

## Home, migration, and Roma people in Europe

Piemontese, Stefano; Maestri, Gaja

DOI:

[10.4337/9781800882775.00051](https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800882775.00051)

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*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Piemontese, S & Maestri, G 2023, Home, migration, and Roma people in Europe. in P Boccagni (ed.), *Handbook on Home and Migration*. Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., pp. 481–492.

<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800882775.00051>

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## 39. Home, migration, and Roma people in Europe

*Stefano Piemontese and Gaja Maestri*

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### INTRODUCTION

With 10–12 million people, the Roma are considered the largest ethnic minority in Europe. It includes various groups commonly known as Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Sinti and Boyash, among others, which are often wrongly represented as nomadic. Historically, Roma have faced discrimination and unequal access to fundamental rights, and today 80 per cent of them still live below the poverty threshold and suffer from severe housing deprivation (FRA, 2018).

This chapter focuses on Roma migrating from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries to Western Europe. Their international mobility strongly contributed to the Europeanisation of the so-called ‘Roma issue’ (Vermeersch, 2012), especially after the 2004 and 2007 European Union (EU) eastward enlargement. Roma migration played a crucial role in convincing EU institutions to adopt the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Unfortunately, however, besides inclusion policies, it also prompted a proliferation of restrictive measures, mainly in the form of administrative regulations, voluntary return programmes, begging bans, and forced evictions implicitly aimed at this population: ‘exclusive but not explicit’ initiatives that both flip and disrupt the ‘explicit but not exclusive’ approach advocated by European institutions (Piemontese & Magazzini, 2019). In the context of growing concern over the arrival of CEE Roma, advocates and researchers have often focused on the institutional discrimination and racism that relegate Roma migrants to government-sponsored camps, informal settlements, and sub-standard squatted buildings in destination countries. Although we acknowledge the many ways European governments marginalise and discriminate against Roma (Fekete, 2014), we argue that reducing Roma housing to loss and exclusion risks concealing the strategic and creative dimension of residential micro-practices enacted by Roma themselves, who instead mobilise various resources at both national and transnational levels.

Given the diversity of the housing situation of Roma in Europe, it would be challenging to give a complete overview. This chapter, therefore, attempts to capture the complexity of the literature on Roma housing by focusing on the following main issues. First, we engage with critical scholarship deconstructing ethnic labels, the discourses on nomadism and Roma exceptionalism, which commonly shape policy approaches and public opinion on Roma populations and mobility. Second, we focus on the different forms of housing segregation in Europe, with specific attention to the spatial device of the camp. Then, we turn to actor-centred perspectives, thoroughly discussing the transnational residential strategies and homemaking practices enacted by Roma migrants themselves. Finally, we reflect on emerging avenues of scholarly and activist research foregrounding intersectionality through feminist perspectives and the nexus with anti-eviction and housing rights movements.

## NOMADISM AND ROMA EXCEPTIONALISM

Before starting with a systematic literature review on the housing situation of Roma people in Europe, we want to highlight three theoretical caveats: terminology, nomadism and Roma exceptionalism.

In this chapter, we use ‘Roma migrants’ and other related terms to describe the international mobility of European citizens who either identify themselves as Roma/Gypsies or who are regarded as such by others. Although we do not use it in quotation marks, this expression should always be understood as a political category that emerged in the interplay between media narratives, institutional categories and integration policies (Piemontese & Magazzini, 2019). Acknowledging the fluid, situational and multi-layered nature of Roma identity and its entanglement with the ‘migrant’ category (Messing, 2019) may help challenge the idea that all Roma who migrate share similar characteristics and their mobility is a cohesive phenomenon. Nevertheless, and similar to the umbrella term ‘Roma’, engaging with this expression can be heuristically helpful inasmuch as it is critically considered a label deployed by policymakers and not an identity (Magazzini, 2018).

In this regard, we cannot help but notice how in the public debate, the Roma are often associated with nomadism. Although this assumption has traditionally shaped the approach of many policymakers and pro-Roma advocates too (Simhandl, 2009), it is worth noting that only a modest minority of Roma people conducts a nomadic lifestyle (Liégeois, 2007). Even in these cases, nomadism is often the outcome of peripatetic economic practices, such as seasonal work or circular labour activities (Lucassen et al., 1998). Notably, what is usually regarded as nomadism is, in most cases, the outcome of state policies. For instance, the cycles of expulsion and eviction that in recent years have characterised public intervention towards Roma migrants (for example, in France, Italy and Spain) eventually resulted in a high level of mobility among these groups, who did not choose this way of living voluntarily (van Baar, 2011). In this sense, nomadism should be regarded, rather than an intrinsic and defining feature of an alleged ‘Roma culture’, as a discursive frame that serves to normalise exclusion and displacement. In line with this understanding, during the last two decades, actors across civil society and academia have advocated for an approach centred on the nexus between housing deprivation and ethnic discrimination. This shift is visible, for instance, at the EU level, where the housing exclusion of the Roma is now discussed from an anti-discrimination, human rights and minority protection perspective (Ferreira, 2019).

While it is becoming more widely accepted that only a minority of Roma are nomadic, mainstream media and political narratives still depict and treat them as a distinct category of people whose cultural features, economic practices and social needs are intrinsically different from the majority society. Consequently, Roma groups are frequently described through derogatory and stereotypical images, highlighting their work aversion (van Baar, 2012) or their neglectful parenting style (Humphris, 2019). The idea of Roma exceptionalism persists and shapes policymaking and pro-Roma advocacy too, still simplistically portraying the Roma as a homogenous group and undermining alliances between Roma and other discriminated ethnic groups. As a result, the Roma are often the target of specific ethnic policies, especially on housing, as we discuss in the next section.

## HOUSING SEGREGATION, CAMPS AND GHETTOS

The housing and socioeconomic conditions of Roma people across the globe are very diverse and heterogeneous, as they reflect social stratification processes that are locally and historically embedded (Giuffrè, 2014). Nevertheless, despite national differences, the residential confinement and sub-standard living conditions experienced by Roma people are widespread across Europe (Picker, 2017).

In CEE, Roma have historically experienced confinement in segregated neighbourhoods and ghettoised villages with poor infrastructure (Berescu et al., 2013). Public policies have further reinforced this tendency via institutional neglect, forced eviction from mixed neighbourhoods and relocation to urban outskirts (Vincze, 2019).

Roma also experience housing segregation and deprivation in destination countries. Whilst in CEE countries the Roma live in segregated neighbourhoods or villages, in the West Roma migrants are often confined in government-sponsored camps (Picker et al., 2015), informal settlements (Solimene, 2019) or sub-standard squatted buildings in poorer urban areas (Torres, 2021). For instance, in Italy there are different types of Roma camps, for example informal ones set up by migrants and official ones inaugurated mainly in the 1990s for housing Roma asylum seekers who arrived during the Yugoslav wars. During the last two decades, these camps have also been used to resettle Roma migrants from Eastern Europe evicted from informal settlements (Maestri, 2019). Despite recent policies aimed at dismantling existing camps, Roma migrants still face confinement and lack access to fundamental rights (Daniele et al., 2018). Moreover, even in countries where official Roma camps do not exist, like Spain (Magazzini & Piemontese, 2016) and Sweden (Hansson & Mitchell, 2018), Roma migrants are still targeted by heightened state control and experience spatial confinement and sub-standard living conditions.

Because of the challenging housing conditions experienced by many Roma in different countries, much scholarship on Roma migration has focused on housing segregation and deprivation, approaching this phenomenon through different theoretical lenses, which foreground two main dimensions.

First, research has considered confinement in the peripheries, camps or informal settlements as characterised by coercion and violence. In all these different spaces, Roma migrants experience first-hand the exclusionary power of the state through neglect, forced evictions, expulsions or resettlements. Like in Agambenian ‘camps’, their fundamental rights (e.g., access to education, housing and health) are often suspended, and they become subject to surveillance and exceptional rules that do not apply to the rest of the population (Clough Marinaro, 2009). However, confinement and disenfranchisement do not mean utter exclusion. On the contrary, those living in camps, ghettos or slums are ‘included as excluded’. Placed at the bottom of the social ladder, they are nevertheless crucial for the broader functioning of society, for instance, by becoming cheap labourers in the global assembly lines (Vincze, 2019) or an easy target for scapegoating political discourses (Leggio, 2019).

Second, in their everyday life, Roma migrants enact coping mechanisms that allow them to transform exclusion into forms of solidarity and protection. Despite these unfavourable circumstances, and similar to other migrants (see Boccagni, 2017), they creatively engage in homemaking practices and develop their own forms of place attachment. In this regard, Sigona (2015) has coined the term ‘campzenship’ to refer to the specific mode of being political that emerges in everyday life of the camps, seen not only as a disempowering political technology

but also a space of protection and recognition for newly arrived migrants. As we will see more in detail in the next section, urban enclosures do not automatically strip the Roma of their rights but can become grounds for claiming new forms of citizenship, including networks of solidarity and participation, both with their neighbours (Powell, 2013) and with civil society organisations (Maestri, 2019).

## MIGRATION, RESIDENTIAL STRATEGIES AND HOMEMAKING PRACTICES

Against the backdrop of a higher incidence of poverty, unemployment and housing deprivation than the general population, European Roma apply their agency and networking abilities to strive for better living conditions. A widening set of studies has emphasised the increasing role of migration as a strategy to achieve upward social mobility and access to fundamental rights (Durst & Nagy, 2018). In this context, transnational homemaking practices stand out as a common thread that intersects a vast research landscape (see Ioannoni et al., 2020), dealing with racialisation, marginalisation and securitisation processes linked to Roma im/mobility in contemporary Europe. As we will see, for disadvantaged Roma migrants, the home emerges both as a site of contention and negotiation between conflicting agencies – institutional and individual – and as the ultimate token of social mobility. In destination countries, their home-making practices mirror the transnational economic strategies of economic betterment whose direction, extent and potential for broader social transformation are often underestimated or misinterpreted by institutional actors (Ivasiuc, 2018; Manzoni, 2017). In the countries of origin, the remittances used to improve or construct new houses do not simply represent a symbolic affirmation of success. They also play a central role in remodelling ethnic landscapes through activating desegregation processes that challenge existing patterns of ethnic relations (Tesár, 2015; Toma & Foszto, 2018).

In both localities, spatial segregation, residential instability and inadequate housing are central elements in reproducing negative imagery of the Roma, problematising them as threatening subjects and conveying the assumption of their inherent cultural incompatibility. Particularly in Western European cities, the materiality and gregariousness of unauthorised settlements, squatted buildings, nomad camps and other forms of temporary and collective accommodation significantly contribute to reviving the tropes of anti-Gypsyism so deeply rooted in Western culture (Cittadini, 2018). This process is not an end in itself. On the contrary, historically, like today, the system of meanings attached to the most popular anti-Gypsyist stereotypes (e.g., non-identity, placelessness, parasitism, absence of discipline, dirtiness) serves to enforce the social norms and values of the majority society by constructing a projective counter-image of the ‘good citizen’ (End, 2012) that legitimates greater surveillance and repressive policy interventions.

However, Roma are not powerless spectators of the exclusionary narratives and policies implemented by local and national authorities. Quite the opposite, an increasing number of studies have aptly highlighted the incessant efforts undertaken by Roma to improve their living conditions under such unfavourable circumstances. By emphasising their ability to access and mobilise the available material and immaterial resources, scholars sought to contrast the widespread prejudices about Roma as indolent and insular communities that are

unable or unwilling to 'integrate', thus exposing the accountability of policies in reproducing inequality and exclusion among disadvantaged Roma communities.

The following sections will focus on three main dimensions that make up the research landscape on the nexus between migration and the housing practices of the Roma: the role of local resources and networks; the nexus between transnational homemaking and the individual and collective processes of social transformations; and the understanding of housing as a site of resistance and autonomy.

### **Housing Strategies across Networks and Resources**

Research has shown how the economic, social, cultural and political resources available locally are essential to redefine the livelihood patterns of Roma migrants in destination countries. Their housing trajectories depend on complex and changing circumstances that combine individual and structural dimensions, including material, cognitive and social resources and capabilities, perceived opportunities and institutional factors (Manzoni, 2017).

If we were to investigate the homemaking processes of Roma newcomers in large Western European cities, we would primarily focus on the information and connections preceding and accompanying their migration trajectories. Not dissimilar from other migrants, the confluence of pre-departure housing agreements with informal migration brokers and a generalised sense of caution towards a new and unfamiliar social environment are common reasons to rely on the closer support networks of families, neighbours and co-ethnics. These networks play a fundamental role in helping newcomers ensure livelihood strategies upon arrival (Sigona, 2015). They are also central to the social and spatial organisation of Roma shantytowns (Vlase & Voicu, 2014). Some scholars have particularly emphasised how, even when undesired, shared experiences of ghettoisation and social exclusion can further reinforce the dependence on closer support networks, consolidating solidarity along ethnic lines (Powell & Lever, 2017).

Although Roma migrants living in unauthorised settlements, squatted buildings and 'nomad camps' tend to form self-contained communities exposed to isolation and marginalisation, their makeshift housing arrangements are not closed spaces (Bermann & Clough Marinaro, 2014). Eviction cycles play a significant role in intermixing people and generating ever new clusters of cohabitation that contribute to reshaping attitudes, behaviours and skills of shantytown dwellers (Cousin et al., 2021). Moreover, like other migrants who strive to navigate changing and unstable transnational fields, Roma's efforts to cope with everyday insecurity rely on a wide range of housing and livelihood arrangements. These strategies profit from a bricolage of information and resources facilitated by a variety of connections endowed with different 'support profiles' that extend far beyond tightly knit and closed networks of family and co-ethnics (Vacca et al., 2021). Over time, the superdiverse urban peripheries of Western European cities have endowed Roma migrants with a vibrant, extensive, articulated and heterogeneous social capital fully blended into local and mainstream society. Here, the informal economic activities carried out locally facilitate establishing relationships with new neighbours (Pontrandolfo, 2018). They also enhance the creation of 'bridging social ties' across ethnic boundaries (Cingolani, 2016). These relations with neighbours, acquaintances, social workers, municipal officers, members of non-profit associations, social movements and religious organisations prove essential to shaping Roma's housing and social mobility careers.

### Homemaking and Social Transformations

For disadvantaged Roma in CEE, home is, above all, a material and idealised site where transnational migration processes entangle with individual and collective social transformation prospects. For many of them, building or improving a property house in the country of origin is one of the driving reasons for moving abroad (Benarrosh-Orsoni, 2019). Nonetheless, constructing a house is a slow process because investments are gradual and often interrupted by insufficient funds (Teodorescu, 2020).

These houses under construction do not only contribute to transforming the social and morphological landscape of their communities. They also substantiate the assumption that mobility and immobility interact and construct each other (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) through a circular economy of homemaking. While in destination countries Roma migrants are evicted, segregated or, at best, swell the ranks of construction workers, in their home countries they invest their remittances in hiring left-behind labourers to construct their houses. Bricklayers and carpenters that travel these regions to sell their work to ‘successful migrants’ are less visible but certainly no less important protagonists of the home–migration nexus as it comes into view in the urban and rural peripheries of Europe. The quality of the new constructions and the time needed to erect them reflect the achievements and unpredictability of the most carefully prepared migratory plans. In CEE, as elsewhere, the materiality and appearance of the houses accurately reflect the existent class, status and ethnic boundaries that cross the local social fabric, with the Roma historically clustered in less well-off neighbourhoods. Thus, for those who migrate improving their homes represents the most visible way to contest, if not reverse, such hierarchies (Anghel, 2016; Tesăr, 2015) and perform upward social mobility routes that are taking place at any cost in an unseen far away.

Notably, besides representing a symbolic affirmation of success, the ‘remittance houses’ (Lopez, 2010) of the Roma are part of broader, spontaneous processes of material and symbolic desegregation that challenge the existing patterns of ethnic relations in the villages and towns of origin (Toma & Fosztó, 2018). As Racles (2018) has highlighted, building or ameliorating a property house ‘back home’ also represents a response to anti-Gypsist repertoires that construct the ‘Gypsy way of living’ as bearing a natural predisposition to carelessness towards the inhabited space and the incapacity to overcome deprivation. The construction of new houses closer to the living standards of non-Roma neighbours and possibly closer to their districts is not only changing negative local perceptions of the Roma (Toma et al., 2017): as Tesăr (2015) has thoroughly shown, these practices remain subject to internal cultural elaboration and vividly contribute to the cultural reproduction of the Roma.

Some authors have specifically explored the decision-making processes that cast the efforts of Roma slum dwellers in destination countries to move out of housing deprivation and progress towards a higher socioeconomic position. Manzoni (2017) showed how the availability of economic capital is a decisive yet insufficient condition for abandoning homelessness. In fact, the role of brokers and the support of informal networks of friends and acquaintances is far more decisive for moving out of the slum. However, exiting homelessness is not a straightforward process that solely depends on the availability of economic and social resources. While connections with former slum dwellers may provide motivation and alternative housing prospects, time spent in sub-standard housing also produces apathy, indifference and resignation (Lurbe i Puerto, 2016). However, some authors invite us not to fall into the trap of one-dimensional interpretations. Moving out of housing deprivation should not be understood

solely as an opportunity but also as a choice that, as such, also contemplates its opposite. Ivasiuc (2018), in particular, draws attention to the need for analysing the intersection between spatial and social mobility through the lens of transnational and transgenerational projects. Pantea (2013) also shows that the decision to live in a slum, rather than a chronic state of dependency and resignation, is a clear economic strategy that feeds projects of upward social mobility elsewhere. From this point of view, experiencing stagnating or downgrading social mobility trajectories becomes acceptable because it facilitates capital accumulation and allows households to invest in family projects they could not attain otherwise. These include constructing a property home or investing in children's education (Beluschi-Fabeni et al., 2019; Toma et al., 2017).

Regardless of the direction and scope of remittances, all these efforts to improve the living conditions are conditional on housing stability. Research on second generations has shown how spatial rootedness is central in enhancing life opportunities, such as finding a job and having uninterrupted educational trajectories (Beluschi-Fabeni et al., 2019; Piemontese et al., 2018). Sometimes, local rehousing projects, by prioritising residential stability to ensure continuity of social intervention initiatives, do not tackle overcrowding (Piemontese & Beluschi-Fabeni, 2014). Varying degrees of housing stability also enable Roma migrants to become increasingly accepted as part of the local social fabric. They also transform their plans for the future, with households living in social housing and rented apartments travelling back home less frequently and ultimately postponing their definitive return to the country of origin.

### **Housing as a Site of Resistance and Autonomy**

The third dimension of the housing–migration nexus conceptualises the informal housing strategies enacted by Roma migrants in destination countries as ‘acts of citizenship’ (Aradau et al., 2013). The practices of Roma dwellers to secure dignified accommodation are generally carried out in conditions of invisibility and are not recognised as activism. Nonetheless, these acts can be seen as insurgent practices that express a silent resistance against the privation of social rights through the democratic appropriation of the urban space (Bonizzoni et al., Chapter 36, this volume). From this point of view, mobility and territorial dispersion may reveal tactics to prevent evictions and expulsions, while informal dwelling can be explained also as a refusal of the strict regulations overseeing access to homeless shelters (Teodorescu, 2020).

Alongside these practices of ‘resistance through resilience’ (Bermann & Clough Marinaro, 2014), scholars have focused on more advantageous strategies that Roma migrant dwellers adopt, particularly when confronted with institutional policies of selective inclusion. Research has shown how Roma-targeted inclusion projects often manipulate the rhetoric of empowerment and cultural recognition as a way to re-educate their beneficiaries and hinder uncontrolled urban development (Grill, 2020). In particular, rather than considering their beneficiaries’ capabilities to pursue their own projects, housing insertion initiatives treat them primarily as subjects to be ‘repaired’ (Manca & Vergnano, 2019). Against this backdrop, research has shown how recipients of ‘Roma integration’ projects mobilise various strategies to take advantage of such unfavourable circumstances. These acts of resistance rarely occur in open forms of political struggle but range from producing a ‘hidden transcript’ in everyday interactions to explicit negotiation with relevant local stakeholders. Whether gossip, omissions, lies or vandalism, these strategies enable beneficiaries to question urban segregation and reduce the asymmetrical relation with institutional actors through acts of ‘non-resistant resistance’



(Clave-Mercier & Olivera, 2018). Such acts see Roma recipients either performing obedience and active submission to their rules or fitting their racial and class stereotypes. Fewer studies (Matras & Leggio, 2017; Pontrandolfo, 2018) have dealt with the reverse ability of Roma slum dwellers to openly negotiate better housing solutions and explore potential agreements with local institutions and stakeholders. As this literature shows, when recognised as legitimate interlocutors by local authorities, Roma slum dwellers are ready to act as political subjects in the public and institutional arenas.

Both forms of negotiation – hidden and patent – manifest the strategic efforts of Roma migrants to simultaneously transcend and reinforce the categorisations used against them and make the most out of unfavourable circumstances (Armillei, 2016). In a context where being labelled as a Roma by local authorities may either provide or constrain access to housing and welfare resources, negotiating identities and identifications is an essential housing strategy (Cingolani, 2016).

## CONCLUSION: NEW AVENUES OF RESEARCH

Historically, national and local governments in Europe have marginalised and discriminated against Roma, mainly by mobilising anti-Gypsyist repertoires (e.g., nomadism and placelessness) as discursive frames that construct their inherent cultural incompatibility and legitimise exceptional policy measures, including surveillance and repressive policy interventions. Against this backdrop, we have argued that reducing the experience of Roma people to exclusion and discrimination does not do justice to the strategic and creative dimension of their social and economic practices. Most notably, those Roma who travel the European space as low-skilled labourers (and increasingly as students and professionals) mobilise various resources at both national and transnational levels to achieve upward social mobility and access to fundamental rights. Their transnational homemaking and house-building practices lie at the core of collective transformation processes, allowing CEE Roma to renegotiate their position within the majority society in both origin and destination countries.

In addition to these aspects, in recent years, two novel streams of research are advancing our understanding of the home–migration nexus shaping the life of European Roma. Both rely on the feminist notion of intersectionality and its underlying idea that disadvantage is conditioned by multiple interacting systems of oppression (Kóczé, 2018). Moreover, both recognise intersectionality as an analytical structure for unpicking social inequalities and discrimination and as an organising strategy within social movements.

One set of literature focuses predominantly on the intersection between race and gender, looking at gender inequality within and around Romani communities and, more in general, at the internal and external constraints and negotiations that characterise the life of Romani women and LGBTIQ people (Fremlova, 2021; Mate, 2022). Consequently, housing segregation and homemaking practices enacted by Roma communities demand to be unpacked in light of this new intersectional framework, as it helps us untangle the double discrimination experienced by Roma people: racial stigmatisation by the non-Roma population and patriarchal oppression within (and without) Roma communities (Cukrowska & Kóczé, 2013). In this regard, recent studies have shown how, among the extra hurdles that migrant Roma women migrants face, there is a lack of autonomy due to their dependency on the men of their family when it comes to housing arrangements and mobility (Mantovan & Maestri, 2021). These

circumstances make them more vulnerable to domestic violence, further exclude them from the labour market (Andrei et al., 2014) and increase their burden of domestic labour (Gheorghe et al., 2019). Roma migrant women, however, also experience gender-specific forms of discrimination in their various encounters with state authorities. For example, they are frequently treated as ‘despicable mothers’ (Humphris, 2019) who need to prove they can conform to the state expectations about appropriate motherhood. Gendered policy interventions do not affect Roma women only but are a tool to govern the Roma population at large (Humphris & Sigona, 2019). Also, the threat of withdrawing children’s custody (Vrăbiescu & Kalir, 2017) or the offer to relocate mothers and children in women-only shelters (Mantovan & Maestri, 2021) further impacts the housing strategies and conditions of Roma migrants. However, despite these obstacles, Roma women are also often at the forefront of housing justice struggles (Gheorghe et al., 2019). In doing so, they play a meaningful role in challenging ethnic boundaries, including by engaging with other ‘native’ Roma women in destination countries (Sordé Martí et al., 2012).

The second stream of research that is informed by an intersectional approach explores the participation of Roma migrants in grassroots social movements. It particularly examines the opportunities and challenges created by forms of solidarity that, under different circumstances, bring together anti-eviction activists and Roma and non-Roma people affected by housing insecurity. This scholarship shows how a favourable intertwining of social, material and political circumstances can potentially turn pre-existing unintentional ‘acts of citizenship’ of Roma migrants, such as squatting, into politicised processes of collective and political empowerment, ultimately redefining their livelihood patterns. During the last decade, the housing bubble that led to the 2007–2008 global financial crisis turned into an unexpected opportunity for many homeless Roma migrants in Europe, both directly, by increasing the available stock of vacant properties ready to be squatted, and indirectly, by strengthening the social reach of housing rights movements (Maestri, 2014). Building on existing contacts between Roma migrants and local activists (Vergnano, 2020), both factors have facilitated access to better housing and activated spontaneous desegregation processes. The ‘intersectional alliances’ (Ryder et al., 2021) underpinning these developments call into question the predominant assumption that, for Roma, the most desirable and advantageous path to social participation, empowerment and social justice has to occur within either the family network or the institutionalised framework of ethnopoltics, through the promotion of their own cultural and ethnic identity. Whilst signalling the frictions and tensions triggered by the multiple interactions between Roma migrants and housing rights movements, an emerging set of studies advocates that the transformation of Roma’s housing conditions in Europe is unlikely to occur if their housing problems are considered a separate ethnic issue. However challenging, intersectional solidarity can help to contrast the culturalisation of Roma exclusion and position the struggles of marginalised groups and discriminated minorities within the broader critique of neoliberal capitalism.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Work on this chapter has been funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant Agreement no. 846645. We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and volume editor for the insightful comments.

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