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A Participatory Governance Model Towards the Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities. An Action Research Experience in Italy

Introduction

- 1 In Italy the traditional models of governance addressing the social, cultural and economic exclusion of ethnic minorities have failed (ERCC, 2000; Sigona, 2005; Ambrosini and Tosi, 2007; Ambrosini and Tosi, 2008; Colacicchi, 2008; Open Society Institute, 2008; Vitale 2009; Ambrosini, 2010; Vitale 2010; Riniolo, 2010 Enar, 2011; ECRI, 2012, Picker, 2012). The need for a new approach also capable of involving the target beneficiaries of policies is emerging. The critical situation of Roma in the Country is the result of multiple exclusion factors – like xenophobia and discrimination – and reflects decades of passive public interventions. As a consequence, in this policy field the governmental initiatives are a typical example of heterogony of ends, i.e. producing unintended consequences from intentional actions.
- 2 In order to bypass the traditional governance models and to develop a new way toward an effective inclusion of ethnic minorities – in line with the EU Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion – the Italian Ministry of Labor funded an action research project, *Valore Lavoro*¹, promoted and coordinated by the Lombardy Region Authority, between 2009 and 2010. The project pursued the active involvement of Roma people as promoters of their paths toward labor integration through a governance model inspired by a bottom-up approach. The project's outcomes demonstrate that public policies can play a relevant role in promoting the social inclusion of minorities by fostering a participatory governance model inspired by the principles of subsidiarity, autonomy, responsibility and active involvement of community leaders expressed by minority groups themselves. These are new relevant elements to be taken into account in the planning of social interventions. This model, as mentioned above, is also based on a close cooperation among national and regional authorities, civil society's bodies (charities, NGOs, third sector entities, social partners) and the Roma (individuals and their families and their associations).
- 3 The objectives of the present paper are twofold: first to identify a participatory governance model capable of meeting the goal of the inclusion of marginalized and excluded groups with a specific focus on Roma people. Second, to explain how and to what extent the participation of Roma people, one of the most excluded groups in Europe, can effectively improve the design of policies regarding crucial issues for them and for the society as a whole. In order to reach these objectives, the present paper falls into three parts: in the first one, a specific focus is dedicated to the concepts of governance and participatory governance, including a discussion of criticisms that these terms collect. The second part regards Roma and aims at answering the following questions: why are they a vulnerable group? What are their specificities and potentialities? Then article focuses, in the third part, on features of the *Valore Lavoro* project and its participatory governance model as a way to innovate traditional top-down approaches, focusing on its strengths and weaknesses. The specificity of this model of governance is the capacity to allow the effective active involvement into the decision-making process of a specific vulnerable group: Roma people.

From governance to participatory governance models

- 4 Governance can be defined as “the process of development, determination and implementation of policy actions, carried out according to criteria of concertation and partnership between public and private or third-sector bodies, in which all parties are involved in the process by giving resources, taking responsibility, exercising powers, taking advantage of shares of benefits of the expected outcomes of the policies themselves” (Segatori, 2012, p. 24)².

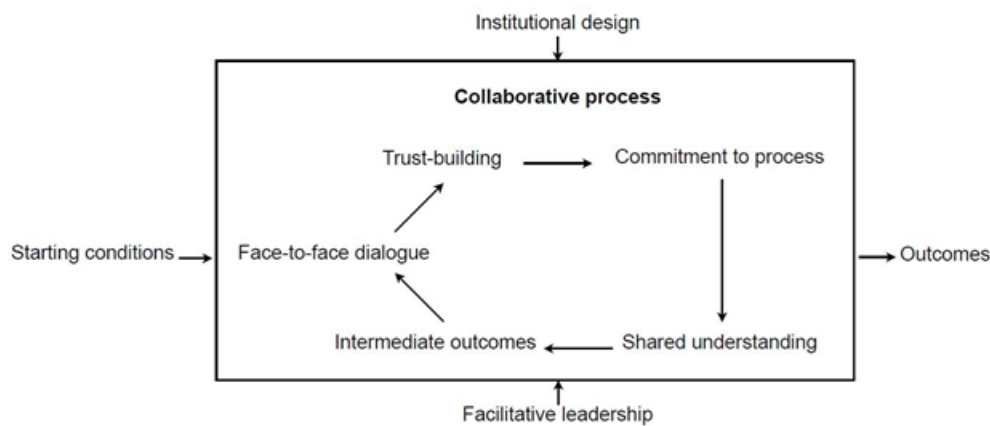
- 5 According to the author (Segatori, 2012), it is possible to distinguish between those who interpret the governance as the *pivotal element of a normative theory* and those who define it as a *descriptor of a specific process outcome* (a result, a product) arising from the interaction of other primary variables, i.e. a typical way (historically determined) of combining the relationships between State, market and civil society³.
- 6 Under the first perspective – the normative one – governance tends to propose itself as an *ideal-typical model*, characterized by particular values, principles and procedures, according to which it is possible to make measurements – in terms of benchmark – of the ways in which the decisional processes are set and conducted. Therefore, the governance imposes itself as a normative theory prescribing the principles of *good governance* in terms of openness, participation, responsibility, effectiveness, consistency, proportionality and subsidiarity. In other words, “a pragmatic action in prescriptive dresses which states itself as virtuous” (Segatori, 2012, p. 25).
- 7 Under the second perspective, the governance is interpreted as an *idea underpinning contingency ideologies* as the neo-liberal or neo-Keynesian ones: according to Kooiman (2003), the idea of governance as *minimal state*.
- 8 Both these perspectives represent the result of an historical process leading modern societies toward a new conception of the role that the public body (the State) has to play in the trial to meet citizens’ changing needs, on the one hand, and a new idea of the role which citizens themselves play, on the other hand.
- 9 The first paradigm reversal crossed by all the economically advanced societies of the western hemisphere affects the welfare state and concerns its *activation* (Oecd, 2005; Vanderbroucke, 2003):. The move is from an approach inspired by the logic of *corrective interventions* fundamentally based on passive benefit transfers to a new *promotional approach* focused on the investment on people and addressed at maximizing people’s capacities in order to have a self-sufficient and independent membership in the society. The underlying *active welfare state* idea is related, according to the new paradigm, to the goal of a public intervention enabling people, i.e. addressed at widening citizen possibilities of choice, action, active participation (Colasanto, Lodigiani, 2008)
- 10 The second fundamental paradigm reversal concerns the consolidation of the *individualization process* (Paci, 2006). The reversal brought to the establishment of a growing awareness of the individual, in front of pre-determined rules and belongings, of self-determination and subjective planning in the construction of his/her autonomous and self-reflective biography (Beck, 2000).
- 11 In response to the changing social needs and risks, the welfare state has therefore reacted not just by revising its founding principles, but also by *shrinking back and giving new scope to other actors as protagonists of the process of building responses to the social needs themselves*.
- 12 Within this framework, governance means responsibility of the community in the government process: all the local and civil society actors, through networks and partnerships, are exhorted to take part into such process. At the same time, the local authorities are not just in charge of the planning of the services, but the political weight of their action and of their coordination role is also increasing. The State remains the hinge of the active welfare regime, maintaining intact its responsibilities toward its citizens’ well-being (Vanderbroucke, 2003). But the emerging practices show also the growing importance that social contracts are assuming at local level as a method regulating the relationships between public actors and other non-public actors. Within such practices, the public authority – according to situations – can play the role of partnership’s starter, coordinator, controller, facilitator, or simply supervisor of the market orientation, thus designing new relationship settings among entities responsible for programming, financing and producing social services and interventions (Pavolini, 2003).
- 13 Pre-condition and – at the same moment – method for an effective governance process, under all the described perspectives, is the concept of *subsidiarity*, declined either in a *vertical* or *horizontal direction*. It can be assumed as the principle legitimating the participation in the governmental processes by actors not belonging to (or emanation of) the public body. Under this perspective, the governance is the politic instrument of the subsidiarity,

i.e. “the practical consequence into the political arena of the principles of participation and co-responsibility” (Sabbatini, 2005, p. 420-421). In other words, according to Jansen, “governance is promoted as a viable alternative rationality to reconcile politics and citizens, consulting and involving people and organizations in the shaping and monitoring of policy-making” (Jansen et al., 2006, p. 194), a rationality thus reinforcing democracy.

14 With specific regard to *participatory governance*, it was conceived as the solution to the limitations of the two prevailing governance models: market oriented and network oriented, both characterized by a lack of accountability and legitimacy (Moini, 2012, p. 67). In the expression “participatory governance”, the term participatory is an adjective that connotes governance, reinforcing it in the sense of a contribution of different actors – stakeholders or bodies belonging to the civil society – in the definition of public policies. But, as seen above, there are many risks smoldering under the ashes of the decision-making processes. The participatory governance model presented in the following sections (§ 4.2) tries to overcome the limitations of a rhetoric of participation⁴, *compenetrating a form of top-down approach* – the participation in the definition of the project strategies comes from public institutions – *and a form of bottom-up approach* – where those involved are collective actors (belonging to civil society) bringing specific interest and an actual power in influencing the policy-making process. Some of the elements of the model that will be presented can also be related to that form of participatory governance that takes the name *collaborative governance*, presented by Ansell and Gash (2007) in theory and practice on the basis of a meta-analysis study of the existing literature. As better described below, despite some similarities the two models show mainly one difference: the collaborative governance model stresses the normative dimension of the decision-making process. This is not the case for the participatory model adopted by the Valore Lavoro project.

15 Collaborative governance is described in terms of a model for bringing together multiple stakeholders and public agencies “to engage in consensus-oriented decision making” (Ansell and Gash, 2007, p. 543) and defined as follows: “a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collaborative decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets” (Ansell and Gash, 2007, p. 544). This definition stresses several dimensions: the initiative undertaken by the public bodies; the involvement of private entities; the engagement in decision-making; the formalization of the decision-making process itself; the consensus-building process; the focus on collaboration. The goal of elaborating a general model of collaborative governance generated an outcome summarized by the authors as shown in Figure 1.

16 According to this model, the fostering of collaborative processes needs that some specific *starting conditions* have to be carefully taken into account: e.g. the involvement of multiple stakeholders implies dealing with relevant influence, resources and knowledge asymmetries and imbalances. Even previous collaborative or conflict experiences constitute an important prerequisite, because, together with asymmetries, they compose the set of constraints and incentives on real participation. On the other hand, *basic protocols and ground rules* for collaboration, as defined at institutional level, along with a *positive leadership role* played by the public actor, represent other two fundamental inputs of the *collaborative process*. This latter is described in terms of a virtuous cycle, starting with *face-to-face interaction* as a practice for sustaining the *trust-building* process; more trust increases *commitment*, especially whereas the actors involved perceive that they actual contribute to the process of reinforcing the *shared understanding* of the objects of the collaboration. All these positive elements reinforcing each other lead to *intermediate outcomes* which enter in turn into the cycle, till the production of the final outcome (ibidem).

Figure 1. A general model of collaborative governance

Simplified from Ansell and Gash (2007, p. 550)

- 17 Although strengthening the normative dimensions, stiffening the role played by the public actor in the shaping of the conditions under which is possible to activate a process of collaborative governance, as a behavioral model of performing it, the Ansell and Gash general articulation of the concept shows several elements of interest. These elements can represent interpretative dimensions to be used for evaluating existing practices. Some of them will be focused on also while describing the governance model undertaken by the *Valore Lavoro* project.

A specific vulnerable group: Roma people in Europe and in Italy

- 18 The model of participatory governance described in the present article (§ 4.2) addresses a particular disadvantaged group: Roma people. In this section we describe some of the main characteristics of this group – both at the European and the Italian level, the country where the action research project was implemented – in order to understand its specificities and the importance of its inclusion in the decision-making processes regarding their issues. The importance of activating Roma is also generally recognized at the European Union level in the Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion⁵. The success in the inclusion of this vulnerable group in the definition of the actions of the *Valore Lavoro* project is of particular relevance since it suggests that this model can also be applied to those groups that suffered severe forms of discrimination and/or exclusion.
- 19 Roma people⁶ are among the most vulnerable minorities and their human rights are far from being respected in many EU Member States, as all recent reports show (Cospe, 2009; EU-Midis, 2009; FRA 2011; FRA 2012; Raxen, 2009; Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012; RED 2012). This is also generally recognized by the sociological, political and economic literature (Barth, 2007, Ambrosini, 2010, Njegovan, 2011, Fésus, 2012, Pogany, 2012, Sigona and Vermeersch, 2012, Smith, 2011, van Baar, 2012, Vermeersch, 2012).
- 20 With 10 to 12 million people, Roma represent the greatest minority in Europe even if their precise number remains unclear due to various problems. Among others, their fear to register in official census due to the stigma linked to their identity (Ambrosini, 2010; Kostadinova, 2011) and problems in collecting ethnic data, since in some cases national legislation forbids it (Ambrosini, 2010, Coses, 2010).
- 21 As outlined above, Roma suffer multiple discriminations⁷ – especially women (European Union, 2010) – and they face deeply-rooted problems: social exclusion, difficult access to health services, housing, high mortality rates, low education attainments, spatial segregation and so forth⁸. Even if they share these series of characteristics, they should not be seen as

a homogenous group, either in cultural terms or in normative or administrative terms. For example, Roma people hold different legal status. Many Roma, after the 2007 EU enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria, became EU citizens hence with new entitlements to freedom of movement and residence in various member states and with a supranational protection of their human rights (Smith, 2011). Others are regular migrants who legally reside in one of the EU Member States. Moreover, some Roma are illegal migrants, since they do not have regular documents to stay in a territory. In some other cases they are forced migrants or stateless or have some lack in the personal documentation (e.g. birth certificates, identity cards) (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012). There is a great variety also in terms of way of living, language, and occupation.

22 In light of these observations, all these differences should be kept in mind when it comes to define the setting of the policies addressing their marginalization. It is also necessary to avoid a vision of their cultural homogeneity, which is taken as an explanation and as *the* cause for their social exclusion. Some observers hold for example that their marginalization in the societies they live in stems from their cultural characteristics and from their identity, not from inequality or the discrimination they are victims of. As Vermeersch writes: “From deprived co-citizens the Roma are turned into cultural deviants” (Vermeersch, 2012, p.1208).

23 At the European level, there is a strong legislative framework for the protection of minorities and the fight against discrimination and xenophobia⁹ and, in addition to this, a new effort can be found in the recent Communication of the European Commission “An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”.¹⁰ Moreover, Roma are the target of many integration policies (RED Annual Report, 2011). Nonetheless all this does not seem to be enough to face their status of deprivation. This increased attention to the Roma issue fosters the consciousness that it is necessary to face this challenge and facilitate a common strategy and vision on how to address this issue. However, paradoxically, there are two risks in this EU attention and activism addressing Roma. The first one can be well-summarized by Vermeersch’s words:

“Europe-wide actions to foster the social inclusion of the Roma in Europe run the risk of being reinterpreted as support for the argument that the Roma’s particular form of marginality is not unique to any country and should therefore be seen as something created by the Roma themselves” (2012, p.1208).

24 The second one is linked to the fact that since their problems have become “European problems” in some cases politicians have tried to avoid their national responsibilities towards their own citizens arguing that the responsibility of Roma is in charge of Europe and its institutions (Sigona and Vermeersch, 2012). According to some politicians, Roma issues should be European and not national ones (Vermeersch, 2012).

25 Still, Roma are a group in need of special attention though “explicit but not exclusive targeting” is the approach suggested in the EU documents (*Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion*, Principle no. 2). As explained in the Common Basic Principles, it is worth focusing on Roma as an explicit target, but not to exclude other groups in the same socio-economic conditions in order to include initiatives towards broader of interventions. This choice can have the advantage of preventing Roma people from being perceived as a burden and not as co-citizens (Vermeersch, 2012, p. 1209).

26 In Italy the situation of Roma reflects the same frame of exclusion and discrimination that characterized the European scenario, as emerges from official reports on Italy (Open Society Institute, 2008; Enar, 2011; Hammarberg, 2011; ECRI, 2012; Amnesty International, 2013; Naga, 2015) and from literature (Sigona, 2005; Sigona & Monasta, 2006; Ambrosini and Tosi, 2007; Ambrosini and Tosi, 2008; Colacicchi, 2008; Vitale, 2009; Ambrosini, 2010; Riniolo, 2010; Vitale, 2010; Picker 2012). In the Italian territory there are between 120,000 and 180,000 Roma people and about half of them are Italian citizens¹¹. In the Lombardy region, where the action research project took place between 2009 and 2010, there live more or less 13,000 Roma people (Ambrosini, 2010). Lombardy is one of the regions where the previous government established the state of emergency for Roma in 2008: indeed the Council of Ministers, on the 21st of May 2008, passed the Decree “Declaration of the state of the emergency with regard to

nomad community settlements in the regions of Campania, Lazio, and Lombardia”. A climate of social alarm dominated the Italian political scene; but from then there have been some changes.

27 Indeed, after the Communication of the European Commission n. 173/2011¹², Italy drafted a strategy toward the inclusion of Roma (*Strategia nazionale d’inclusione dei Rom, dei Sinti e dei Caminanti*). In this document, the previous initiatives of the Italian government based on “emergency” have been declared unsuccessful. The new strategy approach assumes first of all an “intergovernmental” governance – since various Ministries are involved – and, secondly – a multidimensional governance based on subsidiarity, coordination, information, mediation, identity and change. Among the general objectives of this Italian strategy, it is worth mentioning the participation of Roma in their own social development and the exercising of their citizenship rights.

28 In Italy the Roma issue is a delicate and sensitive topic with widespread attitudes of denial and discrimination against them, boosted also by political forces and amplified by distorted information in the mass media. There is a great deal of evidence of vicious cycles among poverty, exclusion, discrimination, segregation, as for example described by the two most important sociological inquiries conducted in Italy into this ethnic minority (Ambrosini and Tosi, 2007, Ambrosini and Tosi, 2008).

29 Sometimes the same public authorities have worsened the climate of discrimination and fear: in some cases Italy was the scene of a series of initiatives operated at a local level by the relevant authorities that explicitly undermines the social inclusion of Roma, such as municipality ordinances solely addressing Roma (ERRC, 2008, Riniolo, 2010). There are also policies initially founded on good intentions, like the solution of establishing nomad camps in order to manage their establishment in a region, which nonetheless had a negative effect (heterogony of ends): the worsening of their marginalization. In addition to this, there are many cases of the institutional legitimization of discrimination.

30 Generally speaking, in Italy Roma are the most excluded group and, as Ambrosini writes, while migrants are economically accepted, Roma instead are still refused (Ambrosini, 2010, p. 145). But the “near complete exclusion of Roma from decent work in Europe” (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012) needs particular attention: labor integration is one of the most critical areas for Roma as demonstrated, for example, by the fact that the level of unemployment among Roma is significantly higher than among non-Roma.

31 In line with these observations, the action research project *Valore Lavoro* focused on the integration of Roma people in the labor market. Job insertion indeed is the first step towards the inclusion of this minority as also recognized in the European Commission document “An EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020”, which underlines how a wider participation of Roma in the labor market could have positive effects in different fields: 1) improving economic productivity; 2) reducing government payments for social assistance; 3) increasing revenue from income taxes; 4) contributing to social cohesion; 5) helping eliminating discrimination and 6) fostering the respect for human rights.

The action research project *Valore Lavoro*: a model of participatory governance

32 In the present section the focus is on the core of the article: the model of participatory governance experimented with Roma people with the *Valore Lavoro* project. In the first part we describe its main objectives, methodology and the activities carried out, while in the next one the attention is specifically on the adopted model in order to include Roma in the designing of policies.

Project description: objectives, methodology, and actions

33 The general and main objective of the project, according to the guidelines coming from the Ministry of Labor that founded the project, was the job insertion of Roma people. With regard to methodology, the project – designed as an action research – has been developed as follows. First, research was conducted into literature dealing with Roma and their inclusion – in its

broad meaning (social, economic, and cultural inclusion) – both at the national and European level. Specific attention was devoted to the area of the labor market. In addition to this, a review of the European normative framework on Roma and the contrast to discrimination lead to the identification of main policies and instruments adopted by European institution in this field. The analysis of policy also considered the Italian context in order to have an up-to-date framework on the normative context within which to develop the *Valore Lavoro* interventions. It is worth stressing that the project was also the result of the two most relevant pieces of research conducted in Italy into Roma, which focused on the condition of Roma in Lombardy (Ambrosini and Tosi, 2007; Ambrosini and Tosi 2008).

34 Another crucial step in the elaboration of the project's strategies was the review of practices and projects conducted in Italy¹³ and in other European countries on Roma and their labor inclusion. This review aimed at identifying the strengths and areas of improvement of other initiatives in order to collect elements for the design and implementation of *Valore Lavoro*. In light of the first results of this stage, the following step consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews with both Roma living in the camps included in the project (11 semi-structured interviews) and the main stakeholders in this field, notably Roma associations, NGOs, representatives of the public administration in charge of labor market insertion.¹⁴ The aim of this stage was to collect the needs and points of views of the direct beneficiaries of the interventions and of the "privilege observers" in this field.

35 The subsequent development of the action research, i.e. the interventions in the field, was based on activities of project-working involving the operative partners, as the way to customize the interventions and budgeting them according to specific goals. This process was implemented in line with the methodology of participatory governance as described below. Moreover, during the entire development of the action research, an activity of monitoring favored the immediate identification of eventual problems arising in the realization of activities. Finally, the assessment of the activities and their outcomes allowed a picture of strengths and weaknesses of each initiative undertaken to be depicted, as described in section 4.3.

36 The project was articulated in different but integrated lines of action: 1) vocational training; 2) promotion and support of already existing working activities, e.g. organized as cooperative companies; 3) the hiring of Roma as employees; 4) encouragement of self-employment; 5) improvement in the autonomy of Roma in accessing public services; 6) promotion of the capability and the sensibility of public services in assessing and answering the specific needs of Roma.

37 In order to put forward the abovementioned actions, five initiatives were carried out in Lombardy. The first one, called "Progetto stireria e piccola sartoria" (Project Small Tailoring and Ironing – led by the Caritas Ambrosiana, a charity), activated a program of vocational training for Roma women and, at the end of the experimentation, in the center of Milan a dressmaker laboratory and a laundry were opened (Biondi e Ignazi, 2010). Similarly "I lavori artigianali delle donne e dei giovani rom e sinti" (Project handicrafts of Roma and Sinti women and youngsters – led by Opera Nomadi Milano, a Roma people association) focused on improving Roma women's capacities as dressmakers (Pagani e Bezzecchi, 2010). The support of on-going activities of a cooperative was the challenge of the third initiatives led by Cooperativa IES-Casa della Carità, NGO, which involved Roma men in activities of pallet production and assemblage (Delfraro e Boffi, 2010). "Mengro Labatarpe" (Our Work – led by Sucar Drom, a Roma people association), the fourth experience, had two objectives: the first one was offering professional training for Roma women and men towards job inclusion supported by grants and, the second one, the establishment of a cooperative for metal collection (Associazione Sucar Drom, 2010). Finally, vocational trainings of a group of young Roma – through the support of Comunità di Sant'Egidio (NGO) and Fondazione ISMU (research institution) – was the core of the fifth experience (Marcante, 2010).

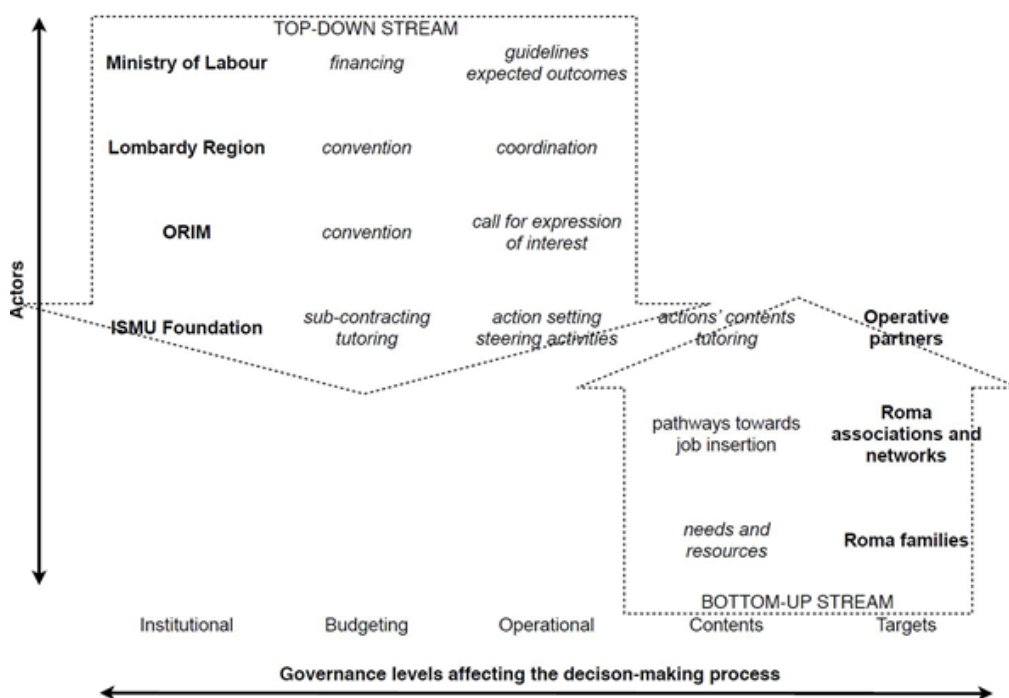
38 Throughout the *Valore Lavoro* experimentation specific attention was also given to the process of raising the awareness of the Italian society. Several public initiatives were organized in order to disseminate the results and outcomes of the project and to open a public debate on issues concerning minorities, discrimination and social exclusion. Moreover it published a job

guide addressing public services, Job Centers, and the Roma themselves, which offers the main information about the access to the labor market in order to facilitate the autonomy of Roma and the capability and increased awareness of public operators.

The participatory model description

39 An effective way to describe a participatory governance model is to identify the different levels or degrees at which it expresses the openness of the decision-making process to the contribution of the citizens or their associations. Afterwards, it is possible to cross the identified levels with the typology of actors involved, at different stages, in the process, ranging from the public bodies to the individuals or groups of individuals. Figure 2 shows the architecture of this descriptive model applied to the *Valore Lavoro* project: on the horizontal axis are identified – according to their relevance under the decisional point of view – the governance levels; on the vertical axis the actors involved in the decisional process are placed according to their degrees of formal responsibility into the decision-making process itself. The filled spaces in the matrix represent the factual involvement of the different actors into the governance process: their position contributes to describing participatory fluxes, in terms of top-down or bottom-up streams. On this basis, the horizontal intersections can be identified as the core of the participatory governance model because they represent the governance spaces with the higher interaction density and where vertical fluxes meet each other.

Figure 2. The participatory governance model of *Valore Lavoro*/project



40 As anticipated in the first section of the present paper (§ 2), the governance model proposed by the institutional bodies leading the *Valore Lavoro* project tended to propose a classical top-down approach interpolated by a bottom-up approach¹⁵.

41 The Lombardy region administration, that – according to the principles of subsidiarity¹⁶ – is in charge of the coordination of social solidarity planning and not of the operative interventions, had to activate a convention with an organization in order to make it responsible for the operational tasks derived from the general ministerial guidelines and for the expected outcomes, and in accordance with the allocated funding. The identified body was a scientific research institute, ISMU Foundation¹⁷, in charge of the coordination of the Regional Observatory on Integration and Multiethnicity (ORIM)¹⁸.

42 In the model introduced in Figure 2, a descending line is shown representing the top-down stream that. At the governance institutional level, the stream moves from the Ministry of Labor to the Lombardy Region, and from the latter to the third sector organizations that assume the operative responsibility for the implementation of the project's activities. In this way, the ministerial guidelines and the expected results, as well as the allocated resources, are gradually transferred to lower levels, eventually reaching the organizations that assume the operational tasks related to the achievement of the goals and the use of the resources.

43 The core of the governance model set out by the *Valore Lavoro* project, and the key to understanding its participatory nature, lies in the intersection of the top-down stream with the bottom-up stream. This latter originated by the decision to directly involve the recipients of the project's activities – the Roma people and their families – into the process of shaping their paths towards job insertion that would better fit their starting conditions and meet their real needs. Thus, the top-down stream involved especially the institutional and third sector actors who usually play the relevant roles in Lombardy's "plural welfare" system (Cossi, Lodigiani, 2008). The involvement of the direct recipients of the interventions was pursued, as emerged from Fig. 2, through different actions: first, direct contact with Roma people who were interviewed in order to collect their views on labor insertion and the relationship with the so called *gagè* society (non-Roma people). This effectively took place through a series of semi-structured interviews with Roma living in the camps included in the project. Second, strong cooperation and constant discussion with Roma associations and NGOs were the precondition of the definition on any interventions: their long experience in the field with regard to inclusion projects and their deep knowledge of the Roma situation was at the basis of the elaboration of the following actions. This discussion was realized through a series of roundtables between all the partners involved in the project (Roma associations, ISMU Foundation and Lombardy Region representatives) and also through a direct dialogue between researchers of ISMU Foundation and representatives of Roma associations and NGOs. This exchange allowed the needs of Roma to be included as expressed directly by themselves and also by their representatives. In addition, this favored the effective inclusion of Roma representatives and NGOs in the design of policies: the construction of the subsequent interventions indeed was the result of the discussion and direct debate among all the stakeholders.

44 It has also to be recognized that the influence of the top-down stream in the context of *Valore Lavoro* project covers the most significant governance levels affecting the decision-making process. The levels range from the institutional governance of the project to the budgeting dimensions and most of the operational activities, as an action setting and steering responsibilities, even if some specifications are needed, as it will better described later.

45 The increasing awareness of the complex implications of the relationships between the goal of job insertion and characteristics of the target population encouraged the existing resources of Roma families and communities in relation to the possibility to draft effective paths towards work to be considered as a starting point of any actions. The main features of this methodological shift can be summarized by describing how the participatory governance process was managed, and by interpreting the method itself in the light of the collaborative governance model categories as formalized by Ansell and Gash (2007) (cfr. § 2).

46 All the above-mentioned contents and methodological challenges emerged at the lowest stage of the top-down process: At this stage ISMU Foundation, as leading partner of the project on the basis of a convention stipulated with the Lombardy Region, started together with ORIM to focus on the problem of how to give shape to actions (*facilitative leadership*), according to governmental guidelines and conferred budget (*institutional design*), but also to the special characteristics of the target (*starting conditions*). To overcome the impasse, the methodological shift imposed – as self-evidence – to develop more participatory opportunities and to undertake the following steps:

- inviting to a meeting all relevant stakeholders (NGOs/third sector organizations, Roma associations, other associations, unions, local authority officials, practitioners) involved at a regional level in actions concerning the social inclusion of Roma (*face-to-face dialogue*). The objective of the meeting was to discuss good practices with regard to the

job insertion of Roma and to launch the call for an expression of interest concerning the active involvement into the project (*trust-building*);

- after the meeting, five organizations, between NGOs and Roma associations, answered the call and were actively involved in the definition of the project's actions (*commitment to process*). According to project's guidelines directly derived from the ministerial ones, a steering committee was also established consisting of representatives of the five operative partner organizations. Another fundamental methodological shift was achieved thanks to the contribution of the operative partners: not proposing already existing paths – i.e. paths that already demonstrated to be ineffective with Roma people, e.g. Job Center protocols – but starting from the already existing activities that Roma are carrying out, from their needs and also from their abilities (*starting conditions*). From this point of view the participatory logic brought about a real added value to the decision-making process and gave effective scope to the aim of empowering people;
- at an operational level – and this is the stage at which the top-down flow meets the bottom-up flow – the operative project's partners were asked to define and implement actions plans – consistent with the ministerial guidelines – addressing the job insertion of Roma people according to the needs, skills and wishes expressed by the Roma communities they represented or they were engaged with (*intermediate outcomes*);
- proportionally financial resources have been allocated to the five operative partners in accordance with the action plans they defined; because of the need for coordination of the actions and for respecting the expenditure constraints settled at ministerial level, a tutorship function in charge of ISMU Foundation was also activated (*facilitative leadership*). The tasks of the tutorship functions aimed not at the overall evaluation of the operative partners choices but at giving them support in order to focus the goals of the actions and reduce the administrative burdens. Within the parameters defined by the spending limits, partners were free to decide how to use the economic resources (*commitment to process*): whether for compensating the beneficiaries involved in the actions of job placement or for purchasing equipment and tools to carry out any pre-existing autonomous work activities, or for starting new businesses, or eventually for paying training activities;
- on a regular basis, the steering committee monitored the action improvements and discussed the emerging issues (*shared understanding*); along with this, an informal internal evaluation process had been established. Once again, also in this case participation had been assumed as the logic inspiring and underpinning the evaluation criteria and methods. The coordinators of the project from ISMU Foundation, together with the tutor, carried out the different stages of the evaluation process directly involving the operative partners and the beneficiaries of the actions themselves. This was realized through carrying out of visits to Roma settlements, workplaces, training places, as well as by collecting self-appraisal interviews with those involved in the supported job insertion paths (*shared understanding*).

Strengths and weaknesses of the project's outcomes

- 47 In spite of its low budget, the methodological shift towards a more collaborative governance of the social inclusion processes via job insertion proposed by *Valore Lavoro* allowed significant results to be achieved. Differently other similar initiatives – analyzed and discussed at the preparatory research stages of the action-research project – proved to be less effective and less efficient. As a consequence of its results, and as secondary outcome of the methodology pursued, other meanings of participation emerged, at the extent to which is now possible to affirm that *Valore Lavoro* actually represents a stepping stone for the implementation of further initiatives into the realm of social inclusion.
- 48 From a *financial perspective*, more participation implied as consequence the streamlining of the institutional steering functions and the reduction of the steering staff devoted to coordination and administrative tasks: as a result, the project had been able to minimize the

administrative costs and overheads and to maximize the budget share directly allocated to the operative partners.

49 As for the *effectiveness of the job insertion* actions undertaken, the collaborative logic strengthened the opportunity for Roma to access sustainable jobs, adequate according to their skills and fitting their needs.

50 Together, financial efficiency and effective job insertion produced the following results:

- 52 Roma people completed a path towards job insertions, 16 of whom completed a training program addressing enterprise creation. 10 become entrepreneurs by creating a cooperative company. 19 were granted a benefit for entering secured jobs. 3 got temporary jobs and 4 got a permanent job;
- in accordance with the budget allocated, the cost per unit for each beneficiary involved in the project's activities had been €7,500.

51 Moreover, the project's achievements demonstrate its high potential in terms of the economic sustainability of the undertaken actions, innovative orientation, and transferability into other local contexts. At the end of the project, a number of recommendations addressed the stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the definition and implementation of inclusive measures involving Roma people have been set out (Marcaletti, 2010).

52 The active involvement of the actors (Roma families, Roma associations and networks, NGOs, charities) can be pointed out as one of the innovative elements of the *Valore Lavoro* project from the perspective of both contents and methods followed to implement the participatory governance process. A mere top-down governance model, along the institutional aspects of the governance process, would have normatively established and delimited the specific fields of action, i.e. the ways to perform the activities in order to achieve the expected results or outcomes. In the specific case of job insertion, top-down settings would have stated the accepted and legitimate paths to be followed before starting the project's actions. The very first stages of the *Valore Lavoro* project clearly showed that it was not possible to follow this way because, from a point of view of the contents, and in accordance with the target population, the job insertion paths are not a neutral topic (Marcaletti, 2010). Roma people are a weak minority group in Italy, but with strong cultural identity even for what concerns family, gender, and working rules. Above all, despite biases and prejudice, they are not mainly inactive or devoted just to criminal activities. Rather, they perform working activities that the majority of society does not usually consider employment.

53 The achieved results, nevertheless, do not conceal the weaknesses of the project, and especially the failure to fulfill the goal of the active involvement of the public employment services in the project's actions. It could be argued that the choice of opening the project's governance model to the participatory logic represented a forced solution to unresolved problems: the mistrust of Roma people when addressing their requests to the major public service providers, on the one hand; and the lack of public targeted services supporting the weakest jobseekers (as the results of unspecific employment policy goals and of low competence of the service operators), on the other hand. Indeed some attempts were made to bridge the gap between the project's actions and the employment service providers. Similarly, the involvement strategy addressing the training providers proved to be more successful. Although it is appropriate to allow Roma people in their working age the full dignity and potential in order to access all kind of regular jobs, in accordance with their capabilities and skills, thus avoiding the creation of a separate and secured jobs-for-Roma market, an overall awareness-raising process, involving all the relevant stakeholders, is needed in order to understand the complex implications of the job placement paths of Roma people (Marcaletti, 2010).

Conclusions

54 According to the theoretical framework and to the current meanings of the concept of participatory governance, the consequent practices should be interpreted as a typical *contingency model of action*, avoiding the attraction of *best fit solutions*. Although some general models are needed and, to some extent are also helpful because of their intrinsic heuristic power – as shown by the collaborative participation general model –, there is no

evidence that best solutions can be applied in the same way to each context (Humphris, 2014). In the light of this, it is relevant to focus on the underlying features of the current practices in order to possibly identify innovative elements and solutions that could improve other already existing practices. This is of particular relevance when participatory governance processes address the needs of vulnerable groups in order to foster their social inclusion. In accordance with new principles of individualization, activation, subsidiarity and responsibility (§ 2) that inspire the *re-design of welfare regimes*, the current meanings of participatory governance – or at least of participation as a process – overlap with several dimensions of the empowerment concept. The *goal of empowering people, groups and communities* increasing their degrees of autonomy while promoting their social inclusion, underlines the strategic importance of participation in the decision-making process.

55 Nonetheless, participation does not automatically mean empowerment of citizens engaged in the process. *Participatory practices prove to vary extensively*. What is at stake – as the *Valore Lavoro* project clearly demonstrates – are also methodologies and contents (topics and issues over which the contribution of the citizens involved into the decision-making process makes a difference and creates added value) of the participatory process. From this perspective it is possible to argue, as lessons learned through the participatory and governance experience described in the present paper, that participatory methods and contents are as important as participatory conditions. At the same time *conditions for participation without methods and contents sound senseless, whilst the latter without the former sound ineffective*.

56 Out of any ambition of identifying general pre-conditions aiming at building sound participatory practices, but with the sole objective of highlighting some other relevant lessons learned that can be assumed as an example of what makes participation effective, two other *Valore Lavoro* achievements should be mentioned.

57 The first one refers to *behaviors*. Both on the side of public bodies with an institutional point of view, and on that of citizens and groups engaged in the governance process, a certain degree of openness is required. In order to *overcome respective rigidities*, the public actor should focus on the areas of participation and operating within them as facilitator, exerting positive leadership roles. On the other hand, citizens and their groups should be aware of protocols and administrative constraints: from this perspective, some “no crossing the line” warnings are unavoidable.

58 The second refers to *resources*. It is not always the case, but the *Valore Lavoro* experience clearly demonstrates that with given conditions the participatory governance processes can reduce the administrative costs and overheads, especially when the actions opened to participatory practices are associated to service provision.

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Notes

- 1 The project *Valore Lavoro. Percorsi di inserimento lavorativo per rom e sinti* (Work Value. Work inclusion paths for Roma and Sinti people) took place between 2009 and 2010 thanks to an agreement between the Region of Lombardy and the Ministry of Labour (Agreement for the funding of a programme of interventions and actions aimed at promoting people's inclusion in the labour market addressed to Roma and Sinti communities established in Italy, December 28th, 2008). For a detailed description of the project see Marcaletti, 2010; Marcaletti, Pozzi, Riniolo, 2011; Riniolo and Marcaletti, 2012.
- 2 The translation from Italian into English was made by the authors of the present article.
- 3 For the concepts of governance and multilevel governance see also Hooghe and Marks, 2003.
- 4 As many authors highlight, the relationship between the participation and empowerment of citizens is not univocal (Arnstein, 1969, Alietti, 2005, d'Albergo, 2010, Moini, 2012): in some cases participation assumes a rhetorical meaning or even has a conservative function in the maintenance of the power structure. Sometimes participation is simply a process of legitimating decisions already taken, while empowerment encompasses the effective strengths of the actors involved. In this sense the "ladder" of participation of Arnstein (1969) is of particular relevance in understanding the different levels and effects of participation: the author, by combining two variables – the intensity of participation and the effective influence on the decision making process – defines a typology of eight rungs of participation: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegating power, and finally citizen control. All these different faces of participation facilitate the comprehension of why this term attracts a great support by some and – at the same time – much criticism by those who state that there is not any actual incidence in term of redistribution of power.
- 5 The Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion were presented for the first time at the meeting of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion in Prague on 24 April 2009. The ten principles are: 1) Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies; 2) Explicit but not exclusive targeting; 3) Intercultural approach; 4) Aiming for the mainstream; 5) Awareness of the gender dimension; 6) Transfer of evidence-based policies; 7) Use of European Union instruments; 8) Involvement of regional and local authorities; 9) Involvement of civil society; 10) Active participation of the Roma.
- 6 The term "Roma" refers to a variety of groups of people who describe themselves as Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Sinti and other names. This term is commonly used in EU policy documents, discussions and generally in the literature.
- 7 Focusing on discrimination issues, the Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2012 highlights that, among the interviewees, those who claim to belong to a minority are more likely than European average to report that they have personally experience discrimination (European Commission, 2012, p.6). In addition to this, discrimination on ethnic grounds is perceived to be the most widespread form of discrimination in the EU (56%).

8 Porrajmos (literally *devouring* or *destruction* in some dialects of the Romani language) – i.e. the attempt of the Nazi regime to exterminate Roma people during the Second World War – is the extreme case of the violence they suffer during their history, still not completely recognized.

9 For example: Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe, 7.4.2010;

10 An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 5.4.2011, n.173/2011.

11 Data from the Italian official document: Strategia nazionale d'inclusione dei Rom, dei Sinti e dei Camminanti, 2012.

12 An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 5.4.2011, n.173/2011

13 The Italian projects critically analysed are the following: *Progetto Sperimentale di inserimento lavorativo di rom e sinti*, Provincia di Rovigo; *Progetto Rom rumeni a Verona. Azioni positive per una convivenza possibile*, Verona; *Progetto Le Radici e le Ali. Sperimentazione di percorsi di inserimento socio-lavorativo per migranti e rom*, Catania, Milano, Pescara, Roma; *Progetto A cavallo del vento verso il lungo cammino*, Emilia Romagna; *Progetto Il lungo Cammino dei Sinti e dei Rom: percorsi verso il lavoro*, Emilia Romagna; *Progetto In carovana sulla via delle stelle*, Emilia Romagna; *Progetto Rom per Roma. Sperimentazione raccolta rifiuti ingombranti, Roma*; *Progetto Rom cittadini d'Europa*, Torino.

14 For a detail description of the actors involved see Marcaletti 2010.

15 The setting has been a consequence of the typical budget procedure associated with the allocation of Governmental funds addressed to meet specific needs. The Lombardy region authority signed a convention with the Ministry of Labour in the form of an agreement on specific guidelines about the implementation of paths toward job insertion of Roma and on the allocation of a budget covering the financing of the actions to be undertaken.

16 From this perspective, it should be noted that the most characterising feature of the Lombardy welfare model is its connotation as “plural”, i.e. the pivotal functions that within it is played by the principle of subsidiarity, especially the horizontal one, in which the focus is posed on the synergy between institutional actors and the private entities, in particular belonging to the third sector (Cossi, Lodigiani, 2008, p. 250). Within this framework, the Regional authority (or in general the local authority) is in charge of the financing of services, thus configuring the public body as funding and auditing agency. The third sector actors or – in some cases – the private profit sector actors have the operational responsibility of service management. Citizens assume increasingly the responsibility of the purchasing function, via the setting of payment devices as vouchers or checks (Cossi, Lodigiani, 2008, p. 251-252).

17 Both the authors of the present paper have had responsibilities within the project, the former as Scientist in charge, the latter as Scientific coordinator of the project. For more information on ISMU Foundation, its research and activities see www.ismu.org.

18 www.orimregionelombardia.it.

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Résumés

Les objectifs de cet article sont de deux ordres : d'une part identifier un modèle de gouvernance participative capable de répondre à l'objectif de l'inclusion des groupes marginalisés et exclus ; d'autre part expliquer comment et dans quelle mesure la participation de certains individus, appartenant à des groupes sociaux exclus, peut effectivement améliorer la conception des politiques concernant les questions cruciales pour eux-mêmes et pour la société dans son ensemble. Après un examen critique des concepts tels que « gouvernance » et « gouvernance participative », l'article présente les points forts et les limites d'un modèle de gouvernance participative, appliquée en Italie entre 2009 et 2010, qui a vu la participation des Roms – l'un des groupes les plus exclus dans l'Europe – dans le cadre des initiatives et programmes qui s'adressent à eux. L'avantage de ce modèle est la participation effective des bénéficiaires dans la planification des programmes qui les touchent.

The objectives of this paper are twofold: on the one hand to identify a participatory governance model capable of meeting the goal of the inclusion of marginalized and excluded groups; on the other hand to explain how and to what extent the participation of some individuals, belonging to social excluded groups, can effectively improve the design of policies regarding crucial issues for them and for the society as a whole. Accordingly, after a critical review of concepts such as governance and participatory governance, the paper presents strengths and limitations of a participatory governance model, applied in Italy between 2009 and 2010, which pursued the involvement of Roma people – one of the most excluded groups in Europe – in the design of initiatives and actions addressing them. The advantage of this model is the actual participation of beneficiaries in the planning of actions regarding them.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : exclusion sociale, intégration au marché du travail, modèle de gouvernance participative, politiques d'inclusion, Roms

Keywords : inclusion policies, labor integration, participatory governance model, Roma people, social exclusion