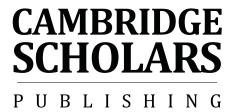# Mobilising against Marginalisation in Europe

Mobilising against Marginalisation in Europe

Edited by

Didier Chabanet and Frédéric Royall

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**
P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

Figures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Agir Ensemble Contre le Chômage
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
ALV	Arbeitslosenverband Deutschland e. V. (Association of the Unemployed of Germany)
APEIS	Association pour l'Emploi, l'Information et la Solidarité des Chômeurs et Travailleurs Précaires (Association for Employment, Information and the Solidarity of the Unemployed and Precarious Workers)
ASSEDIC	Associations pour l'Emploi dans l'Industrie et le Commerce (Associations for Employment in Industry and Commerce)
ATTAC	Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens)
BWP	Belgian Workers' Party
CCME	Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
CGIL	Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (Italian Confederation of Labour)
CGT chômeur	Confédération Générale du Travail—chômeur (General Confederation of Work—Unemployed)
CID	Contract of Indefinite Duration
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions)
CML	Comité des Mal-logés (Committee for the Poorly Housed)
COBAS	Confederazione Comitati di Base (Base Committees Confederation)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DAL	Droit au Logement (Right to Housing)
DTEDG	Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EES	European Employment Strategy
EFCI	European Federation of the Cleaning Industry
ENAR	European Network Against Racism
EU	European Union
EUMF	European Union Migrants' Forum

FGA	Finnish Gypsy Association
FIM	Federazione Italiana Metalmeccanici (Italian Metallurgic Federation)
FIOM	Federazione Lavoratori Metallurgici (Italian Federation of Metallurgic Employees and Workers)
FISMIC	Sindacato Auotonomo Metalmeccanici e industrie collegate (Autonomous Unions of Metallurgy and Associated Industry)
FTC	Fixed-Term Contract
GL	*La Gazette de Liége*
GLFB	General Labour Federation of Belgium
GM	Gypsy Mission
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAC	Itinerant Action Committee/Campaign
IWA	International Workingmen's Association (First International)
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
LM	*La Meuse*
LP	*Le Peuple*
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MERCI	Mobilization on Ethnic Relations, Citizenship and Immigration
MNCP	Mouvement National des Chômeurs et Précaires (National Mouvement of the Unemployed and Precarious People)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPG	Migration Policy Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUCC	Network of Unemployed Centres Combine
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Co-ordination
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)
PDL	Partito della Libertà (Freedom Party)
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism)
PICUM	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
POS	Political Opportunity Structures
RCC	Refugee Children's Consortium
RESF	Réseau Éducation Sans Frontières (Network Education Without Borders)

RSU	Rappresentanza Sindacale Unitaria (Unified Union Representative)
SDF	Sans Domicile Fixe (Homeless)
SEIU	Service Employees' International Union
SLG	Starting Line Group
SP	Socialist Party (French-Speaking Belgium)
SSVP	Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
T&G	Transport and General Workers' Union
UGL	Unione Generale del Lavoro (General Labour Union)
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro (Italian Labour Union)
UILM	Unione Italiana Lavoratori Metalmeccanici (Italian Union of Metallurgic Employees and Workers)
UK	United Kingdom
WASG	Arbeit & Soziale Gerechtigkeit—Die Wahlalternative (Work and Social Justice—The Election Alternative)
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER ONE

ORGANISATION, MOBILISATION AND MARGINALISATION

DIDIER CHABANET AND FRÉDÉRIC ROYALL

The literature on social movements has grown and diversified very much since the 1970s as researchers tried to account for the increase in their number and variety.[1] Early research focused essentially on nationally based social movements following Tilly's (1986) observation that they are a result of and closely linked to the political, institutional, and social structures and contexts in which they are embedded. But by the mid- to late-1990s, researchers paid increasing attention to transnational movements because they were struck by the ways citizens work together to influence social change at international levels (Tarrow, 2005; della Porta and Tarrow, 2004).

Research on "poor" people's movements[2] holds a particular niche within the study of social movements and research activity has also increased in recent years.[3] Initially, the few scholars that looked at poor people's movements paid far greater attention to analyses of the processes

---

[1] For a review of the literature, see Snow *et al.* (2004).

[2] Here, we use the terms the "poor", the "marginalised" and the "disadvantaged" loosely to refer here more or less to many different types of people who suffer from a stigmatised status and who are generally excluded from political, social and economic domains: the working poor, the homeless, undocumented migrants, the unemployed, Travellers/Gypsies, and so on. These terms will be used without quotation marks in the book. One path breaking study on poor people's movements is Piven and Cloward's (1977) analysis of movements of the unemployed in the United States in the 1930s and 1950s.

[3] One key reason why research activity is growing and diversifying is because of the rise in relative poverty, structural unemployment, and precariousness following the end of the post-war boom years in many West European countries. These changes have led to major transformations in people's status, affiliations and action repertoire.

and systems through which exclusion is produced and/or reproduced (Paugam, 1996). In many of these types of studies, scholars sought to analyse the ways marginalised and/or disadvantaged people coped with their lot in life. Marginalised and/or disadvantaged people were also often considered to be passive service recipients rather than active agents of change (Giugni, 2009: 14). The relative lack of research on poor people's movements until recently was in many ways a result of the dominant assumptions that poor people rarely—if ever—initiated collective action since they had to overcome a number of major obstacles to organisation and to mobilisation. Poor people were generally considered to be politically apathetic. They were also deemed to be badly educated, to lack a collective identity, to be economically and personally vulnerable, and/or to be politically impotent allies. In short, the dominant assumptions have been that these people were short of the various political, cognitive, cultural and financial resources that were deemed to be crucial to organise and to mobilise in the defence of their interests.

The contributors to this book accept that marginalised people face a number of very serious obstacles to organisation and to mobilisation.[4] The contributors also acknowledge that marginalised people often seem to move back and forth between political apathy and spontaneous and unorganised forms of rebellion (Giugni, 2009: 16). But the authors contend that even though structured and conventional forms of political activism are elusive, poor people's movements are not unlikely. The authors also argue that very many marginalised and disadvantaged people organise and mobilise in today's Europe even if the forms and the intensity of the mobilisations vary considerably from country to country.[5] In short, this collection of essays maps the new and rapidly changing profiles of poor people's movements in contemporary West European public life.

Aims

The contributors to this volume discuss issues related to the ways that marginalised people in Europe organise and mobilise in defence of their interests. One of these issues deals with the differences between or similarities of poor people's movements across national borders. For

---

[4] This book is based on a number of papers originally delivered at a conference on "Collective Action and Social Exclusion in Europe" hosted by the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (France) in January 2008. The chapters are either substantial revisions of some of the conference papers or specially commissioned contributions.

[5] For wide ranging discussions of many of these issues see Baglioni *et al.* (2008a) and Cadiou *et al.* (2007).

instance, in what respects do movements of the unemployed in Britain, France and Germany compare? Do Gypsies in Finland mobilise to the same extent, in the same ways, and for the same reasons as those in Italy or as Travellers in Ireland? Can the working poor in England and in Italy count on the same allies? These kinds of issues are linked to the ways marginalised social actors across Western Europe seek to overcome various cultural, social, and political obstacles, act collectively, and intervene in the public space.

A second matter discussed in these pages relates to the social and political issues that structure or frame the mobilisations of marginalised people. The contributors to this book take note of the fact that marginalisation has become central to public debates and policy-making in many European societies. But do poor people's movements constitute important forces which promote social change? Does inequality influence the political participation of marginalised people? Given that marginalised social actors are at the heart of many of the concerns expressed within contemporary European societies—inequality, identities, modern forms of political participation—, the authors wish to compare and contrast major social and political developments in a number of West European countries and to assess the political implications of such. The authors look, thereby, at the extent to which new patterns and news forms of social and political marginalisation and inequality are developing and to the roles of marginalised people within them.

The final issue of interest to the authors concerns the range of methodological approaches that are commonly used to analyse poor people's movements. The authors take note of Roger's (2007) words of caution in that there are inherent difficulties and pitfalls in combining various paradigms (or methodological approaches) when looking at such movements. The contributors try to avoid making hasty methodological combinations but they are keen to show, nonetheless, the relevance of the approach that they have chosen: political opportunities, network analysis, resource mobilisation, or frame analysis. The array of the research methods used here is a sign of the vitality of contemporary social movement research. It is also an indication of the novel ways that researchers seek to identify and to analyse the various levels and influences on the mobilisation of marginalised social actors. In this sense, the authors contribute to the development of research in this key area.

To sum up then, the book investigates the following conundrum: are the poor people's mobilisations examples of strong or "weak weapons of the weak" (Guiraudon, 2001)?

Structure

Collectively, the contributions span the broad fields described above. Individually, the chapters outline, review and analyse key developments, issues and debates in the contributors' specialist areas as they focus on the mobilisation of marginalised people in a number of West European countries. The first four chapters compare mobilisations across national boundaries, whereas the remaining essays focus on mobilisations in country-specific political and social contexts.

In Chapter two, Anne-Cécile Renouard notes that some scholars assume that Gypsies are unlikely to participate in collective action because of the sociological and anthropological obstacles that usually prevent them from moving or acting beyond the confines of their group. She questions the validity of this observation and so she assesses the discursive and sociological conditions in which and by which pro-Gypsy organisations have initiated collective action in Finland and Italy. She finds that in Finland, the collective action of Gypsies against assimilation policies played a key role in highlighting pro-Gypsy issues and in framing the national public debate towards pro-Gypsy social and cultural measures. In Italy, on the contrary, she argues that pro-Gypsy activities were divided between the various claims that targeted nomads and immigrants indiscriminately and that were based on quite different discursive strategies. Her research shows that pro-Gypsy issues in Italy are now framed in ethnic terms mainly and that they have few political outcomes. In the second part of the chapter, her analysis of the typology of pro-Gypsy activists supports the view that human and social resources are decisive criteria for the people that do in fact mobilise. She explains why Gypsies in Finland show a major commitment to collective action compared to low Gypsy participation rates in Italian organisations in which pro-Gypsy claims are mainly carried out by non-Gypsy activists. Thus, she argues, the participation of Gypsy activists is linked to the ways the Gypsy issue is framed and that the commitment of Gypsies increases when pro-Gypsy activities deal with Gypsy cultural and identity issues. Hence she stresses that analyses of Gypsy mobilisation processes need to consider three issues at the same time: the roles of activists, interest building, and discourse building.

In Chapter three, Clotilde Giner focuses on mobilisations on behalf of migrant children in France and Britain. Whether accompanying their family or arriving in the country separated from their parents, migrants under the age of 18 have represented a challenge to liberal-democratic states' attempts to securitize migration. She notes that in Western countries, the situation of migrant children without legal status raises difficulties with respect to governments' commitments to protect children,

on the one hand, and to limit "unwanted" migration, on the other. Recent expressions of support for asylum seekers and undocumented people have been interpreted by some as marking the (re-)emergence of a wider movement of resistance against restrictive migration and asylum policies. However, she notes that little research has focused specifically on the child dimension of these movements. Her chapter looks, therefore, at social mobilisations on behalf of foreign minors and families liable to removal in France and Britain. Her objective is to understand the influence of dominant conceptions of childhood and child-centred policies in facilitating or constraining social mobilisations on behalf of non-status foreign minors. She also wishes to establish—through the comparison between France and Britain—the extent to which these mobilisations are affected by national characteristics. Following an outline of the specific policy field in which non-status foreign minors are situated, she presents the results of a political claims-making analysis based on core data retrieved from *Le Monde* and *The Guardian* between 2000 and 2007. This approach enables her to investigate the extent to which the child focus of social mobilisations relating to migration policies has an impact on the type of actors involved, their action repertoire, and the type of claims formulated.

Annika Zorn's chapter is based on research that looks at local organisations of the unemployed in Paris and Berlin and that she carried out between 2004 and 2007. The chapter assesses the extent to which the access of these local groups to resources and to institutionalised actors has an impact on their collective action strategies. She questions the relevance of three dominant assumptions in the literature: (1) some unemployed people across Europe have had successful mobilisations because they had access to resources that allowed them to break from their marginalised status; (2) social movement actors must have access to resources and to contacts and that—when they do not—their action repertoire is limited; (3) poor people—including the unemployed—consider disruptive actions to be very important for them. To show her disagreement with the above assumptions, she links access to resources and to institutionalised actors to the two strategies that unemployed people commonly use: disruptive tactics and the provision of services. Her conclusions are twofold. The first is that local organisations of the unemployed avail of resources and they have access to institutionalised actors in very different ways. The second is that although local organisations have limited access to resources, this fact does not prevent them from using disruptive actions. She shows that local organisations that have good contacts with institutionalised actors do not use disruptive actions as often those that do not avail of good contacts, but that these organisations still provide resources because they have access to resources.

In the following chapter, Manlio Cinalli analyses the multi-organisational fields of unemployment that are at the intersection between the policy domain of the European Union and the public domain of two of its main member states, namely Britain and France. The main question he seeks to answer is whether Europeanisation can be linked to the specific dynamics of these multi-organisational fields. The analysis deals with a number of factors that include the national and European political contexts within which contention over unemployment develops, the endogenous characteristics of this contention, and the inter-organisational relations across national and European Union levels. His main argument is that "national publics" in the field of unemployment have emerged as being capable of playing a key role in shaping different articulations of Europeanisation across their nation states.

In Chapter six, Simone Baglioni discusses a 2004 industrial dispute in a Fiat factory in Melfi (Italy) involving 4,000 workers. These workers demanded better salaries, improved working conditions and the right to organise union-related activities. He argues that this dispute illustrates the range of contemporary labour and industrial conflicts in many European democracies. Hence, whilst focusing on the meanings of the struggle and on the factors leading to its successful conclusion—Fiat accepted in full the workers' claims—, he shows how the incident is symptomatic of the working conditions and of the dynamics at play in contemporary and advanced West European democracies. From a methodological point of view, he uses the social movement approach in particular to assess what the struggle meant to the various actors involved (workers, unions, and political parties) and to explain the factors that led to its successful conclusion.

In the next chapter, Julien Dohet and Jean Faniel note that since the end of the 19th century, May 1st—"Labour Day"—has come to symbolise working-class struggles. In recent years, however, some organisations renamed "Labour Day" as "Euromayday" and so they now organise Euromayday demonstrations in many European cities to denounce rising levels of precariousness. This chapter compares the first editions of "Labour Day" in the 19th century in Liège (Belgium) with recent Euromayday events held in the very same city. Dohet and Faniel focus on two issues. The first is whether Euromayday events imitate or reinvent—in a different way—the May 1st symbol of workers' struggles. The second issue relates to the extent to which precarious workers have indeed taken part in the two series of events—workers in the 19th century and unemployed people or undocumented foreigners in the 21st century. The authors describe a number of issues: how the events unfolded, their media impact, the claims put forward, the role of globalisation, and the sociology of the organisers and of the participants. Their study highlights that the

two events had festive and protest-oriented objectives, that they were transnational in nature, and that the claims the demonstrators put forward were not limited to work-related issues. The chapter also shows that the events were alike in the sense that the people who found themselves in a precarious position marched side-by-side with relatively privileged workers. In the latter part of the chapter, Dohet and Faniel show that Euromayday organisers were highly critical of the May 1st events that were held at the same time as theirs because they felt that May 1st events had become far too institutionalised. Dohet and Faniel argue, therefore, that Euromayday rekindled rather that reinvented the original spirit of the 19th century May 1st happenings. They also show that although the two events embodied a form of mobilisation against the political marginalisation of precarious people, they were rather unlike in that Euromayday protesters seem to have few affinities with their supposedly working-class and institutional representative. Thus, Euromayday has become a kind of warning to working-class representatives (political parties and the trade union movement).

In Chapter eight, Frédéric Royall looks at the mobilisation of Travellers in the Republic of Ireland since the early 1960s and he argues that Travellers' patterns of resistance were structured by the political and discursive contexts in which they were embedded in that Travellers' political quiescence or militancy was determined by the way they were organised and by changes in their relationship with the state and society at large. To show this, he focuses on three inter-related issues: (1) the changing political and discursive contexts; (2) the relevance of Travellers' material and knowledge-based resources; and (3) the significance of the collective actions they initiated. However, he discusses that despite a protracted and successful period of organisation and mobilisation, this phase may be perhaps coming to an end and he explains the reasons for this changing state of affairs.

The Europeanisation of French immigration and asylum-seekers' associations are the subjects of Pierre Monforte's contribution as he deals with the mobilisation strategies of migration-orientated non-governmental organisations at a European level. His analysis is framed in terms of a "European field of mobilisation". He shows how the interactions between institutional and non-governmental actors are determined by the rules and regulations that have for many years hindered protest at the level of the European Union. He also analyses the strategies that associations used, focusing specifically on protest since the 1990s to challenge these rules and regulations. His analysis illustrates, thereby, the ways that a transnational protest movement against the exclusion of migrants was able to emerge. In doing so, he question the validity of received wisdom

according to which social movements are excluded from European-level mobilisations and from the European-level political sphere.

In Chapter ten, Fabienne Scandella argues that the decline in trade union membership in advanced industrial societies since the mid-1970s has often been seen as a confirmation of post-industrial theories. According to this school of thought, a new service society was deemed to have brought to an end certain forms of conflict and to have pushed work to the margins of protest spaces to the advantage of non-class struggles brought on by "new social movements". She argues that despite unfavourable social, economic and legislative contexts for the trade union movement, a trade-union renewal has been carried out whose objective is to break with the downward spiral of membership. Scandella analyses one such initiative—the "Justice for Cleaners" campaign—undertaken by one of the biggest British trade unions in the London cleaning sector—the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G). Her conclusions are threefold. First, the announcement of the end of work-based protests seems pre-mature in the sense that the service-sector society has not led to a "de-proletarisation" and to the emancipation of all workers. At the bottom of the ladder—of which the cleaning sector is a symbolic example—the working conditions of poor workers has led to resentment and to revolt. Second, trade unions do not seem to have said their last word. Following the lead of its American contemporary—the Service Employees' International Union—the T&G turned towards the American union's more militant "organizing unionism" model, deemed to be more adequate given the current economic and legislative contexts. Finally, interim results of the T&G campaign indicate that the strategic, innovative, and offensive adaptations of trade-union activism can lead to major improvements, and especially for vulnerable workers.

In the book's final chapter, Clément Desbos contends that since the 1980s there has been a major shift in France from a focus on work-related issues to questions of a more social nature. Key organisations have emerged most notably in solidarity with disadvantaged and vulnerable people: the unemployed, the homeless, undocumented immigrants, etc. Initially, these organisations mobilised at local and national levels but with the rise of the anti-globalisation movement at the end of the 1990s some of them were tempted to internationalise their cause. Desbos focuses on the period from the late 1990s to the late 2000s and looks at one such organisation: Droit au Logement (Right to Housing). By looking at the context in which Droit au Logement was established and at its discourse and collective actions, he analyses the extent of Droit au Logement's involvement in an anti-globalisation movement and its capacity to mobilise at an international level. He points, therefore, to the limits of attempts to internationalise the cause of poor people.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CAUSE OF GYPSIES IN FINLAND AND ITALY

ANNE-CECILE RENOUARD

Introduction

This chapter seeks to compare the collective actions of Gypsies[1] in Finland and Italy during the second half of the 20th century during which pro-Gypsy mobilisations were organised in opposition to policies characterised by suspicion and control.[2] The chapter has two objectives. First of all, I wish to question the view of some scholars who suggest that marginalised people—such as Gypsies—often have difficulty in initiating collective action because they find it hard to overcome a number of sociological and anthropological obstacles.[3] I focus rather on the conditions that allowed Gypsies to mobilise in Finland and in Italy and I centre this analysis very much on the resources that are engaged in collective action and on the Pro-Gypsy organisations that act as centralising instances of resources and claims building.[4] I analyse, therefore, the involvement of Gypsies in pro-Gypsy organisations by reference (1) to the social and cultural traits of pro-Gypsy activists and (2) to the symbolic work of defining the cause that is undertaken within pro-Gypsy organisations. I argue that the ways people

---

[1] I use the term "Gypsy" as in a generic way in reference to all mobilisation processes regardless of normative uses and of national characteristics. I will come back to the categorisation processes and to the collective representations later in the chapter.

[2] This study is based on empirical research: interviews and analyses of organisations' documents.

[3] For a discussion of these obstacles, see Piven and Cloward (1977). For a discussion of ways that weakly resourced people seek to overcome these obstacles see Mathieu (2003) and Siméant (1998).

[4] For a discussion of resources, see McCarthy and Zald (1977).

identify with the Gypsy cause vary according to the ways that Gypsies are portrayed and represented within collective action. In my view, the symbolic work of defining the cause is a crucial point so as to explain the extent to which Gypsies do in fact engage in collective action.

My second objective is to analyse the issues that favour or restrict collective action and so I compare the cultural and identity aspects of pro-Gypsy activities. I argue that national discursive opportunities seem to be more favourable in Finland than in Italy and so I assess the extent to which political tolerance to the expression of cultural differences either facilitates or restricts the ways the groups are defined and the ways the legitimacy of the claims made to public authorities are put forward.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section one outlines how Gypsies are perceived in Italy and in Finland and summarises how the Gypsy cause has been built with regard to the policies that target Gypsies. Section two analyses the strategies and the resources that pro-Gypsy organisations have used for mobilisation purposes. Section three proposes a typology of pro-Gypsy activists and it examines the extent to which Gypsy activists in particular are able to build the cause that the organisations defend.

General Background and National Perceptions of Gypsies

The term "Gypsy" varies in meaning from one country to another because it is often not contextualised sociologically. I do this in this section but first I wish to describe briefly the Gypsies that reside in Finland and in Italy in order (1) to analyse the discursive strategies that pro-Gypsy organisations use and (2) to assess the claims of pro-Gypsy activists.

The ways that Gypsies are commonly perceived and described often relate to centuries-old migration patterns. Gypsies first migrated from Russia and Sweden to Finland in the 16th and 17th centuries. Today, many Finnish Gypsies move back and forth between Finland and Sweden. By the late-1980s, it was estimated that from 6,000 to 7,000 Gypsies lived in Finland and that 3,000 Finnish Gypsies lived in Sweden.[5] The 1917 Finnish Constitution recognised Gypsies as being a national minority in much the same ways as the State recognised the Sami (the Lapps), the Swedish-speaking Finns, the "Old Russians"[6], the Jews, and the Tatars: all of these minorities were granted full civil rights. Today, Gypsies that live in Finland are Finnish citizens and Finnish is their mother tongue.

---

[5] Survey by the National Board of Housing in Finland in 1989. See Grönfors (1993).
[6] The term "Old Russians" refers to the Russian-speaking minority that settled in Finland when the country became a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire—1809 until 1917.

Traditionally, Gypsies were called either "Mustalaiset" or—more rarely—"Tummat" (both terms meaning "the dark ones"). Gypsies generally consider that these terms are pejorative. Some people still use "Mustalaiset" but it has been slowly replaced by "Romanit", a term chosen and preferred by Gypsies and pro-Gypsy activists.

There have been several Gypsy migration waves to Italy since the 15th century. Scholars generally describe Gypsies as "the Roma and the Sinti", by reference to various European-wide migration patterns. The Roma are located mostly in Central and Southern Italy and the Sinti in Northern Italy. The Roma are generally characterised as having a sedentary way of life and as depending on agricultural and commercial activities for their livelihood. The Sinti are usually considered to have nomadic habits related to widely diffused circus activities (Nicolini, 1988). The so-called "Gypsy" categories also include other people that migrated to Italy in the 20th century: from Yugoslavia in the 1960s and from the Balkans, Kosovo and Romania in the 1990s. By 2005, it was estimated that 120,000 Gypsies lived in Italy, two thirds of which were Italian citizens.[7] Many Gypsies that migrated to Italy in past 50 years are not—for the most part—Italian citizens, contrary to the Roma and the Sinti.[8] Gypsies are usually called "Zingari" or "Nomadi"—nomads— although many Gypsies have a sedentary way of life (Liégeois, 1994). The terms "Roma" or "Roma and Sinti" have been used more frequently in recent years following intense pro-Gypsy militancy: Gypsies consider that the terms Zingari or Nomadi are pejorative and that they are vectors of collective prejudice.

The pro-Gypsy activities that are the focus of this chapter have two main characteristics in Finland and Italy: (1) they contested Gypsy-orientated policies and promoted a discourse highlighting Gypsies' cultural specificities; and (2) Gypsies from pro-Gypsy organisations took part in the events. Activists did not challenge in a direct way the prevailing national representations of Gypsies. In Finland, the focus was on Gypsies' cultural specificity, whereas in Italy the focus was on the nomadic way of life. In both countries, the discourse on Gypsies was based on prevailing

---

[7] See European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 2nd Report on Italy at http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/XMLEcri/ENGLISH/Cycle_02/02_CbC_eng/02-cbc-italy-eng.pdf, [last accessed 24th August 2009].

[8] The procedure for granting Italian citizenship is as follows: "Italian citizenship […] is based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*. Children born in Italy to foreign parents automatically obtain Italian citizenship by means of a declaration made between 18 and 19 years of age, provided they have resided in Italy continuously since their birth" (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, *ibid*, p. 8) Many residents who have lived in Italy for many years have not been able to become Italian citizens because they do not have—or no longer have—proof of residence, or because they are undocumented.

collective representations and pro-Gypsy organisations did not necessarily dispute them. These Italian and Finnish organisations dealt above all with the ways public authorities managed Gypsy affairs. Let us look briefly at these issues.

In Finland, Gypsies were usually regarded as being vagrants or as a cultural entity separate from the mainstream population (Grönfors, 1993). They were also considered to be a socially disadvantaged group that needed to be modernised and integrated into the mainstream population (Pulma, 2006). From an historical perspective, increasing industrialisation in the 19th century led many people to move away from their place of origin. Thus, people from the mainstream population became far more aware—and even suspicious—of cultural differences as embodied by these "internal migrants". Industrialisation reinforced, therefore, the perception of cultural differences based on religious, linguistic or territorial origin (Häkkinen and Tervonen, 2004). Many of the displaced "internal migrants"—perceived as culturally and ethnically different—also often had quite a low social and economic status. Gypsies were considered to be a particularly deprived group. In time, Gypsies—as well as other minorities such as the Sami, Jews or the Tatars—became the subject of the many anti-poverty policies that the State sought to implement during its nation-building phase.[9] Nation-building also ensured that the State recognised minority groups and that they were given full civil rights (Häkkinen and Tervonen, 2004).

Within this context, a religious organisation—the Gypsy Mission (GM)—came to specialise in Gypsy-related affairs and it helped to shape the ways public authorities dealt with Finnish Gypsies in the first half of the 20th century. The GM was established in 1906 by non-Gypsies—a priest was the main force behind it—with a view to bringing up and educating Gypsy children that had been removed from their families. For many years, the GM was the main civil-society organisation dealing with Gypsy affairs. It also had key assimilation objectives and for this it received government support. Later, in 1956, it took part in a newly established state body—the Advisory Board for Gypsy Affairs. But despite the historical importance of the GM, this study of pro-Gypsy collective action deals above all with the activities of the Finnish Gypsy Association (FGA) from the 1960s on. The FGA was founded in 1967 with a view to challenging the GM's predominantly paternalistic approach towards Gypsies. The FGA promoted Gypsy identity in the very same ways as other Gypsy movements across Europe (Acton, 1974) by for instance, encouraging Gypsies to participate in the political process—an uncommon occurrence for Finnish Gypsies at that time. In doing so, FGA

---

[9] Following Swedish and then Russian rule, Finland became independent in 1917.

activists sought to promote Gypsy-related activities led *by* Gypsies and not *for* Gypsies. The Advisory Board for Gypsy Affairs was re-organised in 1968 so as to have an equal number of representatives from various Gypsy organisations and ministries. FGA Gypsy became Advisory Board members for the first time, thus fulfilling the FGA's objective to be officially recognised as representing the interests of Gypsies.

In Italy, many people have traditionally looked at Gypsies with suspicion given that Gypsies were seen to endanger public safety and that it was often felt that they needed to be watched and controlled.[10] In time, a number of legal measures limited the range of business activities that Gypsies could engage in and prevented nomads from stopping for an extended period of time in one locality (Piasere, 1991 and 1999). In the post-war years, several religious—Catholic—movements participated in pro-Gypsy activities. These organisations focussed on issues that usually led to problems for nomads—and other disadvantaged groups—such as school attendance and accommodation. One of these organisations—Opera Assistenza Nomadi (Nomad Assistance Work) was founded in 1965. It was later renamed Opera Nomadi (Nomad Work) and it became the "voice" of the Gypsies. Opera Nomadi activists sought to ensure that the political establishment accepted nomads' customs and that measures were enacted to improve their well-being (for instance, uninterrupted school attendance). Opera Nomadi gradually became officially recognised as an expert in Gypsy affairs. During the 1970s and 1980s it defended Gypsies in word and in act and it influenced policies that had an effect on Gypsies. For example, it lobbied public authorities to recognise Gypsies' way of life and it strove to facilitate nomadism. It also helped to increase the visibility of Gypsies. Opera Nomadi fought for the official acknowledgment of Gypsy identity and for the emancipation of Gypsies. At the same time, Opera Nomadi spoke out on behalf of Gypsies who were considered to be a needy, childish people that depended on charity for subsistence (Sigona, 2003). By supporting the view that Gypsies were a helpless and marginalised people, Opera Nomadi also justified the actions that it took on their behalf:

> An extremely interesting and significant aspect today is the link between a policy centred on the idea of "civilising" Gypsies […] thus giving volunteer organisations a major role in providing social services, on the

---

[10] Although legislation never targeted Gypsies directly, a 1956 law illustrates the underlying perceptions of Gypsies as a socially maladjusted and marginalised people. Entitled "Measures of Prevention Against Persons that Endanger Security and Public Morality", the law identified several categories of dangerous people on the basis of how they lived. It also specified that these people should settle and register their permanent residence with the authorities.

one hand, and a situation of dependence and delegation among Gypsies, on the other. (Sigona, 2003: 108)[11]

This brief overview of pro-Gypsy movements in Finland and Italy indicates that public authorities above all were the target of the many claims as pro-Gypsy activists denounced the social and cultural consequences of the administration of Gypsy affairs. But these pro-Gypsy organisations were ultimately shaped by the prevailing discursive frames. In Finland, the establishment of the FGA led to a more radical discourse but it was a discourse that focused above all on the cultural existence of Gypsies as a group. In Italy by contrast, pro-Gypsy activists' discourse reinforced the dominant views that considered all Gypsies to be nomads.

Pro-Gypsy Organisations: Resources and Strategies

In the previous section, I dealt with the mainstream trends of mobilisation in terms of social and cultural self-development in the Finnish case and with respect to the desire in Italy that nomads' way of life be recognised and defended. But, the organisations in the two countries were quite different in terms of the roles that Gypsies played in their own affairs. I now turn to discuss how these organisations promoted collective action. To do so, I look at the social and cultural characteristics of the activists and at the strategies and the resources that were deployed.

In Finland, the FGA politicised the issue of Gypsies. Well before the Advisory Board was established in 1956, Finnish public authorities saw the GM as the leading civil-society organisation in Gypsy-related affairs. But by the late 1960s, GM's adversary—the FGA—raised collective action to a new political level by promoting views different to that of the GM and by claiming that it too had the legitimacy to be involved in the institutional process. In doing so, the FGA had recourse to its high-profile activists of which there were two main types: (1) highly resourced individuals from outside the Gypsy community (politicians, lawyers, journalists, researchers); and (2) Gypsies. The FGA's highly resourced non-Gypsies brought their expertise—technical and symbolic resources— to the FGA and they helped to establish key political contacts on behalf of Gypsies. For their part, Gypsy activists brought legitimacy to the organisation and to the grassroots movement as a whole.

The FGA acted, therefore, as a type of pressure group. By resisting the ways Gypsy issues had been administered by the GM, the FGA politicised the Gypsy cause and it stressed that Gypsies should participate in activities of concern to them. The FGA targeted central public authorities in general

---

[11] In this book, all quotations from non-English sources are the authors' translations.

and the Advisory Board in particular since the Board was the most important institutional structure in which Gypsy issues were discussed. Because of the FGA's political contacts—its symbolic resources—it was also able to exert some influence on various policies related to housing and to racial discrimination. When the Advisory Board was re-organised in 1968, the FGA became a full member as discussed above thus enabling it to counter the GM's dominancy and to open the way for other organisations to join the Board such as Elämä ja Valo (Life and Light)—a Pentecostal organisation. So, for the first time ever, Gypsies participated in the Advisory Board and the Board became a forum where pro-Gypsy activists and public authorities discussed formally issues of interest to them both.

Pro-Gypsy collective action also availed of favourable political and media attention during the 1960s and the 1970s as was the case for other minorities. For instance, the Finnish media came to pay more and more attention to pro-Gypsy mobilisations in Sweden. Pulma (2006) argues that one of the reasons for this new-found interest was that Finnish Gypsies regularly migrated to Sweden and so they were interested what happened there. The international context also played a key role. The Nordic Council in particular became a major platform to discuss Gypsy related issues during the 1970s, thereby supporting and consolidating the position of the Finnish pro-Gypsy movement. Over time, the GM and the FGA[12] continued to play a key role in structuring pro-Gypsy claims: the GM as an organisation run *for* Gypsies, the FGA as an organisation run *by* Gypsies in the main. Differences between the two organisations slowly subsided and the GM was less intent on assimilating Gypsies within the mainstream population. Pro-Gypsy activities were thus no longer as politically orientated since activists from both the FGA and the GM supported the view of Gypsy self-development and Gypsy participation. Later, other organisations dedicated to the religious, social, cultural aspects of Gypsy politics came to be represented in state-run bodies.

Few Gypsies were involved in pro-Gypsy mobilisations in Italy. As discussed above, pro-Gypsy activities first arose within Catholic networks. For instance, Opera Nomadi used the Pope's 1965 visit to a nomad camp in Rome as a major symbol in its daily activities. Slowly but surely, Opera Nomadi became public authorities' main interlocutor and it provided them with expertise in Gypsy affairs. The State recognised Opera Nomadi as a "moral institution" in 1970. However, there was not—there is still not—a

---

[12] Later, the GM and the FGA were renamed as the Romano Missio and the Finnish Romani Association respectively. This change of name was presented as a symbol of the departure from the terms perceived as pejorative and as vectors of negative perceptions of Gypsies.

global political frame for Gypsies in Italy. For example, there are no specific legislations and/or policies that focus on Gypsies nor is there any co-ordinating body for Gypsy affairs. Despite the absence of official policies regarding Gypsies, Opera Nomadi did play a part in an agreement with the Ministry for Public Education in 1965 to establish special schools for Gypsies and nomads. It also had a role in a 1973 Home Ministry circular in favour of halting sites for nomads. In the 1980s, Opera Nomadi also helped to draft several regional laws regarding the administration of halting sites (Sigona, 2002).

Opera Nomadi was different from other Italian pro-nomad movements whose activities were social in intent. Opera Nomadi focused on nomadism and on Gypsy identity building and its claims in favour of Gypsy self-development and emancipation were linked to cultural and educational initiatives. To this end, Opera Nomadi collaborated with the Centro Studi Zingari (Centre for Gypsy Studies). The Centro Studi Zingari edited a journal—*Lacio Drom*—that specialised in Gypsy studies: history, literature, linguistics, anthropology, and so on. *Lacio Drom* was also the name for a pilot project to build mobile schools and that was launched in Northern Italy in the 1960s and the 1970s. The Centro Studi Zingari and Opera Nomadi had many things in common: they both had the same president in the 1970s and the 1980s, and some of the Centro Studi Zingari's members were involved with a number of Opera Nomadi's regional affiliates.

In Italy, the Gypsy cause—defined by Opera Nomadi in terms of nomadism and education—was based on the presumption that all Gypsies were foreigners. When immigration to Italy increased in the 1990s, some immigrants—many of whom were Gypsies—came to live in quite a number of "settlement" or "halting" sites and they became the subject of much public attention and concern forcing local public authorities to manage these many campi nomadi (nomad camps). Some of these camps managed by local authorities became authorised, but many others were illegal or unsupervised by public authorities.

However, the political context of the 1990s helped to change the ways Gypsies were collectively portrayed. The far-right ruling government of Silvio Berlusconi politicised the issues of immigration and nomad camps, thus enlarging the discursive framework based on cultural differences and framing the issue of citizenship in ethnic terms alone (Koopmans and Statham, 1999a). Since local public authorities had to deal much more with nomads—understood here in terms of immigration and ethnic differences—this situation helped to reinforce the collective—and negative—perceptions of Gypsies and to strengthen the political and administrative "policies" towards Gypsies. One result is that many pro-Gypsy organisations became involved in Gypsy affairs and these