Rom and Sinti in Italy have been relegated to an area of ‘sub-citizenship’ by the central authorities.<sup>8</sup>

Officially citizens, they are perceived within the internal binary logic of the state (either citizen or foreigner, either out or in) as not-belonging, non-citizens, as foreigners, as people who do not enjoy all of the rights of the citizens of that particular state. Especially their itinerant culture, the so-called ‘nomadism,’ has placed them symbolically outside of the state border. (Piasere 2004, 107)

In Italy, in fact, many Sinti and Rom with Italian citizenship are treated exactly the same as foreigners, closing off all access to the rights of citizenship. Several international denunciations of the situation describe the Italy of the last thirty years as the ‘country of the camps’,<sup>9</sup> in reality a state, which after approximately a

century of politics of non-recognition, decides instead to recognize Rom and Sinti not as a cultural minority (evidence of this is their absence from lists of national linguistic minorities outlined in Law 482 from 15 December 1999), but instead as ‘nomads’, that is to say in some way ‘foreign’. The creation of the ‘nomad camps’ is the single piece of legislation enacted in the 1980s and 1990s in regard to Rom and Sinti. The policy is founded on the reification of an identity imposed from above and on misrecognition, more than any recognition of the multiple emic identities of the communities present in the national territory. In particular, the northern Italian Sinti communities, which have been able to preserve certain itinerant practices, find themselves in an extremely difficult position vis-à-vis the legal authorities: although they are Italian citizens, their misrecognition as nomads situates them in an ambiguous status as sub-citizens. The same applies to the numerous communities of Rom emigrating from the Balkans and eastern Europe in recent decades: even they, because of their misrecognition as nomads have been denied access to the rights of immigrant citizens coming from other European states. Precisely because of this treatment, some Sinti groups from northern Italy and some groups of Rom from southern Italy (in particular Abruzzo and Calabria) have gradually begun to enter the political arena as participants in the struggle for recognition of identities. The rhetoric of this struggle is similar to that of the pro-Gypsy associations that in the past have called for the Rom and Sinti to ‘make themselves visible’ and to ‘empower themselves’ in order actively to reclaim an ‘ethnic’ and ‘cultural’ identity. The political tools used by these groups are those traditionally employed by *gadje*: specifically the use of ‘technological culture’, or media. This emergent version of ‘identity politics’ in Italy is associated with the use of modes of communication once neglected by Rom and Sinti groups. The detailed ethnography of Paola Trevisan (2008) regarding the use of the written word and technological culture, specifically the book, by a community of Sinti in Emilia clearly demonstrates that some Sinti communities in Italy are consciously entering into the political arena and abandoning the traditional strategies of invisibility in favour of ‘visibility’. Similar attempts have been described in other places (e.g. the association headed by the only Italian representative in the International Romani Union [IRU] and the various associations formed by Rom from Abruzzo or from Calabria in the 1990s). However, it is still necessary to point out that these attempts have not succeeded in creating a consensus or the active participation of the majority of other Rom and Sinti.

Thus, within the taxonomy imposed by the authorities, the Italian Rom and Sinti, in a certain sense, have not been recognized as full citizens by the Italian state, nor the immigrant Rom been recognized as full citizens from other European states. The taxonomic procedures that label these citizens as second class, and deny them access to the same rights as others, consist of recognizing (misrecognizing) them as ‘nomads’. Briefly, in the Italian case it is possible to individuate two different types of the politics of recognition in relationship to this minority: first, accompanying the categorization as ‘nomads’, a policy of

discrimination emerged that has been repeatedly condemned nationally and internationally; second, accompanying the categorization as ‘Rom and Sinti’, a politics of reclamation of community rights emerged, for example the right to diverse modes of living or the flexible fulfilment of obligatory public education requirements. Naturally, in reality things are much more complex than this simple dichotomy; for instance, the categorization of nomads does not necessarily and always accompany this state-institutional violence, but it also is associated with various pro-Gypsy movements that retain certain aspects of that categorization (the exemplary case here is *Opera Nomadi*<sup>10</sup>). What I would stress here is that the contemporary political rhetoric in Italy is marked by a kind of double binary of recognition that allows access to different forms of mobilization and political practice. On one side exists the recognition of a nomad identity (present and active in various institutional practices), on the other exists a recognition of an ethno-cultural identity of Rom and Sinti (exemplified by the various attempts to reclaim the rights of these communities by local associations, either pro-Gypsy or Gypsy). In the political arena, characterized by traumatic conflict, one of the most interesting movements is that of Gypsy associations that are seeking to change the leopard’s spots on the Italian peninsula to promote the basic rights of citizenship to Rom and Sinti who find them at present inaccessible.

My hypothesis is that various collectivities are now attempting to appropriate the rhetoric of recognition of the Rom and Sinti in order to oppose effectively the rhetoric of the recognition (misrecognition) of the nomads, having seen the discriminatory effects of decades of experiments and denunciations of that rhetoric and the policies that have accompanied it. What unifies the two divergent rhetorics is a recognition based on ethnicity; but what differentiates them is whether the recognition is based on emic or etic categories. In both cases, however, the rhetoric is consistent with the reclamation of recognition. It is precisely in this point that these two widely diffused rhetorics in the Italian political arena conflict with those of the Melfitani.

### **The rejection of the politics of recognition in Melfi**

The case of Melfi is unique in relation to the sketch of the two dominant Italian national rhetorics outlined above. The politics of the Melfitani with Gypsy origins continue to differentiate themselves from those of other Italian Rom and Sinti. The predominant politics in Melfi, as we have seen, is a decisive refutation of the rhetoric and policies of recognition.

We have seen that the majority of local conflicts emerge in the face of an allegedly inappropriate use of certain categories and all of the semantic fields associated with them. The conflicts therefore regard, above all, certain representations of the borders between social groups that are not considered pertinent, at least not on a local level, to daily practice. The use of the categories of Rom, Gypsy and nomad, or even the reference to a Rom community in

Melfi, is actually openly contested by a majority of the Melfitani. It is necessary to highlight that this rejection of the politics of recognition on the part of the Melfitani with Rom origins (but in general all Melfitani) cannot simply be explained as a continuance of the traditional politics of invisibility. The current situation in Melfi should not be read as the persistence of a resistance to the integration/assimilation paradigm through the invisibility and the silence of a community, but instead as the logical conclusion of a long process of assimilation that led to the dissolution of the historical community. The assimilationist policies enacted in Melfi during the course of the last century have been effective in so far as they have succeeded in 'integrating/assimilating' the community into the social fabric of the town to the point where all of the social actors in Melfi have not only interiorized, but profoundly incorporated, the rhetoric of non-difference and equality in their representations and in their social practices.

In a situation of this type it is not surprising that conflicts regard the imposition of a cultural difference from on high or from external sources onto a particular local social context: the Melfitani Rom have paid the price of their integration in terms of cultural loss, which in some cases was painful. Refusal of 'ethno-cultural' recognition is a logical outcome of this process: simply evoking the possibility of a public recognition of an identity that no longer exists outside of the memories of a few individuals is experienced in Melfi as the umpteenth act of violence, the umpteenth lack of respect by the cultural apparatus and the invasive central authorities. The latent risk of such a recognition is that of creating new and unexpected conflicts which otherwise would have been peacefully resolved via a long negotiation among those involved, via matrimonial unions, and other ways. The actual invisibility of the Rom community in Melfi is the fruit of diverse and parallel historic processes: the local incorporation of assimilatory policies of the nation-state in the last century (hence the fusion of what was once the Rom community of Melfi with the community of the town); the negotiation of the representations of social parts and of the whole within the local context (hence the silence about the community that today exists only in a few individual memories); the personal negotiations between external agents and the local community to influence the representations from below.

Before I conclude with these brief reflections on the refusal of recognition, it is also useful to reflect on the role of anthropology in this political arena. In general, anthropologists act as producers and carriers of the rhetoric of recognition. It is important to recognize that frequently anthropology is politically aligned with exactly these kinds of rhetoric in order to defend the variability of human culture (it is not a coincidence, for example, that during the long juridical proceedings for the reclamation of the property and land of American or Australian indigenous populations, anthropologists were consulted). The anthropologist thus cannot remain indifferent to demands for greater social justice through greater recognition of cultural diversity.<sup>11</sup> In the

case of Melfi, however, it is clear that the majority of local social actors reject the rhetoric of recognition, instead embracing a rhetoric of equality typical of liberal democracies in the past. In the individual conversations that the Melfitani of Rom origins had with me during our first encounters, I was occasionally explicitly asked not to write about the 'Rom of Melfi' (i.e. so as not to attract an undesirable visibility). This is a request the Rom frequently address to their 'researchers', as is evidenced by the following passage:

Silence is what we find in the communities we frequent when we are searching for approval for our work. . . . This distrust, sincere and massive, concerning our project troubles more than one searcher – especially since in most cases our work cannot be accomplished without building, patiently, sometimes with difficulty, relationships of intimacy and familiarity. Should we challenge that intimacy by the act of unveiling? Should we therefore call everything into question through the act of unveiling? Many hesitate. But by avoiding the critical present, they deprive their reflection of its more vivid dimension. . . . The one who studies Gypsies and faces this problem, what is he doing if not creating a stir? He sees that he will not find true approval from those whom he studies, and he knows that he must reject any certainty which comes from the official society that gives to his words an authoritative character. If he waits for some kind of recompense or favor from public recognition, whether it comes from the Gadje or the Gypsies, he exposes himself to deception, bitterness, rancor. . . . To support himself, he must expect only what comes from his work. Thus he should live with the scandal, point it out and be faithful to it. It is a situation of a perfect lucidity that is also complete freedom, complete responsibility. Nothing but the fidelity to the emotion caused one day by the encounter with other people could justify his perseverance. And if, for a moment, he feels tired or discouraged, or if he thinks that he can no longer find in himself enough strength, he can always come back to that people and find again some strength, some happiness in finding out that the scandal of his work is nothing compared to the scandal of what he is trying to explain: the unending and amazing scandal of the Gypsy presence. (Williams 1989, 31–32)

But what should happen when the researcher confronts, instead of the 'scandal of the Gypsy presence', the scandal of their 'visible disappearance'? In this case, the risk becomes that of creating something, to evoke with words, and thus to 'make present' a category that belongs only to the past. In the case of the 'Rom of Melfi', remaining faithful to anthropological study means to refuse, along with them, not the words in an absolute sense, but the rhetorical politics of recognition.

Later in my research, when my interlocutors became more comfortable and trusting in my presence, the negotiations about my presence became less preemptory. Once they felt reassured that I would protect the anonymity of

Melfitani of Rom origins, once they were reassured of the fact that I had no intention of making them visible in the same way that other Italian Rom communities were made visible by certain associations and the media, once I had emphasized that I was conducting above all historical research about the ‘community of Melfi’, then the Melfitani of Rom origins began to take an interest in my research. Significantly, the research represented for them, at least from what I understood, a way to give voice respectfully to a past that they knew belonged to them, but that they could not publically express except in silence, a space without words.

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### Notes

- 1 For detailed reconstructions of these social changes with the archival documentation, see Pontrandolfo (2004, 2010, 2013).
- 2 I conducted the research from 2001 to 2004 in several lengthy stays in Melfi, totalling approximately a year and a half. The research project initially was to carry out an ethnography, specifically direct fieldwork and participant observation of the Rom community in Melfi. That research methodology, grounding the construction of knowledge by sociocultural anthropology, was not practicable in Melfi because the target group was absent from the first moment of my arrival, and thus the sources for my study were lacking. The existence of a Rom community in Melfi actually emerged quite clearly only from the examination of archival documents from parishes, towns, schools and the police of Melfi. The research methodology is thoroughly described in Pontrandolfo (2013).
- 3 For many ethnographic examples of these repeated denials, see Pontrandolfo (2004, e.g. chapter 3, 2010, e.g. chapters 4–5, 2013, e.g. part 3).
- 4 The anthropological literature on European Gypsy groups and the process of identity construction of these cultural minorities is quite rich. For an introduction to this literature and for an explanation of the fundamental distinction between Gypsy and non-Gypsy as formational for Gypsy identity, I here refer only to some key ethnographical works, such as Williams (1984, 1993); Okely (1983); Stewart (1997); and Piasere (1985, 1995, 1999, 2004).
- 5 The literature on the politics of recognition and redistribution is vast, so I here refer only to some of the most relevant works, such as: Taylor (1992); Fraser (1997); Honneth (1995); Fraser and Honneth (2003); Wieviorka (2001); Kymlicka (1995, 2009); Banting and Kymlicka (2006); and Olson (2006).
- 6 *Gadje* generally refers to all non-Rom individuals in Romani language.
- 7 It is important to note here that there are no regional laws addressing the Rom in the region of the Basilicata, where Melfi is located.
- 8 About the use of the label ‘nomads’ to provide cultural legitimacy to the marginalization of Rom and Sinti in Italy, see for instance Sigona (2005, 2011) and Piasere (2012).
- 9 The European Roma Rights Center has defined Italy as ‘campland’ since 2000 (see European Roma Rights Center 2000).

- 10 One of the most important and oldest pro-Gypsy associations in Italy.  
11 For similar reflections about the role of anthropology in contemporary world, see, for instance, Herzfeld (2001).

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