Chapter 3
Integration as an Essentially Contested Concept: Questioning the Assumptions behind the National Roma Integration Strategies of Italy and Spain

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3.1 Introduction

Integration is a term that can fittingly be included in what W. B. Gallie (1956, p. 169) labelled 'essentially contested concepts' – those notions 'the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users'. Gallie warned that the indetermination suffered by this kind of concept cannot be settled by appeal to linguistics or logic, since it is caused by a dispute, a substantive disagreement on the reasons for attributing any given meaning to the concept. As argued in the introduction to this volume, integration has become a key term in the social sciences and yet it can be used – as it is – for a variety of meanings.

The indetermination of the notion of integration is closely related to what the aims or the target of integration are considered to be: whether the underlying 'problem' that integration is to tackle is seen in terms of cultural distance from the majority or as socio-economic disadvantage and whether the belief is either that the minority should integrate into the majority or that society as a whole should undergo an integration process as a response to increased diversity.

This chapter is concerned with the underlying assumptions that underpin the concept of integration aimed at a specific minority, the Roma, in two Mediterranean Western European countries, Italy and Spain. In both countries Roma minorities have been present in the territory for over five centuries.[1] Yet, over the past two decades, Italy and Spain have also become destination countries for Roma individuals or families fleeing poverty and discrimination in their home countries.

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[1] For an overview of the historical context in Italy see Sigona 2005; Armillei 2014; Picker and Roccheggiani 2014; for Spain see Charnon-Deutsch 2004; Sánchez 2017.

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While Italy and Spain have fairly similar political and administrative structures and migration histories, and have both been heavily affected by the 2008 economic crisis, they differ radically in their treatment of Roma. While Spain is usually presented as a model of successful integration,[2] Italy has been condemned repeatedly by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and other international bodies for its treatment of Roma.

In order to understand such different approaches, I here carry out a discourse and thematic analysis of the Roma-targeted integration legislation that exists in Italy and Spain. The National Roma Integration Strategies (henceforth NRIS), which both countries adopted in 2012 in compliance with the 'European Roma Integration Framework' promoted by Brussels, represent the cornerstones of the Roma integration policies in each country in terms of goal-setting and objectives to be achieved, and thus are critical to our understanding of how integration is interpreted. I combine the analysis of these policy documents with interviews with a range of actors involved, who are part of the politics of (dis)integration. This means attempting to uncover processes of negotiation and political dynamics around integration and disintegration. By giving policy-makers a voice on what Roma integration is about, according to them, and what they meant by it when drafting policies, we gain some insight into what the expectations of such measures and the politics behind them are.

This chapter is part of a broader study which builds on the hypothesis that the Spanish state historically focused mainly on the socio-economic dimension of the integration of the Roma, while Italy has adopted a more culturalist approach towards this specific minority. Analysis of the NRIS confirms the different levels of importance granted in each of the two countries to the cultural and economic aspects of integration. Yet, what emerges is also a picture in which the declared intent of promoting integration coexists with – and is part and parcel of – wider processes of disintegration. As explained in this volume's introduction, disintegration processes and measures are hereby understood as policies that actively 'do harm [...], although they are sometimes justified within a broader integration framework' (Collyer et al. 2020, p. 2), and experiences of disintegration are not a problem experienced by a few individuals but a phenomenon of mainstream society and its institutions.

In the case of Roma minorities and of racialised migrants more broadly, the discourses have shifted over the past decade from protection against discrimination to the issue of 'integration' (Ciulinaru 2018). More specifically, 'being integrated' in the case of Roma minorities in Italy and Spain seems to be associated with 'being a national' which, in turn, is perceived as belonging to the mainstream, understood as the white middle-class sector of society (Magazzini 2018). In this sense, it appears that normative assumptions of integration have not radically changed in contemporary Western Europe from that described as 'segmented assimilation' in the United States in the early 1990s (Portes and Zhou 2016). 'Segmented assimilation' chal-

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[2] For a problematisation of Spain's 'successful Roma integration' see Magazzini and Piemontese 2016; Vrăbiescu 2016; Vrăbiescu and Kalir 2017.

lenged the idea that assimilation goes hand-in-hand with upward mobility, recognising that immigrants and their descendents might experience 'downward' assimilation and/or selective acculturation. While the vocabulary employed in policy discourses aimed at minorities in contemporary Europe celebrates diversity and rejects assimilation, the assumptions behind the new concept of 'integration' are still rooted in an assimilationist idea of what it means to belong to a given community. Disintegration practices are thus the result of an understanding of 'integration' that either requires assimilation – Spain compels Roma to be 'proper Spaniards' in order to be the recipients of inclusion policies – or pits the majority and minority as so inherently culturally different as to require physical separation or mediation – Italy compels Roma to be 'ethnic others' or 'cultural others' for them to benefit from integration policies.

3.2   (Roma) Integration as a Stratified Process

While, in European literature and policies, the concept of minority integration is usually understood to address the situation of migrants – and specifically of third-country nationals (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016; Murphy 2010; Penninx et al. 2008) – it has also become an increasingly pivotal term in directives and policies explicitly targeting Roma groups and individuals, even though the vast majority of them are European citizens and only relatively few have left their country of origin (Matras and Leggio 2018).

Roma minorities are specifically addressed in Italy's and Spain's reports pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, a framework that, as a general rule, does not include 'new' minorities (even though it is not forbidden to do so).[3] This would lead them to be thought of as 'old' or national minorities; however, at the same time, a specific set of 'integration' policies aimed at the Roma has emerged, which is an atypical way of conducting diversity management of, or accommodating, traditional minorities.[4] The rationale for the distinction between migrants and national minorities is fairly straightforward: since historical, autochthonous minorities became numerical

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[3] 'New' minorities refer to migrants. For a distinction between 'new' (migrant) and 'old' (national) minorities, see Tina Magazzini 2018; Medda-Windischer 2014.

[4] Long-established minorities in European countries, whether officially recognised or not as national minorities by the state in which they reside, have generally, albeit to different degrees, been granted some sort of autonomy from the state, and such autonomy (linguistic, fiscal, etc.) has typically not included interaction with mainstream society as a necessary feature of majority–minority relations. While important historical, political and legal differences exist between Western and Eastern European countries, the protection of national minorities is not generally framed in terms of 'integration'. The only exception I am aware of is the case of the 'integration programmes' developed by Estonia and Latvia for their Russian minorities but, even in these cases, an attempt was made to frame the policies as addressed to 'residents with immigrant background' or 'immigrant settlers' (Cianetti 2015, p. 201).

minorities in the territories they have traditionally inhabited as a result of conquest, colonisation, state-building and/or the redrawing of international borders, their incorporation into the state is seen as 'involuntary' which, in turn, makes it difficult for the state to ask for concessions in terms of cultural integration[5] (Medda-Windischer 2014, p. 3). The rights and protections afforded to refugees rest on similar assumptions of their migration being caused by external reasons of *force majeure* and thus being 'involuntary'.

Conversely, minority integration in the European academic literature is commonly conceived of as a process shaped by the interaction between so-called 'economic migrants' and the receiving society, even though it is 'an interaction between parties that are fundamentally unequal in power and resources' (Ponzo et al. 2013, p. 2), and, more recently, has been presented as a three-way process that also includes countries of origin (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016). However, as is noted in the chapter by Nimführ et al. (2020), the burden of integration, in most cases, tends to fall on the migrants, refugees or minorities, rather than on the state – even if this latter might subscribe to the principles of integration as a desirable goal for society as a whole.

'Integration' as a category of analysis may well fit the definition contained in the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies as a 'two-way process of mutual accommodation by minorities and residents of Member States' (OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities 2012), yet the actual policies and practices related to it differ greatly. Indeed, to use the concept of 'integration' is to enter a minefield which can cause great political and theoretical concern, confusion and, in some cases, hostility, because of the diversity of meanings which the term can have. Lorenzo Cachón and Ben Gidley, amongst others, have pointed at how conceptualising integration means making choices regarding the kind of 'issue' to be addressed (Cachón 2008; Gidley 2014). This can take radically different turns depending on whether we interpret it as an individual or a collective 'integration', as an issue involving a study of the actors or rather an analysis of the structures, as a process, a 'measurable' result reflected upon general society or as a result/outcome measurable only with reference to the minority community, and whether 'integration' should study the behaviour (and/or processes) at an empirical level (including analysing policies) or instead delve into the normative regulatory field of how integration 'should be' and 'should take place' (Cachón 2008; Gidley 2013, 2014). These choices open up important questions related to the various dimensions of rights (civic and political, social, economic and cultural) as well as the interplay and relations between them, and issues such as whether there is a trade-off between different types of integration (i.e. cultural versus socio-economic).

Thus – given all these variables and potential for misunderstandings – the first temptation is to criticise the concept of 'integration' and jettison it, as a number of authors have proposed (Merry 2014; Schinkel 2017). It is, however, a term that is increasingly difficult to avoid as it has entered the jargon of international politics

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[5]The idea that migrants should integrate into the host society because of their migration being 'voluntary' is debated, particularly in the case of refugees (see Lundberg 2016; Spencer 2004).

and of EU policy to such an extent that to do away with it would mean to give up on analysing altogether the causes and consequences of one of the most compelling current debates, both in terms of minority rights and of diversity management. In the case of Roma-targeted policies, 'integration' has turned into the officially declared goal of the EU as a whole as well as of individual countries, becoming an inescapable component of Roma politics itself. The departing point of this chapter is that integration, as stated in this volume's introduction, encompasses a set of normative assumptions, practices, policies and discourses that are always embedded in specific context.

3.3 Roma Integration Regimes: European Narratives and Fragmented Collectivities

Against this background, how can and should we situate the 'Roma integration' concept and policy framework? The emergence of the Roma minority as a category to be 'integrated' saw a significant hoist in the late 1990s and early 2000s, along with a more general preoccupation with minority protection in Europe, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of Yugoslavia and the wars that accompanied it. The 1993 Copenhagen criteria required member-states to demonstrate 'respect for and protection of minorities'. Such a principle led to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which came into effect in 1998 and which, beyond fighting discrimination, is concerned with the preservation and development of the culture and identity of national minorities. This, in turn, translates into certain legal guarantees dealing with minorities' access to media, education and basic services accessible in their language. The Roma were included by some countries as a 'national minority' that falls within the scope of the convention and that is therefore in need of 'protection', but such a narrative has run counter to a parallel discourse on Roma 'integration'. This narrative has gained traction in recent years and tends to frame the Roma as a minority that is disadvantaged *vis-à-vis* the majority but that is more in need of 'getting up to speed' with the rest of society than of 'protection' as an indigenous cultural minority – or even of protection from discrimination. As Ciulinaru argues in reference to Eastern European Roma who migrated to France and have faced repatriation:

> [P]rejudice against the Roma took over the debate about their discrimination as migrants […]. Of particular importance is *the shift in discourse from protection against discrimination to integration*, and the implications this shift had on diminishing the responsibility of national and EU authorities for protection of migrants from discrimination (2018, pp. 2–3).

A 2003 meeting of 12 European countries to promote the socio-economic inclusion of Roma minorities in the region resulted in the launch of the Decade for Roma Inclusion initiative (2005–2015), 'an unprecedented political commitment by European governments to eliminate discrimination against Roma and close the

unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society' (Brüggemann and Friedman 2017). While the elimination of discrimination is mentioned, the real focus of the Decade, as can be seen by its funding allocation and programmes, is rooted in the idea of 'uplifting' a vulnerable population from extreme poverty and marginalisation. The 'acknowledging' or 'constructing' of the Roma as a vulnerable category – a group considered to be especially susceptible to social exclusion (European Commission 2010) – and the representation of Roma exclusion as a public problem differed, however, from the accounts of other disadvantaged or marginalised groups. While the European Commission never singled out Roma exclusion in documents on welfare, economic growth and social inclusion, it developed a parallel set of reports, directives and recommendations addressing the Roma as a specifically disadvantaged group. Similarly, other international organisations, researchers and often also Roma activists have tended to reinforce the idea that the Roma face a set of obstacles that are completely different from the issues faced by other minority groups or by the majority population, which sets them in a category of their own. Thus, the growing debate around Roma marginalisation –and the need for Roma integration– has made for the hybridisation of a discourse that is highly ethnicised and yet, at the same time, centred on poverty and exclusion.

This has led to a Roma Integration Strategy Framework which sets the same markers and means as those typically used to assess the integration of migrants and refugees, but without addressing what Ager and Strang identified as the foundation of integration, namely the issue of rights and citizenship.

In their 2008 paper 'Understanding integration: a conceptual framework', Ager and Strang carried out a thorough review of the ways in which the term integration had been used in policy documents in an attempt to identify those elements that were consistently central to perceptions of what constituted integration (Ager and Strang 2008). In their article, the target population to be 'integrated' were refugees and, by analysing the 200 indicators of integration proposed by the 1997 Council of Europe's Report *Measurements and Indicators of Integration* and combining an additional literature review with fieldwork in refugee camps, they came up with the recurrent dimensions of integration, illustrated in Fig. 3.1.

In the following sections I take a similar approach, looking at how 'Roma integration' is defined in the Italian and Spanish NRIS, which lay the conceptual framework for the actions that governments are expected to pursue with regard to Roma minorities. While not focusing on all of Ager and Strang's domains, I look at the understanding of 'integration' of policy-makers and how they translated such understandings into a conceptual framework for the national strategies. This shows how integration is not a set 'package' of measurable characteristics but, rather, a stratified and, at times, contradictory narrative in which different voices overlap and coexist.
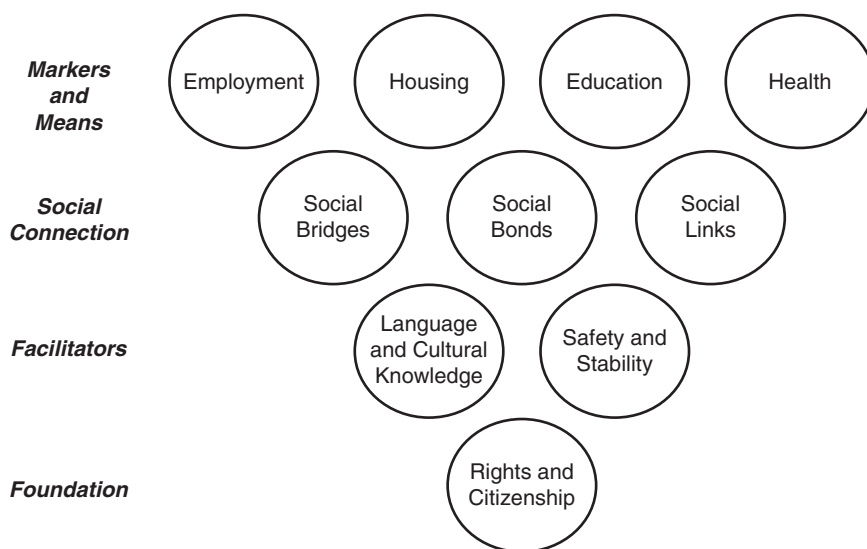
Fig. 3.1 A conceptual framework defining core domains of integration

3.4   The 'Subjectivisation' of Roma Integration: Political Contexts and Actors

This section provides the context and content of integration strategies aimed at the Roma in Italy and Spain. I firstly outline the political background of the NRIS, then look at the different definitions of the target population and analyse the use of 'integration' within the documents that is made in relation to this target population.

The rationale for introducing explicitly targeted measures to reduce inequality for the Roma was rooted in the conviction that Roma integration would both foster social cohesion and bring economic benefits to society as a whole (Vermeersch 2012). As explained in the introduction, this is also one of the core arguments that this book makes and which encompasses the (dis)integration processes faced by refugees, migrant and non-migrant minorities alike: the disintegration of some (including barriers to their access to resources and institutions) is inherently connected to the disintegration of society as a whole (Collyer et al. 2020; Hinger 2020; Lundberg et al. 2016).

The concern of Western European countries to deter large numbers of Eastern European Roma from migrating westward – what Liz Fekete (2014) defined as an attempt to curb a 'free movement of poverty' – also played an important role in promoting Roma-specific policies. Particularly following Italy's and France's repatriation of EU Roma citizens, the concern that freedom of movement from Romania

and Bulgaria would translate into significant numbers of impoverished Roma migrating to Western Europe functioned as a catalyser for action.[6]

In 2012, both Italy and Spain submitted an NRIS to the European Commission, as requested by the EU. While there was no officially agreed-upon definition of integration, the European Commission (2011) communication *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* identified the issue in the following manner:

> Since non-discrimination alone is not sufficient to combat the social exclusion of Roma, the Commission asks the EU institutions to endorse this EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. It is a means to complement and reinforce the EU's equality legislation and policies by addressing, at national, regional and local level, but also through dialogue with and participation of the Roma, *the specific needs of Roma regarding equal access to employment, education, housing and healthcare*.

The two countries therefore found themselves with two comparatively similar documents which were, however, the result of very different processes: Spain in 2011–2012 already had a fairly long trajectory of Roma inclusion plans and practices to draw upon for the drafting of its NRIS. In fact, the European Framework for Roma Integration put forward by the European Commission borrowed a number of features – i.e. the focus on four priority areas (education, health, housing and employment) – from the structure and goals set by the Decade for Roma Inclusion, of which Spain was a strong driver, and from Spain's 'explicit but not exclusive' approach. It is therefore not surprising that the 2011 EU Framework was well received by the Spanish government and that Spain did not encounter major difficulties in producing a national strategy in line with European guidelines. In terms of institutional responsibility for the development and implementation of Roma integration guidelines, the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality was charged with producing the strategy and it remains the National Contact Point to manage and implement it.[7]

Italy, instead, selected the Italian Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) as the National Contact Point for the strategy. The UNAR, established at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers within the Department for Equal Opportunities, was instituted by Decree no. 215 of 9 July 2003, which transposed into Italian law the European Directive 43/2000. It has, however, seen a series of setbacks, scandals and changes in its directorate and staff composition since its inception, mainly because of it being very much dependent upon the ruling government. When asked about the structure and responsibilities of UNAR, one senior Italian policy advisor stated:

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[6] Between 2008 and 2010, under the justification of a 'nomad emergency' promoted by the Berlusconi government, five Italian provinces fingerprinted, evicted and relocated to encampments many Roma families who had been living in so-called 'unauthorised camps'. Around the same time, Sarkozy's government in France evicted hundreds of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma and provided economic incentives to those who agreed to leave the country (Kóczé 2017.).

[7] For a contextualization of the Gitano-Roma nuance in Spain see Magazzini and Piemontese 2016.

> UNAR is not independent, it doesn't have its own budget nor political autonomy; it is completely dependent upon the Prime Minister, who can appoint and revoke the staff; and it is attached to the Department for Equal Opportunities, which isn't even a Ministry…in short, it is not worth a hill of beans (Interview 12).

Another interviewee commented that '[t]he UNAR staff basically lives off the National Roma Integration Strategy. Without it they would have no purpose, even though they couldn't care less about the integration of the Roma' (email follow up to an interview with a senior consultant, Ufficio Rom, Sinti e Caminanti).

The way in which the term 'integration' is used in both national strategies is noteworthy, and appears to be more of an adaptation of EU vocabulary than a term of choice for the two governments. In Spain, the '*Estrategia Nacional para la Inclusión Social de la Población Gitana en España 2012–2020*' uses the term 'social inclusion' rather than 'integration' in its Spanish version (Ministerio de Sanidad Servicios Sociales e Igualdad de España 2012, emphasis added). This is also reflected in the body of the text: the word 'inclusion' is used over 50 times, while 'integration' features fewer than 15. Both terms are employed not as a 'two-way process', but rather as a *de facto* synonym for a poor section of society that needs to overcome socio-economic marginalisation. When describing the challenges that the strategy aims to tackle, the document reads:

> In general terms, Roma people in Spain have seen significant social progress in the last 40 years; such progress is the result of the arrival of democracy in Spanish society, economic growth on a national scale, the establishment of a Social state, generalized access to social welfare systems (particularly housing, education, healthcare and social services and benefits) and specific measures and programmes aimed at correcting disadvantages. However, there is still a long way to go for there to be equality in the four fundamental areas for social inclusion, and on which the targets of this National Roma Integration Strategy for Spain are based (*Ibid.*, 2012, p. 5).

A NRIS section entitled *The 2020 National Roma Integration Strategy: Definition and Targets* provides a detailed description of the targets aimed at improving the living conditions of Roma in Spain and includes mid-term quantifiable targets to be reached by 2015 and 2020 for each of the key areas of social inclusion: education, health, employment and housing. However, it does not offer an explicit definition of what 'integration' or 'inclusion' mean.

An adviser to the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (MSSSI) who contributed to the Spanish strategy's conceptual framework, offered the following explanation when asked to define the term 'integration' for the purposes of the NRIS:

> Well, the semantics of a term always carry nuances and are important. It's not the same to say 'handicapped' or 'disabled' or 'person with a disability'. The terminology has been changing and evolving with Roma as well … but basically the NRIS uses the term [integration] that was established by the European Framework. *The term was really just adopted because of that*. However, when [later in the document] the meaning that is given to [integration] is explained, you can see that the principles for Roma integration are defined, and *basically what is meant by integration is the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma population, their normalisation into society*, while respecting their differences and their particularities. And for this reason, the Spanish strategy should not be reduced to the

four axes established by the European framework (education, housing, etc.) but we also included aspects related to culture, discrimination, etc – aspects that we have always worked on and that we considered important (Interview 7).

It is true that the concept of Roma identity and culture is neither dismissed nor totally excluded from the Spanish strategy,[8] but it is certainly not the main pillar of what Roma integration is understood to require or entail. In talking about the trade-offs between an identity-based approach and a socio-economic one, the same interviewee summarised his position, and the way he framed the NRIS, in this way:

For years there has been, in Spain and also in Europe, something that I would call 'a negative empowerment' or a 'misunderstood empowerment'[9] of Roma with a focus in some cases towards defending and using more 'ethnic arguments' for Roma integration. I don't share this view: I don't think that it's the right approach. I am more in favour of an intercultural approach, for many reasons, which doesn't mean that I am against Roma identity … on the contrary, I am completely in favour of the empowerment of Roma – that is to say, I believe that we must seek the leadership and participation of Roma. But when you have an ethnic approach – and I have seen this quite a bit in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – the fundamental risk is that the Roma issue becomes a problem *of the Roma*, not a problem *of society*, and therefore specialised agencies are created, and the integration of Roma is of course delegated to these organisations. And that does not work, and nowhere has it been shown that this works because, in the end, *the key to the integration of Roma lays fundamentally in the access to standardised, normalised services, in policies by the ministry, which then have to be balanced with targeted measures* (Interview 7).

Similar considerations about this understanding of integration, consistent with the idea of it being a matter of improving Roma's socio-economic conditions – often referred to in terms of 'normalising' or 'bringing to the same level' the rate of unemployment, education outcome etc. of Roma persons as that of the non-Roma population – were made by a number of other Spanish interviewees in charge of policy-making and/or implementation (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9). While none of the policy-makers interviewed denied nor wanted to antagonise Roma identity and culture, these aspects are seen as residing outside the integration paradigm which is, instead, understood to be a matter of access to services.

Italy presents some common features from a superficial terminological outset but a very different – and almost specular – focus with respect to the content and meaning of integration. In Italy's NRIS, which is approximately twice the Spanish one in length, the word 'integration' is also not featured in the title, which is '*National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities'*.[10] Footnote 1 of the text specifies that

In view of the differing legal status of the members of relevant groups (please see below para.1.5), it would better respond to the current heterogeneous Italian situation, the following title: 'Strategy for the *Inclusion/Integration* of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities' (National Office on Anti-Racial Discriminations National Focus Point 2012, p. 3).

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[8] The document mentions the creation, in 2007, of the Institute for Roma Culture, and contains the creation of educational materials on Roma culture and history to be included in schools.

[9] '*Un mal empoderamiento o un empoderamiento mal entendido*'.

[10] '*Strategia Nazionale per l'Inclusione dei Rom, Sinti e Caminanti*' in Italian.

The terms 'inclusion' and 'integration', in the Italian National Strategy, are linked to the principles of anti-discrimination and equality, but the usage of rights and equality is in turn very much tied to the differentiation between citizens and non-citizens. As Nina Sahraoui's chapter in this volume illustrates, if integration is a tool for establishing 'equality of both access and outcome for migrants and racialised minorities' (Sahraoui, 2020), the legal dimension of anti-discrimination policies alone clearly falls short of addressing the structural power dynamics that allow and reproduce racist behaviours. Not only does it fall short of ensuring equality, but it also can be used as window-dressing for state naturalisation of inequalities within society. Disintegration, for Roma residing in Italy is, therefore, at least in part, the result of the government having successfully constructed the illusion of neutrality by merely granting individuals the same rights and opportunities, without concerning itself with the outcome: '[t]he assumption that we live in post-racial societies de facto obscures the continuity of 'race' as an organising dynamic in European societies' (Sahraoui, 2020, p. 84). In the Italian NRIS, there is a general preoccupation with defining the excluded groups as either 'regular' or 'irregular'. Such legalistic differentiations are, however, difficult to implement in terms of concrete policy actions. As the UNAR senior legal adviser who drafted the NRIS' conceptual framework argued, when explaining the way in which 'integration' is employed in the Italian strategy:

> From a juridical point of view, we should keep the concept of integration and inclusion separated, because integration applies to those who, for instance, are not European citizens, while inclusion is for those who are European citizens but are not Italian. This is a distinction that I made in the strategy. Honestly it is, however, a bit useless to make these distinctions between integration and inclusion. I prefer to speak of outright inclusion because if, let's say, you are a European citizen, it is now useless to make these distinctions between European and Italian citizens, we are all Europeans now … so I think we should enter the order of ideas that the concept of integration must be overcome, even if it is true that part of the Roma who are in Italy are from places such as Bosnia, Albania, Montenegro, so they are not yet in the European Union. I did specify in the first footnote of the strategy that the concept of integration is different from that of inclusion…. But I tell you, really, it's quite useless to make that distinction, because we should really just speak of inclusion and that's it (Interview 10).

Despite the interviewee's choice of terminology, there is no objective legal basis to claim that 'integration' should refer to Third Country Nationals while 'inclusion' has to do with European citizens. Yet, making such a differentiation in the NRIS contributes to frame differently the targets of the strategy based on their citizenship status.

As shown in Sophie Hinger's chapter in this volume, '[s]tate actors and the policy documents they produce are of special relevance, because of their power position and because their formal systems of categorisation are particularly apt for deconstruction' (Martiniello & Simon 2005 cit. in Hinger 2020, p. 21). If Germany places special emphasis, in the case of asylum-seekers, on the legal status of those eligible as recipients of integration strategies, Italy operates similarly with regard to Roma individuals. As has been observed with respect to refugees and migrants, integration policies are mainly marked by a national framing of integration

(Hinger, 2020). It is noteworthy that, while it is more evident in the case of Italy, the 'national' dimension of integration is just as strong in Spain's approach.

In fact, an interesting element that emerges from both strategies is that the (dis) integration processes are deeply linked to what constitutes the *idea* of being a 'national'. Those who are perceived as 'in need of integration' are either portraid as foreigners (Italy) or as second-class citizens (Spain) (Magazzini 2018).

3.5   Whose Integration?

While in Spain the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality seems to have incorporated in the NRIS some cultural elements advanced by the *Segretariado Gitano*, the *Unión Romaní*, the *Fundación Instituto de Cultura Gitana* and other entities, the focus and benchmarking remain strongly centred around the economic aspect of integration and, particularly, the employment and schooling dimensions. The Director of the Roma Social Programme Unit at MSSSI described the 'Spanish model' of Roma integration and its line of action thus:

> The key to the Spanish model has been a programmatic approach that has prioritised measures to redress inequalities and improve living conditions over other approaches more focused on issues of identity, advocacy for minorities or political participation which, in fact, have also started to emerge but later. … *we privileged a socio-economic approach over the ethnic approach* (Interview 1).

This does not mean that there is unanimity amongst the different stakeholders on the success of such an approach or that its implementation has been consistent or uniform in different autonomous communities (Bereményi and Mirga 2012). However, there was general agreement among Spanish policy-makers in understanding the concept of integration as 'raising the living standards of the Roma population', *as members* of the Spanish population. The rejection of a cultural lens can be seen in the conflation of the 'cultural' with the 'ethnic', two terms that most interviewees used interchangeably. If the stress is on bettering the living conditions of part of a population, it is only natural that policies will omit any reference to the 'ethnic or cultural other', even though this has often meant, in practice, that Roma immigrants end up being excluded from such integration policies (Magazzini and Piemontese 2016).

Conversely, while, in Spain, it was considered necessary to not single out the Roma as recipients of specific policies in order to prevent the promotion of 'difference' over 'equality' (Kostka 2015, p. 82), the Italian strategy focuses, instead, precisely on differential treatment for different categories:

> When considering the human rights-based approach, *it should be always very clear who are the recipients of relevant measures, the rights-holders and the duty-bearers*. […] With this strategy Italy intends to achieve the effective integration/social inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities, besides effectively enabling them to fully exercise fundamental rights, as enshrined in Art. 2 of the Italian Constitution. […] It has been stressed, under Part One of the present strategy, the differing legal statuses of members of the minority under

reference, to whom to apply the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution, primarily Art. 3, being dedicated to the principle of equality and non-discrimination. […] On a practical note, such principle [the equality principle] envisages that: it shall be treated on a equal basis what is equal; and on a different basis, what is different (National Office on Anti-Racial Discriminations National Focus Point 2012, pp. 19–20).

This passage is interesting because it makes explicit that one of the main concerns of the Italian strategy is to identify and categorise the various Roma groups based on their legal status, and that those categories should function as a criterion for which rights and duties belong to each category. This is also reflected in Paragraph 1.5 of Italy's NRIS, which does not explicitly define either inclusion or integration but does provide an extensive overview of demographic estimates broken down by citizenship status. The data provided, however, are inconsistent: on Page 12, the estimate given for the totality of the Roma residing in Italy is about 140,000 (around 0.23 per cent of the total population – the approximate calculation provided by the Council of Europe), 'most of whom are children and youngsters based in Italy, with Italian nationality'. This is, however, immediately contradicted by a paragraph in which the estimates add up to over 160,000 persons, most of whom do not hold Italian citizenship:

> They can be divided into three main groups in relation to the citizenship and period of immigration: The first group consists of approximately 70,000 people (Italian citizens) whose first records date back to the fourteenth century and are distributed throughout the country.; The second group consists of about 90,000 Roma people from the Balkan region (non-EU citizens) who arrived in Italy, in the 90s, especially after the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. This group is mainly settled in Northern Italy. The third – more recent – group … is made up of Roma people with Romanian and Bulgarian nationality (EU citizens), who mainly live in large cities (Milan, Turin, Rome, Naples, Bologna, Bari, Genoa) (National Office on Anti-Racial Discriminations National Focus Point 2012, p. 12).

It is noteworthy that, even for the first group – Italian citizens – the 'foreign' ancestry dating back to the fourteenth century is stressed. Mention is also made a page later in the strategy to

> [t]hose irregular Roma people, whose exact number has not been set yet, officially. For example, the Prefecture of Rome detected the presence, on the local territory, of 12,000/13,000 *irregular* Roma people, compared with 7,000 *regular* Roma people living in around 20 unauthorized camps (National Office on Anti-Racial Discriminations National Focus Point 2012, p. 13, emphasis added).

The last sentence is particularly telling of how, despite the claim that the NRIS represented a radical rupture with the previous paradigm in Italy, Roma are still very much tied, in the government's view, to either the so-called 'authorised camps'[11] or the 'unauthorised camps'.[12] As articulated in Hinger's chapter in this volume and by Mihai Surdu in his 2016 book *Those Who Count: Expert Practices of Roma Classification* (Surdu 2016), the power and danger of categories and categorisations

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[11] In practice, segregated ghettos run by local administrations that sub-contract their 'management' – mainly surveillance – to private agencies or NGOs.

[12] Slums/shantytowns, generally built on publicly owned land on the outskirts of cities.

to integration policies lies in the fact that, even though they are social constructions, they are framed as natural and mutually exclusive, while people may move between and fit into several categories. 'The supposed exhaustiveness of category systems can be deconstructed if we look beyond those groups or individuals highlighted by the policy and ask who is obscured or only targeted implicitly by a policy and why' (Hinger 2020).

On the whole, it seems that the approach adopted by the Italian government in its 2012 strategy is indeed an attempt to comply with European demands, but that the Roma minority is still seen (not only sociologically but also institutionally) as cultural and ethnic 'others'. While the Spanish approach conceives Roma exclusion as a product of wider socio-economic changes, the Italian one points directly at Roma groups with alleged particular problems and regards the issue as cultural and behavioural, thus focusing on group identity and characteristics rather than on discriminatory patterns or institutional incapacity to address a systemic lack of affordable housing.[13]

The strategies are, by and large, a reflection of how the majority of policy-makers understand the Roma's role in society and the role they can 'fill' in either economic or political terms. Based on policy-makers' way of speaking about the beneficiaries of Roma policies, we notice that Spain focuses on the socio-economic dimension of integration while Italy highlights cultural integration. Beyond this difference, an equally important distinction between the two approaches is that, while the Spanish narrative is about improving living conditions for part of its population (who might well be overly represented among the poor and less-educated, as well as culturally different and/or subject to ethnic discrimination), Italy's discourse is about incorporating, integrating or accommodating an 'external' group (or rather multiple external groups) who are not part of the Italian nation and its society, even though they might hold Italian citizenship. In Italy, the problem is framed as being about integrating foreigners or citizens of foreign origin who, in any case, hold a culture and values that are seen as distant, and often opposed, to 'Italianity'. Therefore, the indicators and framework adopted are those usually employed in the 'migrant integration' literature, including the need to respect 'migrant' identity and 'diversity' while making sure that they [the migrants/Roma] accept (unspecified) 'Italian' values. In Spain, it is instead about bringing 'up to level' an impoverished and 'deficient' section of the population, therefore the indicators and categories used are those linked to social exclusion, employment and economic growth.[14]

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[13] For a more detailed account of Roma classifiers as targets of specific policies in Italy and Spain, see Magazzini (2018).

[14] A sentence that is repeated more than once in the Spanish strategy, and in the numerous plans and actions, and that represents the main pillar of Spain's approach towards Roma integration is 'Roma are full and equal citizens in Spain' ('*Los gitanos son ciudadanos de pleno derecho en España*'). See, for instance, the position of the Spanish Ombudsman on the Roma: https://www.defensor-delpueblo.es/grupo-social/gitanos/

3.6 Concluding Remarks: (Dis)Integration Dynamics within Integration Policy Frameworks

This chapter has built upon an analysis of the Roma integration strategies adopted by Italy and Spain, and on interviews with the policy-makers in charge of these strategies, to explore how 'integration' is understood and acted upon by policy-makers in these two settings. By looking at the NRIS and their formulation in Italy and Spain, what emerges in terms of general trends is that the Spanish framework revolves mainly around socio-economic elements, while the Italian one prioritises the differentiation between different legal statuses and the alleged need for cultural mediation. There are, however, some commonalities in the ways in which Roma are seen as 'deficient', lagging behind the majority population (in either cultural or economic terms). The fact that national identity dominates both strategies –even more than the concept of integration itself– is highly consequential for their outcome, and for the ways in which the recipients of integration policies are categorised.[15] On the whole, the fundamental difference – beyond the economic or cultural approach – seems to be whether or not Roma are framed as belonging to the national polity. It could actually be said that it is precisely whether Roma individuals are perceived as citizens of the respective country (regardless of their actual legal status) that determines a socio-economic or a cultural approach.

Because group solidarity relies heavily on the contingency of perceptions of commonality and otherness, the dichotomy 'in group' vs 'out group' is crucial, particularly in times of economic crisis, in constructing categories of deservingness (Kymlicka 2015). Who belongs to 'us' and is therefore rightfully entitled to welfare benefits, social housing, health services and so on? Each case responds to distinct political necessities and societal contexts, and neither is accidental. While Spain decided to 'use' Roma policies as an effective tool to attract European funds and develop what has been called 'a strategy of competitiveness with a human face' (Kostka 2015, p. 82), Italy wrapped its plan in an eloquent human rights discourse which, however, has proven quite shallow (thus flexible) in terms of concrete measures. This can be problematised and declined in various ways, but the baseline narrative is that Roma 'have problems' (or are themselves a problem) and are thus in need of 'integration'.

This distinction points at the necessity to delve, beyond integration's markers and means, into its foundation, as defined by Ager and Strang: rights and full citizenship. In their definition Ager and Strang (2008) acknowledge that such a foundation is by no means consistent across different countries, nor does citizenship necessarily respond to fulfilling the same criteria everywhere:

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[15] While the words 'integration' and 'inclusion' are used cumulatively about 60 times in the Spanish strategy and 130 times in the Italian, the Spanish document used the terms 'national', 'Spain' or 'Spanish' 188 times, and the Italian one the words 'national', 'Italy' or 'Italian' 483 times, inciting us to question who the Roma targeted by these integration policies are for policy-makers.

Definitions of integration adopted by a nation inevitably depend on that nation's sense of identity, its 'cultural understandings of nation and nationhood' (Saggar 1995, p. 106). This sense of identity as a nation incorporates certain values; and these are values that significantly shape the way that a concept such as integration is approached' (Ager and Strang 2008, pp. 173–174).

They suggest that a discussion about citizenship and rights should be made explicit whenever applying the notion of integration in any given setting. How to do so is, however, less clear, precisely because 'notions of nationhood, citizenship and rights will vary across settings' (*Ibid.*, p. 176). Of course, the political dimension of the exclusion and marginalisation is hardly, if ever, really separated from either cultural or economic inequalities or both. To the non-citizen who enjoys a sense of cultural belonging and recognition in the host country and who does not suffer from economic hardship and the personal insecurity that comes with it, the idea of being a citizen is largely superfluous. It is when a group has access to neither cultural nor economic rights that the lack of civic and political rights comes at a high cost.

One way to overcome the exclusion and disintegration processes that racialised minorities are subjected to might be, as suggested by some of the chapters in this book (Desille 2020; Hinger 2020) to focus more on the local dimension of integration, which is where the practicality of integration measures holds the potential to override ethno-nationalist rhetoric. Yet the wider issue that this raises is that state institutions are themselves engaged in producing and reproducing not only integration but also disintegration, by selectively organising and categorising 'deserving' and 'underserving' individuals. What Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas have called 'probationary citizenship' with respect to irregular migrants (2012, p. 243), applies similarly to racialized minorities such as the Roma. Integration measures are granted to (or forced upon) Roma groups based on their perceived 'deservingness' and/or ability to participate in the majoritarian society. To be 'integrated' becomes therefore to become 'closer' to an imaginary ideal national citizen.

Against this backdrop, an analysis of the Roma integration strategies in Spain and Italy shows us that, while widely different in scope and trajectories, they share two problematic assumptions with other European integration strategies aimed at migrants and refugees. One is an ethno-national framing of integration, which is rarely made explicit but permeates most integration policies, fostering the illusion of a homogenous ethno-national identity that 'others' should ntegrate into. The other assumption is the understanding of integration as a 'privilege' to be either 'earned' by the outsiders through hard work or that might be 'granted' to them by the institutions upon proof of good conduct (Hinger 2020). As argued in the introduction to this volume, the perceived desirability of the integration of specific individuals ultimately depends on how they are categorised by the state in which they live, with those who are seen as too 'foreign' or 'deviant' increasingly becoming the target of disintegration policies or practices which, in turn, harm society as a whole. As long as even explicit integration policies rest on these assumptions, however, they will continue to produce and reproduce disintegration dynamics at both the individual and collective levels.

3.7 List of Interviews

Interview 1: Director of the Roma special programme unit, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (MSSSI), Spain, 14 October 2014.

Interview 2: Local councillor (social services), City Council of Aviles, Spain, 16 October 2014.

Interview 3: Member of the Board of Trustees, Fundacion Secretariado Gitano (FSG), Spain, 16 October 2014.

Interview 4: Member of the Welfare Committee, Parliament of Catalunya, 17 October 2014.

Interview 5: Member of the Social Service Department, City Council of Zaragoza, 17 October 2014.

Interview 6: Member of the Governing Board, Instituto de Realojamiento e Integracion Social (IRIS), Spain, 18 October 2014.

Interview 7: Legal adviser, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (MSSSI), Spain, 17 April 2015.

Interview 8: Head of the Promotion of Social Action Programme, City Council of Bilbao, 9 June 2016.

Interview 9: Member of the Governing Board, City Council of San Sebastian, 8 July 2016.

Interview 10: Senior legal adviser, National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR), Italy, 6 August 2015.

Interview 11: Senior consultant, Ufficio Rom, Sinti e Caminanti, Italy, 14 November 2015.

Interview 12: Senior policy adviser, Roma Capitale, Italy, 19 December 2015.

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