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Informal Settlements and International Migrants:

The city of Rome (Italy) as Case Study

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Abstract

Today, urbanization is happening at an unprecedentedly rapid rate, owing heavily to the influx of migrants. Empirical evidence shows the development of informal settlements in cities as a result of migration, including Rome. Furthermore, information on informal settlements is either insufficient or inadequate, which makes it challenging for architects, urban planners, and policymakers to form viable solutions to deal with the situations of informality. The main focus of the research is to study the Authorized Nomadic Camps, illegal and tolerated squatter settlements of the Metropolitan City of Rome from 1990-2021, and the laws, regulations, and policies that have shaped them.

Mixed research methodology and descriptive-analytical techniques are used to analyze the data collected via field research, site visit, interviews, and study of existing literature and maps. The analysis of morphological changes of the selected sites is done using images from Goggle Earth Time Lapse dating from 2001 – 2021.

This research identifies that most of the settlements have been located by the Municipality in segregated and marginalized areas of the city with poor transport and mobility, and inadequate conditions of housing, access to services. Furthermore, the Gordiani Campo Nomadi need not be entirely evacuated and demolished, as it and the area around Via Gordiani have the potential to be developed in a way that meets the needs of all stakeholders, and most importantly the current dwellers of the camp. This will help alleviate the sense of trauma and loss experienced by uprooting and evicting them. Case studies and urban analysis reveals the involvement of the community, effective communication, and participation between all stakeholders are pertinent to design long-term sustainable solutions.

Keyword: *informal settlements, squatter settlements, campo nomadi, Rome.*

Introduction

Over one billion people are currently living in informal settlements all over the world, and empirical evidence shows the development of informal settlements in urban peripheries as a result of migration (United Nation, 2020), as one in every third person finds a housing solution in them. Information about informal settlements is often either imprecise or inadequate, and there is urgent need to fill the gaps of information - especially at the sub-city level – as the course of actions taken to deal with squatter settlements and slums, have greater chance of success when based on an understanding of their urban morphology (McCartney & Krishnamurthy, 2018; Samper, Dean, & Shelby, 2020; Kamalipour, 2020). Squatter settlements, one of the most enduring forms of informal housing (Tsenkova, 2010), and legal or authorized nomadic camps of Rome are the main focus of this research. Firstly, the location of squatter settlements and legal camps from 1950s to 2021 is

identified, and their proximity to different means of mobility and the river is understood. Secondly, a brief urban analysis of all major sites from 1990's to 2021, identifies the land use pattern with respect to land use and availability of mobility solution, infrastructure, services and facilities. This is followed by an urban analysis of existing sites, and the type of urban fabric in their vicinity to identify the sites which sites are not socially and physically marginalized. Along with this, an in-depth urban analysis of the Institutionalized Camp at Via Gordiani, and the Tolerated squatter settlement at Via Salviati is also done.

International Migrants and Informal Settlements

According to the International Organization of Migration, migrants are defined as individuals undergoing a “*process (of migration) by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement.*” (IOM, 2020) There can be different types of migrants, legal, illegal, business, educational. Current demographics for Rome indicate that a large majority of international migrants (IM) belong from Romania, followed by Philippines, Albania, Algeria, Morocco, and Bangladesh. IM with poor economic conditions and refugees find housing solutions through: 1. Social housing, 2. Reception Centers, 3. Illegal occupation of abandoned buildings, 4. Authorized/Legal Nomadic Camps, 5. Illegal or Tolerated Squatter Settlements, 6. Open air or rudimentary built shacks under bridges, near river banks or other precarious locations.

This research focuses on the authorized camps and squatter settlements, also known as Campo Nomadi and considers their formation for two main time periods. Firstly, post-world war from 1950 - 1980's, and then from 1990-2021. The authorized settlements formed for the ‘preservation of nomadic culture’ (Maestri & Vitale, 2017), which were provided with basic services and infrastructure by the Roma Municipality. However, these camps have been used as cheap housing solutions for migrants arriving during the former-Yugoslavia wars, and later from Africa and Asia. The authorized/legal nomadic camps provide a unique perspective on the effect of politics on informal settlements as they developed within a legal framework, and were impacted by various regulations, laws and policies, resulting in fragmented and less homogenous spaces, whereas illegal or tolerated squatter settlements, provide a study of the urban growth and development of settlements indicative of more stable forms.

Defining Informal settlements

There is no universal definition of informal settlements, and this research considers the following parameters: 1. Primary function is housing; 2. They do not fulfil requirements of adequate housing defined by the United Nations, namely: legal status of land, location, connectivity and access, services and infrastructure, condition of the houses and their habitability, and cultural adequacy (UN Habitat, 2014); 3. Informal settlements are the physical manifestation of social inequality, segregation and marginalization, formed as a reaction to various forces exerted by the city and urban conditions like : available land, transit networks, employment markets, threats of demolition, planning frameworks, local politics and climate (Dovey, Oostrum, Chatterjee, & Shafique, 2020; McCartney & Krishnamurthy, 2018).



Current approach for solving the problem of squatter settlements and Campo Nomadi:

Denying their existence, demolition and eviction – with or without relocation – and upgradation, are the general approaches towards informal settlements world over. (Kamalipour, 2020; Bartolini, 2019; Dovey & King, 2011). Demolition and displacement often adversely affect the residents, and does not solve the problem (Samper, Dean, & Shelby, 2020), so why does the state choose to eviction of residents and demolition of these informal settlements? This could be political in nature, to clean the ‘image’ of the city, sway the voters before an election; or it could be because of health and risk factors, if the settlements are on unsuitable sites, like close to flood plains, landslides, or toxic waste; or encroaching areas of historic and archeological value; or to clear occupied land for the development and growth of the formal city (Provenzano, 2014; Agostini, 2011; Dovey & King, 2011; Bartolini, 2019).

Methodology

Mixed research methodology and descriptive-analytical techniques are used to analyse the data collected via field research, site visit, interviews, and study of existing literature review, and archival records. Urban analysis of the squatter settlements and campo nomadi is done using archival records, cadastral records, and the Piano Regolatore of Rome of settlement system and environmental system maps of Rome. The analysis of morphological changes of the selected sites is done using images from Goggle Earth Time Lapse dating from 2001 – 2021. The selection of sites for in-depth urban analysis is done after analysis of the land-use and typology, the provision of infrastructure, services and facilities, and the type of urban fabric in the immediate neighborhood, with more weightage given to sites that were close to residential, health, education and commercial zones. One of the biggest challenges faced was the collection of data through field research, as the authors could not gain access the Authorized Nomadic Camps, and only wind-shield surveys could be conducted of them. Access to the tolerated and illegal squatter settlements was limited due to health and safety reasons owing to Covid-19

Results and Discussions

Half of the illegal squatter settlements formed from 1950-1980 were located close to train lines, while the rest were close to tram and metro lines. 50% of those from 1990 to date, were located close to train lines, 25% were close to metro lines, and a small percentage near main roads and only accessible to city via public buses or private transportation. Out of the seven Authorized Camps built from 1990 onwards, the Gordiani Camp is well connected via tram, metro and train line. From the remaining sites, 50% are located only close to a train station, while the remaining sites have only access to the city via public buses or private transportation (see Figure 1, Table 1). Out of 7 , 4 authorized camps found on Public Green areas ,and 3 on Agriculture land. All tolerated squatter settlements are found on public green areas, and half are within national parks. More than two-thirds of illegal squatter settlements are on public green areas, where as the rest is on agriculture land and private green areas.



Figure 1.

Figure 1. Analysis of squatter settlements and campo nomadi of Rome, from 1950-1980, and 1990-2021.

Table 1. Analysis of locations of the squatter settlements and illegal or legal camps : 1950's-1990 (Yellow), and then 1990-2021(Red) : w.r.t to access to transportation, and proximity to Rivers

Proximity to ; and Quantity of study area :								
	Train line	Metro B	Tram	Metro A	Metro C	GRA and Highway	Main Roads	River Tevere or Aniene
1950's - 1989 No of sites: 22	Yes 10	Yes 01	Yes 05	Yes 04	No	Yes 01	Yes 13	Yes 06
1990 - 2021 No of sites: 21	Yes 16	Yes 01	No	No	Yes 04	Yes 03	Yes 12	Yes 05

Similarities between 'Legal' Camps and illegal squatter settlements or shanty towns: 1. No legal right or ownership to the land. 2. Poor waste disposal and management. 3. No concept of recycling, and division of waste. 4. Lack of or no provision of health, education and recreation facilities. 5. Not integrated into the existing urban fabric. 6. Poor construction material of dwellings/living units. 7. No or extremely limited provision of green areas, parks, etc. 8. No use of renewable or green energy.

Differences between 'Legal' Camps and illegal squatter settlements: In the legal or Authorised Camps it was found that : 1. Site selected by government; 2. Containers and living units provided as dwellings by government. 3. Provision of basic infrastructure. 4. Poor accessibility to city centre. 5. Poor accessibility to services like health or education. 6. No freedom of movement for non-residents into the area. 7. Fenced, walls, barbed wire and /or security check post to access the site. For the Illegal and Tolerated Squatter

settlements it was found: 1. Built on Illegally occupied land, usually located in precarious and hazardous areas, like close to the river banks, steep slopes, or main high ways. 2. No provision of services or infrastructures, except for point of water supply, and portable potty provided by 3rd parties. 3. In close proximity to residential and commercial areas of city 4. Freedom of movement for non-residents into the area. 5. Open and unrestricted access, with no or low height boundaries/walls around the site. 6. Residents are welcoming, friendly and open to outsiders.

Table 2. Representing findings from analysis of existing Campo Nomadi (A,E, I, L, P), and Tolerated squatter settlements (D, K2)

	No. of people	Distance from city centre KM	Infrastructure and services				Proximity to basic facilities				Proximity to residential fabric	Proximity to business and small industry	Proximity to commercial areas
			E	W	S	M	H	E	S	R			
A : Candoni (A)	838	7.8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	N
E : Lombroso (A)	181	8.5	Y	Y	U	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
I : Salone (L)	360	13.5	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
L : Gordiani (A)	260	6	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
P : Barbuta (A)	425	10.5	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
D : Monachina (A)	91	9.8	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
K2 : Salviati (T)	492	8.9	E	W	S	M	H	E	S	R	Y	Y	Y

Infrastructure and infrastructure: E : Electricity W : Water G : Gas S : Sewerage and Sanitation M : Mobility and Major Transportation systems. Basic Facilities: H: Health E: Education S : Sports R: Recreation
(A) : Authorized settlement (T) : Tolerated settlement

The Politics of the space: The past situation gives insight into the workings and success or failure of the policies adopted. The Nomad Emergency Decree of 2008 - declared as unlawful by the National Council of state (judgment n. 6050) and the Supreme Court in 2014 –was followed by the 2009 **Piano Nomadi** (Nomad Plan), on the basis of which numerous illegal, tolerated and legal camps were closed by 2010, and the Roma Municipality relocated the people in 13 mega camps situated along the urban-periphery of Rome, in areas with poor infrastructures, services and facilities that segregated and marginalized these people (Rossi, 2010) (Marinaro, 2014), with a special task force to control the law and order situation, and restriction on public to access these camps, or on the residents to have visitors (Marinaro, 2014).

Tor e Cenci camp was an ‘Authorized Camp’ until the 2008, but after the Piano Nomadi of 2009 it started to be referred to as a ‘Tolerated Camp’, and by 2012 it was shut down owing to poor health and hygiene conditions (Claridge, 2019). There is also the example of the River Camp, which was closed in 2018 because the government could not renew the contract of the site and the residents were asked to leave the site. Only 10% people were relocated into adequate housing, and 50% of them end up various forms of informal settlements (Luglio21, 2017). This practice shows the precarious nature of legality of the authorized camps, indicating complete lack of legal tenure for the residents. The latest Decree and the Roma Plan of 2017, orders closing, demolition and eviction of all legal, tolerated and illegal squatter settlements in Rome and the

residents of these mega camps, of which only 6 are operational by 2020. Site visits confirmed that many people living in these camps have not been provided with adequate housing solution to date. Google Earth Time Lapse and existing literature review identifies that uncollected waste has accumulated over the years around the sites. Site visits identified this situation and during interviews of camp dwellers, it was highlighted that the Roma Municipality stopped collecting waste from the camps.

Furthermore, study of urban morphology of Via Salviati Camp identified the degradation of infrastructure over the years, development of spaces from regular grid-planning to organic pathways and housing clusters (see figure 2) is visible. The concept of housing clusters is more clearly evident during the morphological study of squatter settlements of La Monachina. This site formed in a spontaneous and organic way, developed and maintained the organization and hierarchy of spaces, upgradation and upkeep of infrastructure, open and green spaces (see figure 2). Lastly, the urban analysis of the Campo Nomadi at Via Gordiani, identifies that it is connected with good means of transportation, located in an area with available health, education and recreation facilities, as well as, residential fabric (see fig.3).

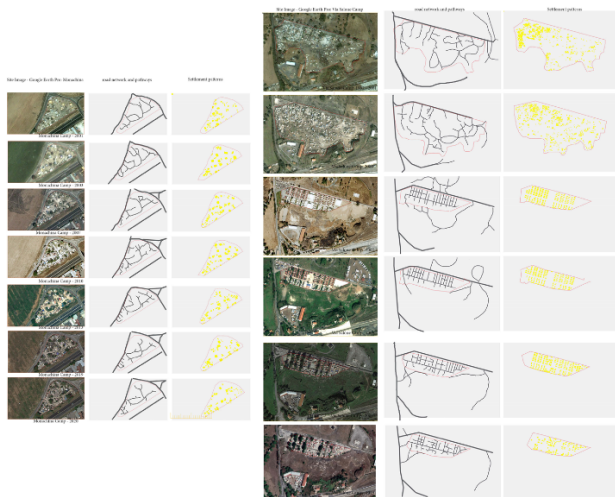


Figure 2. Analysis of Urban morphology for Monachina (Tolerated Settlement) and Via Salone Camp (Authorized Camp) 2001 – 2021, using images from Google Earth Time Lapse.

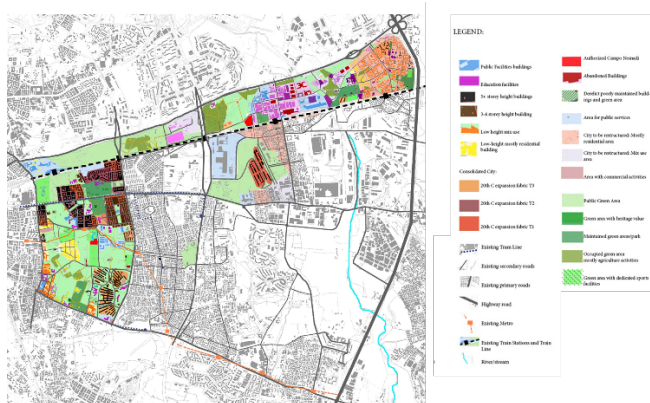


Figure 3. Urban Analysis of the Campo Nomadi at Via Giordani and squatter settlement at Via Salviati.

Discussion:

It can be seen that the sites at Via Gordiani (Authorized Camp), and Via Salviati (Tolerated Settlement) are located on open public land (see fig.1 and 3), and are in close proximity to residential zones with moderate access to services and facilities. The camp at Via Gordiani is very well connected via Metro, tram and train as well, while the one at Via Salviati is well connected via Train. The neighbourhoods of these settlements have the potential to be developed, including but not limited to development of agriculture land, farmers market and other small business, educational and vocational training, as well as, social and co- housing. Also, the development of a tram line to connect the area of La Storta and the neighboring Giorgio Morandi social housing, could benefit in solving the problem of poor connectivity with the city that is being faced by the area, as well as, open up the potential for developing new housing.

Recommendations:

What is the way forward and is there a viable solution to this scenario where people have to reside on the fringe of cities in precarious situations, continuously in fear of being evicted? Following is a list of reforms and practices that can be adopted to find long-term and sustainable solutions:

1. Institutional reforms combined with public-private consolidations. Otherwise, the cycle of demolition, relocation, formation of new squatter settlements will continue.
2. Free and open access and interaction with the residents of the informal settlements and the public.
3. Community-led decision-making process involving all stake holders. This is a fundamental principle of Adequate housing, overlooked during both the Nomadic Emergency of 2007, and Roma Plan of 2017, on the basis of which current closure and eviction or relocation of residents is going on.
4. Awareness campaigns and workshops on hygiene, recycling, and waste management.
5. Use of renewable and green sources of energy. Recent Successful study found in Reggio Emilia, Italy.
6. Community- led and collaborative housing, close proximity to original sites so that the people can keep their jobs, children can continue attending the same school, and people can strengthen their existing social ties. Successful examples from social housing in Milan, and New Ground Housing, UK.
7. Inclusive and diverse neighborhood.

Conclusion:

Possibility of upgrading the campo nomadi at Via Giordiani, and extending the site to develop a program for CLH near the Campo Nomadi Giordiani. Introduce an agriculture program and good market to help provide sustainable and economic independence. There is also the possibility for requalification and adaptive re-use of abandoned buildings in the neighbourhoods of Gordiani and Salviati to create spaces for community activities, and small commercial and business activities, as well as, residential use. Also, there is the possibility of improving mobility systems and connectivity in the area. Lastly, there is a need to further study these sites, and to implement strategies based on each individual scenario.



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