Governing Roma Inclusion through Urban Space: Policy Discourse, Ethnic Difference, and the Case of La Cañada Real

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Abstract

Social inclusion has become a central objective of European, national, and regional policy frameworks addressing Roma marginalization. Yet inclusion policies increasingly operate through governance regimes that regulate ethnic difference rather than simply alleviating inequality. This article examines how Roma inclusion is discursively rendered intelligible across urban and diversity policy documents in the European Union, Spain, and the Community of Madrid, focusing on La Cañada Real Galiana as a paradigmatic site of spatial intervention. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and frame analysis, the study analyzes four key policy strategies adopted between 2017 and 2021 across multiple governance scales. The findings show that inclusion is articulated through a multi-scalar and spatialized governing logic combining administrative categorization, monitoring, behavioral normalization, infrastructural intervention, and cultural recognition. At the European and national levels, inclusion is primarily framed through indicators, participation frameworks, and policy coordination mechanisms that render inequalities measurable and governable. At the regional level, these logics become territorialized through urban restructuring, demographic segmentation, and housing intervention. Roma communities are constructed simultaneously as rights-bearing minorities and vulnerable populations requiring targeted governance, while informal settlements are framed as incompatible with legality, infrastructural order, and contemporary urban life, legitimizing relocation and planning control. At the same time, symbolic recognition and participatory commitments coexist with regulatory governance, producing persistent tensions between visibility, inclusion, and control. By centering policy discourse, the article argues that inclusion functions as a differentiated mode of governing ethnic difference through urban space and administrative legibility. In doing so, it contributes to debates on Roma governance, urban marginality, territorialized inclusion, and the ambivalent limits of recognition-based policy frameworks.

Keywords

Roma inclusion; ethnic governance; urban marginality; policy discourse; La Cañada Real

Introduction

Social inclusion has become a central policy objective across Europe, particularly in relation to historically marginalized ethnic minorities such as Roma communities. European Union policy frameworks, including the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation (European Commission, 2020), emphasize *integration* through improved access to housing, education, employment, and healthcare. However, scholars increasingly argue that inclusion policies are embedded within governance structures that may simultaneously reproduce forms of exclusion, surveillance, and normative regulation (Magazzini, 2020). This paradox raises critical questions about how institutional language constructs marginalized populations and shapes their socio-spatial conditions. This tension resonates with critiques of multicultural inclusion that emphasize how recognition-based frameworks may accommodate minority difference while leaving intact hierarchical relations of power and belonging (May, 2012; Modood, 2013).

The case of Roma communities in Spain illustrates these tensions particularly clearly. Despite longstanding national and regional inclusion strategies, Roma populations continue to experience structural inequalities, including residential segregation, limited access to public services, and stigmatization within urban environments (García-Ramírez et al., 2015; Ruiz-Rivas et al., 2023). One of the most emblematic examples is La Cañada Real Galiana, an informal settlement predominantly populated by Roma people (including both Spanish Gitano and Eastern European Roma) located on the outskirts of Madrid. Often framed as a symbol of urban marginality, La Cañada has been the focus of multiple policy interventions aimed at urban regeneration and social integration. Yet these interventions have generated ongoing controversy regarding forced evictions, infrastructural neglect, and the governance of informal housing settlements (Agüí, 2017; Gonick, 2015).

Policy discourse not only reflects governmental priorities but actively constructs social problems, target populations, and acceptable solutions (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2009). In the context of Roma inclusion, institutional rhetoric frequently relies on categorization strategies that frame Roma communities as vulnerable populations requiring intervention while simultaneously positioning them as social risks or obstacles to urban development (McGarry, 2014; Sigona, 2005). These discursive practices may contribute to the reproduction of social exclusion by legitimizing forms of state control and normative expectations of integration.

This article examines how urban and diversity policy documents in the Community of Madrid, Spain, and the EU construct Roma inclusion and whether these discursive frameworks help structure exclusionary governance. Drawing on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2004) and frame analysis (Goffman, 1974), the study analyzes four key policy strategies across European, national, and regional governance levels.

Particular attention is paid to how these policies represent Roma communities in relation to urban space, social participation, and state intervention.

The study is grounded in theoretical approaches that conceptualize governance as a form of governmentality operating through discourse, administrative rationalities, and the production of governable subjects (Foucault, 2010). Within urban contexts, biopolitical governance often manifests through planning policies, housing regulation, and welfare interventions that aim to manage marginalized populations while simultaneously reinforcing social hierarchies (Legg, 2005; Rutland, 2015). From this perspective, inclusion policies may function as regulatory mechanisms that shape subjectivities and urban spatial arrangements rather than simply promoting equality.

The intersection between biopolitics and policy discourse has been increasingly explored in research on ethnic minority governance. Scholars have demonstrated that inclusion strategies may rely on processes of "othering," in which marginalized groups are constructed as culturally distinct, socially deficient, or requiring assimilation into dominant societal norms (Okely, 1994; Wacquant, 2008). In the case of Roma communities, such processes are often embedded within urban policy frameworks that frame informal settlements as pathological spaces requiring modernization, relocation, or normalization (Marinaro, 2009; Yiftachel, 2002). These representations can have material consequences by legitimizing eviction policies, spatial segregation, and intensified administrative monitoring.

Existing research on Roma inclusion policies in Spain has primarily focused on socio-economic outcomes, housing programs, and institutional reforms (Fabeni, López, & Piemontese, 2014; Pastor Hernández, 2018; Laparra, 2007). While these studies provide important insights into policy implementation, less attention has been devoted to examining how institutional language actively shapes governance practices and constructs social inclusion. By focusing on discursive strategies within policy documents, this article addresses this gap and contributes to broader debates on the role of language in producing urban inequalities.

Methodologically, the article combines frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) with critical discourse analysis informed by the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl, 2017; Khosravinik, 2010). This approach enables an examination of how referential, predicational, and argumentative strategies construct Roma communities as policy subjects while legitimizing particular forms of intervention. The analysis focuses on four key policy documents at European, national, and regional levels: the EU Roma Strategic Framework (2020), the Regional Pact for La Cañada Real Galiana (2018), the Plan for the Social Inclusion of the Roma Population of the Community of Madrid (2017–2021), and the National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021–2030). Together, these documents provide insight into how inclusion policies are articulated across multiple governance scales.

The findings demonstrate that inclusion discourse changes form across governance scales. At the European and national levels, policy frameworks emphasize diversity, social cohesion, participation, and cultural recognition while simultaneously constructing Roma communities through categories of vulnerability, measurable disadvantage, and targeted intervention. Inclusion is articulated through indicators, monitoring systems, and policy coordination mechanisms that render inequalities administratively legible and governable. At the regional level, particularly in the case of La Cañada Real Galiana, these logics become territorialized through discourses of legality, urban order, infrastructural compatibility, and spatial normalization. Together, these discursive strategies facilitate the production and management of urban marginality by reinforcing hierarchical distinctions between mainstream urban citizenship and territorially regulated minority populations.

The article argues that inclusion governance changes form across scales, moving from epistemic frameworks of legibility and coordination at the European level to territorially concentrated forms of intervention and infrastructural management at the regional level. It makes three interrelated contributions to scholarship on social inclusion and urban governance. First, it demonstrates that Roma inclusion policies operate through a *spatialized discursive logic*, in which administrative categorization, surveillance, and cultural recognition are articulated in relation to informal urban space. Second, by focusing on urban and diversity policy documents rather than program outcomes, the article shows how inclusion is constructed not merely as a social objective but as a mode of governing marginalized populations through the regulation of space, conduct, and legitimacy. Third, through the

case of La Cañada Real Galiana, the study advances an understanding of informal settlements not as exceptional policy problems but as *paradigmatic sites* where contemporary inclusion governance becomes visible in its most condensed form. In doing so, the article contributes to critical debates on how institutional language shapes urban marginality, citizenship, and belonging.

Theoretical Framework

2. Social inclusion, Roma governance, and discursive power

2.1 Social Inclusion and the governance of marginalized populations

Within European Union governance, inclusion policies are commonly framed as mechanisms to reduce poverty, improve access to services, and foster civic participation among marginalized populations (European Commission, 2017). However, critical scholarship increasingly highlights the ambivalent nature of inclusion frameworks, emphasizing that inclusion initiatives may simultaneously operate as tools of regulation and governance rather than solely mechanisms of empowerment (Magazzini, 2020; Tremlett, 2014).

Research on social inclusion demonstrates that policy frameworks frequently construct marginalized populations through institutional categories such as vulnerable groups, populations at risk, or beneficiaries of intervention. These classifications shape both public perceptions and policy implementation strategies by defining who qualifies for support and under what conditions inclusion is considered achievable (Sigona, 2005). While such categorizations often aim to facilitate targeted social assistance, they may also reinforce essentialist representations that portray marginalized groups as socially deficient or culturally incompatible with mainstream society (McGarry, 2014). At the same time, a definition of the Roma identity is difficult to find (Català-Oltra, 2021). The issue is that their identity mainly arises from a logically external categorization, understood from above by policy-makers and scholars.

While Roma communities constitute historically grounded and internally diverse populations with shared cultural and linguistic trajectories (Maltras, 2002; Stewart, 1997), defining Roma identity remains analytically complex and often reductive. In particular, the category Roma has also been shaped and standardized through policy frameworks, academic discourse, and governance practices (Sigona, 2011), which can obscure the heterogeneity and situated forms of self-identification across different Roma communities (Okely, 1983; Brooks, 2015).

The governance of Roma communities illustrates these tensions particularly clearly. Across Europe, Roma populations have been the focus of extensive inclusion strategies aimed at addressing housing segregation, unemployment, and educational inequalities. Yet scholars have documented how these strategies frequently reproduce hierarchical relationships between state institutions and Roma communities by framing inclusion as contingent upon behavioral adaptation, cultural assimilation, or spatial reorganization without participatory practices (Taba, 2021; Creţan et al., 2021). As a result, inclusion policies may reinforce structural inequalities by prioritizing regulatory intervention over community agency.

These dynamics are particularly evident in urban governance. Cities have become key arenas for the implementation of social policies, often through housing programs, urban regeneration initiatives, and spatial

planning frameworks (Koch, 2018). Urban policy interventions frequently target informal settlements inhabited by Roma communities, framing these spaces as sites of social disorder or infrastructural deficiency requiring modernization and normalization (Marinaro, 2009). Such representations may legitimize relocation programs, surveillance mechanisms, and intensified administrative monitoring, reinforcing patterns of spatial segregation rather than addressing their structural causes.

2.2 Urban marginality, spatial Governance, and Roma settlements

The relationship between urban planning and ethnic marginalization has been widely explored in critical urban studies. Scholars have demonstrated how spatial planning operates not only as a technical process of infrastructure development but also as a political mechanism that regulates access to urban resources and defines acceptable forms of habitation (Yiftachel, 2002; Harvey, 2005). In this context, marginalized settlements are often framed as pathological urban spaces that threaten social cohesion or economic development.

Roma settlements across Europe have frequently been subjected to such spatial governance strategies. Research has shown that relocation programs, housing normalization initiatives, and urban renewal projects may inadvertently reproduce segregation by relocating Roma communities to peripheral or poorly serviced neighborhoods (Fabeni, López, & Piemontese, 2014). Public policies like in Spain often rely on narratives of modernization and social integration that portray informal settlements as incompatible with contemporary urban standards.

In Spain, the governance of Roma settlements has been closely linked to urban regeneration policies implemented since the late twentieth century. Programs such as the *Plan de Remodelación de Barrios* and the creation of the *Instituto de Realojamiento e Integración Social* aimed to eliminate informal housing and relocate residents into formal housing structures. While these initiatives sought to improve living conditions, scholars have documented their role in reinforcing socio-spatial marginalization and limiting Roma agency in decision-making processes (Pastor Hernández, 2018; Nogués, Sáez 2010).

La Cañada Real Galiana originates from a historic livestock route (*vía pecuaria*), but its current configuration as an informal settlement dates back to the mid-twentieth century, when rural migrants began to self-construct housing along its trajectory on the outskirts of Madrid. Over subsequent decades, the area consolidated into a linear settlement of approximately 15 kilometers, characterized by significant social and spatial heterogeneity, including diverse housing typologies, economic activities, and populations.

This process intensified in the 1990s and 2000s, driven by rising housing costs, urban expansion, and the arrival of both migrant and marginalized populations, including Roma communities, who faced barriers to accessing formal housing markets. Despite its consolidation and long-term habitation, La Cañada remained outside formal planning frameworks due to its legal status as public land, creating a condition in which settlement was simultaneously tolerated and legally precarious.

This historical trajectory is crucial: rather than emerging as an inherently “illegal” space, La Cañada was progressively produced through processes of urban growth, informal housing practices, and institutional ambivalence, before being reframed through policy and media discourse as a social and urban “problem.”

2.3 Discursive governance, biopolitics, and the production of inclusion

Critical discourse studies provide important tools for analyzing how institutional language shapes social governance. According to critical discourse analysis, policy texts do not simply reflect social realities but actively construct them through linguistic strategies that define social actors, attribute responsibility, and legitimize policy interventions (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2009). These discursive practices are particularly relevant in the governance of marginalized populations, where institutional narratives often frame inclusion as both a moral obligation and a regulatory process.

Foucauldian approaches to governmentality and biopolitics offer a useful framework for understanding how inclusion policies regulate populations through administrative knowledge, monitoring practices, and normative intervention. Biopolitics refers to forms of governance that regulate populations through administrative knowledge, statistical monitoring, and normative frameworks that define acceptable forms of life and citizenship (Foucault, 2010). Within urban contexts, biopolitical governance often operates through planning policies, welfare programs, and data collection systems that aim to manage social risk and promote population optimization (Legg, 2005; Rutland, 2015).

Scholars have increasingly applied biopolitical perspectives to the study of minority governance, demonstrating how inclusion policies may function as mechanisms of population management. Through processes of categorization, monitoring, and normalization, institutional frameworks shape marginalized populations as policy subjects while reinforcing hierarchical distinctions between dominant and subordinate social groups (Okely, 1994; Wacquant, 2008). These processes are often accompanied by practices of "othering," whereby minority populations are constructed as culturally distinct, socially problematic, or requiring assimilation into dominant societal norms.

In the case of Roma communities, discursive governance frequently relies on binary oppositions between integration and marginality, tradition and modernity, or dependency and productivity. These discursive constructions may legitimize interventionist policies by framing Roma communities as simultaneously vulnerable populations deserving support and social risks requiring regulation (Pap, 2015; Duquesnoy, 2013). Such representations have material consequences, influencing policy priorities, resource allocation, and urban planning decisions.

Despite growing scholarship on Roma inclusion policies, relatively limited research has examined how institutional language itself contributes to the reproduction of social and spatial inequalities simultaneously. Much existing research focuses on policy outcomes or program implementation, often overlooking the discursive mechanisms that render intelligible target populations and legitimize governance strategies. By analyzing policy discourse through a combined CDA (Fairclough, 2013) and frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) approach in the context of La Cañada Real, this article contributes to bridging this gap and provides insight into how inclusion policies shape urban marginality through linguistic and institutional practices.

Together, these theoretical perspectives highlight the need to critically examine social inclusion frameworks beyond their normative goals. Understanding how policy discourse constructs marginalized populations is essential for assessing the broader implications of inclusion strategies and identifying alternative governance approaches that prioritize participation, agency, and spatial justice.

Methodology/Research Design

3. Materials and methods

3.1 Research design

CDA provides analytical tools for examining how discourse reflects and reproduces power relations, particularly within institutional and policy contexts (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2009). The study specifically draws on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which emphasizes the contextual and historically embedded nature of policy discourse while allowing for systematic analysis of linguistic strategies used to construct social actors and policy problems (Reisigl, 2017). Frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) complements CDA by identifying recurring interpretative patterns policies define social inclusion, vulnerability, and intervention strategies. This mixed qualitative approach is particularly suited to exploring how inclusion policies operate through discursive governance rather than solely through formal policy implementation.

3.2 Data selection and sources

The analysis focuses on four publicly available policy documents addressing Roma inclusion and urban governance in the EU, Spain, and the Community of Madrid. These documents were selected due to their relevance, institutional authority, and influence on regional and national inclusion strategies. Together, they represent multiple governance scales and provide insight into how inclusion policies are articulated across administrative levels.

The analyzed documents include:

1. **Regional Pact for La Cañada Real Galiana (2018)** – A regional policy agreement addressing urban restructuring and social intervention strategies in La Cañada Real Galiana.
2. **Plan for the Social Inclusion of the Roma Population of the Community of Madrid (2017–2021)** – A regional framework outlining inclusion strategies related to housing, employment, education, and social services.
3. **National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021–2030)** – A national policy aligned with the European Union Roma Strategic Framework, establishing long-term inclusion objectives.
4. **EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation (2020)** - the European Union's main supranational policy framework establishing common objectives, indicators, and governance priorities for addressing Roma equality

These documents were selected following criteria proposed by Reisigl (2017), such as representativeness, policy relevance, intertextuality, and institutional impact. This also includes the authoritative policy texts that articulate and circulate dominant inclusion frameworks. The selected dataset captures the discursive construction of Roma inclusion across urban planning, welfare governance, and diversity policy domains.

3.3 Analytical framework

The analytical framework focuses on identifying discursive strategies that construct Roma communities as policy subjects and define inclusion mechanisms. The analysis examines three interrelated dimensions of policy discourse: categorization, governance intervention, and normative inclusion narratives.

First, the study analyzes referential and predicational strategies used to describe Roma communities. Referential strategies involve the naming and categorization of social actors, while predicational strategies attribute characteristics, behaviors, or social conditions to these actors (Khosravinik, 2010). These strategies reveal how policies construct Roma communities as vulnerable populations, cultural minorities, or governance targets. Second, the analysis examines social action representations, focusing on how policy documents assign responsibility, agency, and regulatory intervention to different actors. This dimension investigates how inclusion policies frame Roma communities in relation to state governance mechanisms, including housing regulation, social assistance programs, and urban restructuring initiatives. Third, the study evaluates argumentative strategies within policy discourse, analyzing how policies justify inclusion interventions through causal reasoning, normative claims, and comparative narratives between Roma communities and majority populations. This approach allows for identifying how institutional rhetoric legitimizes governance strategies and constructs inclusion as a conditional or regulatory process.

Frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) was used to identify recurring interpretative patterns across the dataset. Ten analytical frames were developed based on existing literature on othering, biopolitics, and social inclusion governance. These frames were grouped into three thematic categories: (1) discursive othering and categorization, (2) governance and biopolitical regulation, and (3) inclusion and recognition narratives. The frames provided a structured coding scheme for identifying recurring discursive patterns across policy documents.

3.4 Data coding and analysis procedure

The documents were analyzed using qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti) to facilitate systematic coding and thematic identification. The coding process followed an iterative and reflexive approach involving multiple analytical stages.

In the first stage, the documents were coded inductively to identify recurring linguistic patterns related to inclusion, exclusion, and governance intervention. This initial coding focused on identifying key terminology, rhetorical constructions, and representations of Roma communities within policy texts. Codes were later grouped into thematic categories corresponding to the analytical frames. This process involved identifying discursive patterns related to categorization strategies, surveillance mechanisms, spatial governance narratives, and symbolic recognition of Roma culture. Thematic clustering allowed for identifying dominant narratives and discursive tensions within policy frameworks. Lastly, the coded data were analyzed through CDA techniques, focusing on transitivity, modality, metaphor usage, and argumentative structures. These linguistic features were examined to assess how policy language constructs agency, authority, and normative expectations of inclusion.

3.5 Ethical considerations and limitations

The study relies exclusively on publicly available institutional policy documents and does not involve human participants. However, ethical considerations remain relevant due to the sensitivity of analyzing policies affecting

historically marginalized populations. The analysis aims to critically examine institutional discourse without reproducing stigmatizing representations or essentialist characterizations of Roma communities.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on policy discourse rather than policy implementation, meaning that it examines institutional representations rather than lived experiences of Roma communities. Second, the interpretative analysis may be influenced by the researcher's positionality and not being a Roma person. To attempt to address this limitation, the study employs systematic coding procedures and triangulation between analytical frameworks to enhance methodological transparency and reliability. As with all interpretative policy analysis, the study is shaped by the positionality of the researcher and the limits of analyzing institutional discourse without direct ethnographic engagement with affected communities. Despite these limitations, analyzing policy discourse provides valuable insight into the symbolic and institutional mechanisms that discursively construct social inclusion within urban policy frameworks.

Results

4. Findings

The analysis reveals that Roma inclusion policies across European, national, and regional governance levels are structured through layered discursive strategies that simultaneously promote social integration while reinforcing regulatory governance and spatial restructuring. Across the three policy documents, inclusion is articulated through institutional narratives that define Roma communities as both beneficiaries of social protection and targets of intervention. The findings identify four interconnected themes: (1) categorization and administrative construction of Roma policy subjects, (2) inclusion as regulatory governance through surveillance and normalization, (3) urban restructuring and the production of spatial marginality, and (4) the paradoxical coexistence of cultural recognition and governance control.

4.1 Administrative categorization and the construction of Roma policy subjects

Across the analyzed policy documents, Roma communities are systematically constructed through institutional categorization strategies that frame them as populations requiring targeted governance. These strategies rely heavily on administrative classifications such as "population at risk of social exclusion," "vulnerable group," or "population requiring social intervention." While such labels are presented as neutral and technical tools for allocating resources, they simultaneously produce Roma communities as administratively legible social subjects, defined primarily through their relationship to institutional intervention rather than through political agency or social heterogeneity (Sigona, 2005; McGarry, 2014).

The analysis demonstrates that referential strategies rely extensively on semantic generalization. Policy documents repeatedly describe Roma populations in terms of shared structural barriers—housing instability, educational marginalization, and limited labor market participation—yet these conditions are articulated in ways that homogenize Roma communities into a unified policy category. Diversity of class position, migratory trajectories, or forms of social organization is largely absent from the discourse. Similar homogenizing tendencies have been identified across European Roma governance frameworks, where complex social realities are simplified into standardized administrative populations to facilitate policy intervention (Tremlett, 2014; Creţan et al., 2021).

Predicational strategies further consolidate this homogenization by attributing characteristics associated with vulnerability, institutional distrust, and socio-economic dependency to Roma populations. In several instances, limited participation in education, employment, or welfare programs is framed less as the outcome of structural discrimination and more as a deficit of engagement with public institutions. Such framings subtly reorient responsibility, depicting Roma communities as simultaneously disadvantaged and responsible for activating their own inclusion. This logic reflects what Pap (2015) describes as ambivalent minority governance, in which marginalized populations are constructed as both objects of protection and subjects of correction.

A key mechanism enabling this ambivalence is the widespread use of indirect ethnic classification. Rather than explicitly naming Roma communities, policy texts frequently deploy broader categories such as "groups at risk of social exclusion" or "vulnerable minority populations." While this linguistic strategy appears to avoid ethnic labeling and reduce stigmatization, it often functions as a semantic proxy that implicitly references Roma communities while preserving institutional neutrality. As Hinger and Schweitzer (2020) note, such avoidance of explicit ethnic reference can reproduce forms of institutional invisibility while maintaining targeted intervention, allowing governance to operate without overtly racialized language.

This dynamic is particularly visible in formulations that simultaneously recognize difference and consolidate administrative control. For example, the National Strategy states that "*the Roma working population is a beneficiary of active employment policies and is considered a group of special attention*" (National Strategy, p. 29). Here, the designation of "special attention" signals both recognition and differentiation: Roma subjects are singled out as deserving policy focus, yet only insofar as they are positioned within a framework of deficit and intervention. The phrasing reinforces Roma populations as exceptional administrative cases rather than as participants in generalized labor and welfare systems.

This classification is not neutral but is typically justified within the document through references to disproportionately high levels of unemployment, social exclusion, and structural disadvantage among Roma populations. Such justifications anchor the category of special attention in measurable socio-economic indicators, while simultaneously consolidating Roma populations as a distinct administrative group requiring targeted intervention. In this way, structural inequalities are translated into policy categories that both legitimize intervention and stabilize Roma as exceptional policy subjects, rather than as participants in generalized labor and welfare systems.

Taken together, these categorization practices contribute to the reproduction of othering and racialization processes within institutional discourse. Although policy discourse frequently avoids explicit racial terminology, these processes nevertheless participate in broader forms of racialization that permanently differentiate Roma populations as governable subjects (Goldberg, 2002). By framing social exclusion as a persistent group condition rather than as the product of historically situated structural inequalities, policy texts naturalize vulnerability and stabilize it as an inherent characteristic of Roma communities. As Okely (1994) argues, such essentializing representations reinforce symbolic boundaries between minority groups and dominant social structures, normalizing hierarchical governance relationships. In this sense, administrative categorization does not merely describe Roma populations; it actively produces the policy subjects through whom subsequent practices of surveillance, normalization, and spatial regulation become both intelligible and legitimate. This dynamic is most clearly observable at the regional level, where administrative categorizations are directly translated into spatial

segmentation and intervention, while at the national level they operate through the construction of Roma populations as measurable and targetable groups.

4.2 Inclusion as regulatory governance: surveillance, monitoring, and behavioral normalization

A second central finding concerns the regulatory dimension embedded within inclusion policies. The analysis demonstrates that inclusion is repeatedly framed as contingent upon monitoring mechanisms, behavioral normalization, and participation in institutional oversight programs. Rather than operating solely as instruments of support, these measures position inclusion as a process to be managed, evaluated, and corrected. Such discursive patterns align with critical interpretations of social inclusion as a governance technology that regulates marginalized populations via administrative and normative frameworks (Magazzini, 2020; Wacquant, 2008).

Across the analyzed documents, surveillance practices are presented as essential components of inclusion strategies. References to demographic monitoring, educational performance tracking, and targeted intervention programs illustrate how institutional governance relies on data collection and statistical assessment to measure integration progress. However, important differences emerge across governance levels. At the national level, the *National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021–2030)* emphasizes the development of indicators, baseline data, and monitoring and evaluation systems, constructing Roma populations as measurable and comparable subjects of policy intervention. In contrast, at the regional level, the *Pacto Regional por la Cañada Real Galiana* operationalizes these logics more concretely through detailed territorial segmentation, population registries, and sector-based intervention frameworks, enabling the spatial management and direct regulation of residents. These differences reflect a scalar distribution of institutional power: while the national level defines the epistemic and administrative frameworks through which populations become legible, the regional level concentrates the capacity to implement, territorialize, and enforce these forms of surveillance. As scholars of governmentality and biopolitical governance have shown, such practices are central to contemporary modes of governance, in which populations are rendered legible through classificatory knowledge and administrative oversight (Foucault, 2010; Legg, 2005).

The emphasis on monitoring and measurable governance is particularly explicit within the *EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation* (2020). The document calls for "a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework" and emphasizes the need for "improved collection and use of equality data" in order to "measure progress towards the targets" (European Commission, 2020, pp. 3–4). Similarly, it advocates the "systematic monitoring of the situation of Roma" through "reliable and comparable quantitative and qualitative data" (European Commission, 2020, p. 17). At the same time, the framework promotes the "meaningful participation of Roma" throughout policy processes (European Commission, 2020, p. 9). These formulations position inclusion as dependent upon continuous measurement, comparability, coordination, and administrative visibility, illustrating how the European level primarily governs through epistemic frameworks of legibility rather than through direct territorial intervention.

This logic is clearly articulated in the Regional Pact for La Cañada Real Galiana, which calls for the "*preparation of a census of the school-age population that makes it possible to know their needs, the inclusion of minors and out-of-school youth, and facilitates their future insertion into the labor market*" (Regional Pact, p. 36).

While framed as a supportive and future-oriented measure, the census functions as a biopolitical technology that renders Roma populations governable through data. By explicitly linking educational monitoring to future labor market insertion, the policy constructs childhood, schooling, and employability as sites of early normalization, where deviation from institutional trajectories becomes detectable and correctable.

Multiple policy sections describe inclusion as dependent upon access to and participation in mainstream systems of education, employment, and housing, framed in terms of reducing gaps with the general population and ensuring alignment with existing institutional norms. As the National Strategy states, "actions were focused in the areas of sectoral policies of Education, Employment, Housing and Healthcare to try to reduce the existing gaps with respect to the general population (p. 7)," while "mainstream policies will be implemented… to ensure access to and enjoyment of public services (p. 9)."

Responsibilization is made explicit in the Plan for the Social Inclusion of the Roma Population of the Community of Madrid, which states: "*Therefore, they must decide to get the most and best out of them, which requires an individual and collective action*" (Plan, p. 5). The modal construction ("must decide") frames inclusion as a moral obligation rooted in choice and effort, rather than as a shared social responsibility. Inclusion is thus recast as a matter of self-regulation, where Roma subjects are expected to align themselves with normative trajectories in order to merit inclusion. Such phrasing exemplifies neoliberal governance logics in which marginalized populations are held accountable for overcoming conditions that are structurally produced (Juhila, 2017).

Beyond monitoring and responsibilization, the analysis also identifies governance strategies embedded within housing and urban intervention policies that aim to improve living conditions and promote social inclusion. Relocation and urban restructuring initiatives are frequently framed as necessary measures to address structural inequalities and enhance access to adequate housing and services. These interventions are often justified through deontic modalities that emphasize institutional responsibility and commitment to ensuring equitable living standards. At the same time, policy frameworks incorporate explicit commitments to participation. At the European level, for instance, it is stated that "Roma people should be involved from the design to the implementation of measures" (European Commission, 2020, p. 6) , while the National Strategy highlights "the effective participation of the Roma population in the whole cycle of the relevant public policies" (National Strategy, p. 5). However, in practice, while policies aim to foster inclusion and improved living conditions, they also reflect broader planning frameworks through which spatial organization is coordinated and managed (Yiftachel, 2002).

Importantly, these regulatory mechanisms coexist with symbolic inclusion strategies. Policy frameworks frequently promote awareness campaigns, diversity initiatives, and anti-discrimination measures aimed at improving public perceptions of Roma communities. While such strategies articulate commitments to equality and recognition, they operate alongside surveillance, normalization, and spatial control. This coexistence reflects the tension identified by Fraser (2000) between recognition and redistribution, wherein symbolic inclusion does not necessarily disrupt the material and institutional conditions that sustain inequality. In this context, cultural recognition functions in parallel with governance practices that require behavioral and spatial adaptation to dominant norms. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that inclusion policies operate through a layered assemblage of surveillance and responsibilization.

The regulatory scope of inclusion discourse also extends to the governance of everyday conduct. Policy objectives such as the "promotion of healthy habits and lifestyles" (Plan for the Social Inclusion of the Roma Population of the Community of Madrid, p. 38) frame inclusion as a matter of personal behavior and self-regulation. The formulation presupposes a deficit in everyday practices and implicitly establishes normative standards of living against which Roma households are evaluated.

By mobilizing health as an object of intervention, policy discourse shifts attention toward behavioral and lifestyle factors, emphasizing individual responsibility in the promotion of well-being. At the same time, other policy domains—particularly housing and urban restructuring—explicitly address structural determinants of inequality, including access to formal housing, infrastructure, and essential services. For instance, the National Strategy highlights that "actions were focused in the areas of… Housing and Healthcare to try to reduce the existing gaps with respect to the general population" (National Strategy, p. 7) , framing inclusion as a matter of improving material conditions. However, these structural interventions coexist with health-related discourses that prioritize behavioral normalization and individual conduct. Inclusion is thus articulated through a dual logic: while housing policies seek to transform structural conditions, health frameworks often frame integration in terms of conformity to dominant lifestyle norms. Together, these dynamics reveal how inclusion operates through a combination of structural redistribution and responsibilization.

4.3 Urban restructuring and the discursive production of spatial marginality

The third major finding concerns the relationship between inclusion discourse and urban spatial governance. The analysis demonstrates that policy documents consistently construct informal Roma settlements, most notably La Cañada Real Galiana, as pathological urban spaces that stand in opposition to dominant imaginaries of modern urban development. Such representations do not merely describe material conditions but actively participate in the discursive production of spatial marginality, whereby certain forms of habitation are rendered illegitimate within the urban order (Marinaro, 2009; Harvey, 2005).

This framing is made explicit in the Regional Pact for La Cañada Real Galiana, which refers to the settlement as "the complex problem of the Cañada Real, whose situation was absolutely incompatible with an advanced society in the 21st century" (Regional Pact, p. 5). The evaluative force of this formulation establishes a civilizational hierarchy between legitimate urban modernity and informal Roma habitation. By invoking "advanced society" as an implicit benchmark, the policy discourse positions La Cañada—and by extension its residents—as temporally and normatively out of place. In this sense, policy discourse does not only spatialize marginality but also temporalizes it, positioning informal Roma settlements as remnants of an underdeveloped past incompatible with contemporary urban futures.

Across the analyzed documents, informal settlements are repeatedly described through a lexicon of illegality, infrastructural deficiency, and disorder. Such spatial narratives transform informal housing into a governance problem that demands normalization through relocation, urban renewal, or territorial restructuring. Similar discursive patterns have been identified in research on European Roma settlements, where informal housing is routinely framed as incompatible with modern urban citizenship and therefore subject to intervention (Fabeni, López, & Piemontese 2014). In this sense, discourse helps legitimize planning intervention by rendering spatial restructuring appear both necessary and inevitable.

The analysis further reveals that spatial governance strategies rely heavily on redlining discourses embedded within urban planning language. References to land regularization, housing normalization, and territorial adaptation implicitly delimit the legitimacy of residential permanence and constrain claims to land. These discursive strategies align with broader patterns of advanced marginality identified by Wacquant (2008), whereby spatial stigmatization functions to legitimize interventionist policies targeting marginalized populations while depoliticizing their effects.

This logic becomes particularly visible in legalistic formulations concerning land ownership. The Regional Pact states that "these lands become patrimonial assets of the Community of Madrid, which will be able to dispose of them" (Regional Pact, p. 13). This statement foregrounds state ownership and discretionary authority over land while rendering residents' presence and claims to space invisible. In discursive terms, inhabited territory is transformed into an abstract asset, facilitating dispossession through bureaucratic rationality. The erasure of inhabitants from this formulation exemplifies how spatial governance operates through depersonalization, enabling redlining and relocation while maintaining a veneer of administrative neutrality.

Policy narratives frequently establish causal links between spatial restructuring and social inclusion outcomes. Relocation and urban transformation are presented as prerequisites for improving access to education, employment, and social mobility. However, the discourse rarely acknowledges the social costs of displacement, including community fragmentation, economic instability, and the erosion of social support networks. These omissions resonate with critiques of Spanish housing and relocation policies, which have documented how such interventions often reproduce socio-spatial marginalization rather than alleviating it (Pastor Hernández, 2018; Nogués Sáez, 2010).

Framing La Cañada as a "problematic" or "incompatible" urban space thus performs important legitimizing work. As Agüí (2017) argues, such representations transform informal settlements into symbolic markers of urban disorder, enabling state intervention while obscuring the structural conditions that produce housing informality in the first place. Through this discursive operation, spatial marginality is naturalized, and interventionist planning strategies are rendered both technically justified and morally necessary.

Recent research on La Cañada Real further illustrates how spatial governance is enacted through infrastructural deprivation rather than solely through formal relocation policies. Studies on energy poverty and service disconnection show that exclusion in La Cañada has been intensified through prolonged electricity cuts, limited access to water, and the suspension of basic urban services, disproportionately affecting Roma residents (Ruiz-Rivas et al., 2023). These infrastructural conditions are not incidental but operate as governance mechanisms that render everyday life precarious while avoiding direct forms of eviction.

Framing marginality through infrastructure allows policy actors to depoliticize exclusion by presenting deprivation as a technical or logistical issue rather than as a consequence of planning decisions and legal uncertainty. In this sense, infrastructural neglect functions as a form of indirect displacement, producing pressure to relocate without formally acknowledging coercion. As scholars of urban governance have noted, such strategies allow states to govern marginal populations through withdrawal rather than intervention, shifting responsibility onto residents while maintaining regulatory authority over land and space (Anand, Gupta, & Appel, 2018).

In La Cañada, infrastructural exclusion reinforces existing discursive constructions of the settlement as incompatible with urban modernity. The absence of services is mobilized to justify further intervention, while the historical and political causes of informality remain unaddressed. This dynamic underscores how urban inclusion policies extend beyond planning documents into material practices that regulate who is allowed to inhabit the city and under what conditions, reinforcing ethnicized hierarchies of belonging through everyday deprivation rather than explicit displacement. Hence, the governance exerted over La Cañada is not only discursive, but also material.

4.4 The paradox of inclusion: cultural recognition and governance control

Across the analyzed documents, policy frameworks repeatedly foreground the value of Roma culture, diversity, and social cohesion, aligning with broader European inclusion paradigms that frame cultural diversity as a social asset contributing to pluralistic citizenship (McGarry, 2014). In this register, recognition operates symbolically, positioning Roma history and cultural heritage as elements to be acknowledged within the national narrative.

This orientation is exemplified in the National Strategy's commitment to "promote the knowledge and dissemination of Roma history and culture in order to favour recognition and reconciliation" (National Strategy, p. 17). At the level of discourse, such formulations construct inclusion as an act of symbolic incorporation, whereby historical injustice is acknowledged through cultural visibility and pedagogical dissemination. Recognition here functions as a moral and reconciliatory gesture, signaling institutional responsiveness to past discrimination and exclusion.

However, this discourse of recognition does not operate in isolation. Rather, it coexists with governance strategies that frame inclusion as contingent upon the transformation of Roma living conditions, social practices, and spatial arrangements. The same policy frameworks that promote cultural recognition simultaneously articulate expectations of normalization through housing regulation, behavioral adaptation, and administrative oversight. In this sense, symbolic inclusion operates through a conditional regime of recognition, where institutional acceptance is granted insofar as Roma populations conform to dominant norms of citizenship and urban order.

This coexistence of recognition and regulation reflects what Magazzini (2020) conceptualizes as the essentially contested nature of inclusion frameworks. Inclusion does not simply denote access or visibility, but operates as a technology of governance through which minority populations are rendered legible, manageable, and comparable within institutional regimes. Cultural recognition, while potentially emancipatory, may also coexist with, and in some cases legitimize or soften, forms of regulatory intervention that structure who can belong, under what conditions, and in which spaces.

The resulting tension produces a structural paradox at the core of inclusion governance. On the one hand, policy documents explicitly acknowledge historical discrimination against Roma communities and promote initiatives aimed at combating stigma and fostering reconciliation. On the other hand, inclusion is frequently framed as conditional upon compliance with institutional expectations of normative citizenship, including settled housing arrangements, participation in labor markets, and adherence to dominant behavioral standards. Similar paradoxes have been identified in comparative European research, where inclusion policies operate simultaneously as empowerment frameworks and as governance technologies that regulate minority populations through normalization and control (Tremlett, 2014; Creţan et al., 2021).

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that Roma inclusion policies are not internally contradictory but structurally ambivalent. Symbolic recognition and regulatory governance do not negate one another; rather, they function in tandem as layered mechanisms that administer inclusion. This ambivalence underscores the importance of critically examining policy discourse not only in terms of stated intentions, but in terms of how recognition is articulated alongside, and subordinated to, broader regimes of spatial regulation, surveillance, and normative integration. In doing so, the analysis highlights how policy discourse actively shapes participation, citizenship, and spatial belonging within contemporary urban governance contexts.

5. Discussion

This article has examined how Roma inclusion policies at the European, national, and regional levels construct social inclusion through interconnected frameworks of governance, participation, and territorial intervention in La Cañada Real. Rather than treating inclusion as a purely redistributive or symbolic project, the analysis demonstrates that inclusion is produced through a multi-scalar and spatialized mode of governance that combines rights-based recognition, administrative categorization, monitoring practices, and urban regulation. At the European level, Roma inclusion is articulated through indicators, targets, and evaluation systems designed to render inequalities measurable and comparable across member states. At the national level, these frameworks are translated into coordinated strategies of mainstreaming, participation, and targeted intervention. At the regional level, particularly in the case of the Community of Madrid and La Cañada Real, these logics become territorialized through practices of sectorization, demographic monitoring, housing intervention, and urban restructuring.

Where much research treats Roma inclusion primarily as a question of policy effectiveness or implementation, this analysis shows that inclusion itself operates as a governing rationality that produces ethnicized hierarchies of belonging.

5.1 Inclusion as a multi-scalar and spatialized mode of governance

The findings demonstrate that Roma inclusion policies are governed through differentiated scalar rationalities operating across European, national, and regional levels. At the European level, inclusion is articulated through epistemic frameworks based on indicators, targets, and comparative evaluation systems designed to render inequalities measurable across member states. At the national level, these frameworks are translated into coordinated strategies of mainstreaming, participation, and targeted intervention. At the regional level, particularly in the case of the Community of Madrid and La Cañada Real Galiana, these logics become territorialized through demographic segmentation, housing intervention, urban restructuring, and infrastructural management.

Importantly, governance changes form across scales. While the European framework primarily governs through abstraction—benchmarks, indicators, and comparative legibility—the regional level translates these epistemic categories into materially territorial forms of intervention. In La Cañada Real, inclusion becomes operationalized through sectorization, demographic registries, relocation planning, and infrastructural regulation. The movement across scales therefore reflects a transformation from statistical legibility to territorial governance. This scalar differentiation resonates with broader scholarship on multi-level governance and urban governmentality, which has shown how policy rationalities mutate as they move from supranational coordination to localized implementation (Brenner, 2004; Jessop, 2002).

Administrative categorization produces Roma populations as legible policy subjects defined through vulnerability and "special attention." Surveillance practices such as censuses, educational monitoring, and evaluation systems then operationalize this legibility by translating social inequality into measurable indicators of integration.

Spatial governance extends these logics into the urban realm, where informal settlements become objects of normalization through relocation, regularization, and planning intervention. Cultural recognition initiatives operate alongside these mechanisms, symbolically incorporating Roma identity into broader narratives of diversity and inclusion while leaving intact the regulatory conditions through which belonging continues to be organized.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Roma inclusion policies increasingly function as spatialized technologies of governance through which ethnic difference is managed across institutional and territorial scales. Inclusion policies do not simply address urban marginality as a pre-existing condition. Through demographic categorization, territorial intervention, relocation frameworks, and infrastructural regulation, they also participate in organizing how marginality becomes administratively visible and governable (Harvey, 2005; Yiftachel, 2002; Marinaro, 2009). These dynamics also raise broader questions regarding differential urban citizenship and the uneven right to inhabit urban space (Holston, 2008; Lefebvre, 1996).

5.2 From vulnerability to legibility: categorization, surveillance, and responsibilization

A central contribution of this study lies in showing how vulnerability-based categorization operates less as a neutral descriptive framework than as an administrative technology of governance. By constructing Roma communities as populations "at risk" or deserving "special attention," policy discourse legitimizes intervention while delimiting the terms whereby Roma agency becomes institutionally intelligible. Vulnerability therefore functions not only as a socio-economic descriptor but as a mechanism through which intervention becomes actionable, measurable, and continuously expandable.

These dynamics vary across governance scales. At the European and national levels, governance operates primarily through indicators, policy coordination, and monitoring systems that construct Roma populations as measurable policy categories. At the regional level, however, these forms of legibility become territorialized through population registries, sector-based intervention, and localized surveillance mechanisms linked to housing and urban management. Different governance scales therefore produce different institutional constructions of Roma subjectivity: the European level constructs Roma populations primarily as measurable minority groups; the national level frames them as vulnerable citizens requiring coordinated inclusion strategies; and the regional level increasingly governs Roma populations as territorially situated urban subjects embedded within concrete problems of housing, infrastructure, and spatial management.

Importantly, the findings complicate purely punitive interpretations of governance. The analyzed policies do address structural inequalities related to housing, infrastructure, education, and labor-market exclusion. However, redistributive intervention coexists with responsibilizing logics that frame successful inclusion through behavioral adaptation, self-regulation, and participation in institutional trajectories. Inclusion is therefore articulated through a dual logic: populations are supported through welfare and housing measures while simultaneously expected to align themselves with dominant institutional norms of education, employment, health, and civic participation.

This coexistence reflects broader governmentality in which care-oriented interventions and regulatory oversight become mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory (Foucault, 2010; Legg, 2005). Inclusion operates not only through redistribution, but through the continuous production of institutional visibility, evaluability, and normalized conduct.

5.3 Urban space, territorial legitimacy, and the governance of marginality

The analysis further demonstrates that urban space constitutes a central terrain that legitimizes governance. Informal settlements such as La Cañada Real Galiana are repeatedly constructed as spaces incompatible with legality, infrastructural order, and dominant imaginaries of urban modernity. These representations perform important political work by reframing structural housing inequality as a spatial and technical problem requiring intervention, thereby depoliticizing displacement and territorial restructuring.

Significant differences emerge across governance scales. Whereas European and national frameworks predominantly frame inclusion through rights, equality, and socio-economic disparities, regional urban policy discourse places greater emphasis on legality, territorial order, infrastructural compatibility, and urban normalization. Exclusion is thus transformed from a social problem into a spatial one linked to informality, irregularity, and deficient urban integration.

By positioning spatial restructuring as a prerequisite for inclusion, policy discourse establishes a normative model of urban citizenship grounded in formal housing, legal regularity, and administrative visibility. This finding resonates with critical urban scholarship showing how planning operates as a mechanism of spatial regulation over marginalized populations (Yiftachel, 2002; Wacquant, 2008). Rather than representing an exceptional governance failure, La Cañada condenses broader European and national inclusion rationalities into a territorially concentrated form, making visible how inclusion policies become territorialized through relocation planning, infrastructural regulation, and the management of informal urban space.

The findings also highlight the importance of infrastructure within these processes. While European and national frameworks govern primarily through knowledge production and policy coordination, regional governance increasingly operates through infrastructure itself. In La Cañada, access to electricity, housing regularization, and urban services become mechanisms through which inclusion and territorial legitimacy are materially regulated. Governance therefore operates not only through formal relocation policies but also through differentiated access to urban services and infrastructural support. This aligns with scholarship emphasizing how infrastructure functions as a political technology through which states govern everyday life and urban belonging (Anand, Gupta, & Appel, 2018; Graham & Marvin, 2001).

5.4 Recognition, participation, and the ambivalence of inclusion

The coexistence of cultural recognition initiatives with regulatory governance strategies reveals a structural ambivalence at the core of contemporary inclusion frameworks. Policy documents repeatedly emphasize Roma history, participation, diversity, and intercultural dialogue as elements of social cohesion and democratic inclusion. At the same time, these commitments coexist with mechanisms of surveillance, territorial regulation, and behavioral normalization.

Although these policy frameworks rarely employ explicit racial terminology, they nevertheless construct Roma populations as differentiated objects of intervention through categories of vulnerability, integration, and

social risk. As Goldberg (2002) argues, contemporary racial governance frequently operates through apparently neutral administrative and developmental frameworks rather than through overt biological racism. The emphasis on monitoring, activation, and territorial intervention therefore contributes to the production of Roma populations as administratively legible and governable subjects.

Important differences also emerge in how participation is articulated across governance scales. At the European and national levels, participation is framed primarily as a democratic principle linked to equality, representation, and inclusion throughout the policy cycle. Participation therefore functions not only as a democratic principle but also as a selective mechanism through which institutional actors structure the terms, scales, and acceptable forms of engagement. Roma communities are invited into governance processes, yet primarily through participatory frameworks already organized by state-defined priorities, territorial categories, and intervention logics. At the same time, these participatory spaces may also create limited opportunities for negotiation, visibility, and institutional contestation.

Recognition therefore does not displace regulatory governance; rather, it coexists with and at times legitimizes it by softening its coercive dimensions. Roma communities are recognized as legitimate stakeholders, but primarily through institutional channels already structured by state governance frameworks. Inclusion thus functions through a conditional regime of recognition in which legitimacy, participation, and full urban citizenship remain closely tied to conformity with dominant institutional and spatial norms.

These findings extend critiques of recognition-based inclusion advanced by Fraser (2000) and subsequent scholarship on Roma governance (Tremlett, 2014; Creţan et al., 2021). They also resonate with broader critiques of liberal multiculturalism, which have shown how diversity recognition may coexist with persistent forms of structural inequality and governmental regulation (Brown, 2006). The contribution of the present analysis lies in showing how this ambivalence is spatially organized within urban governance regimes where recognition, regulation, and territorial management become mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory.

5.5 Rethinking inclusion as a contested urban process

This study reconceptualizes social inclusion as a contested urban process rather than a linear or inherently emancipatory policy goal. Inclusion emerges as a governing rationality operating through language, infrastructure, spatial regulation, and administrative practice, shaping the conditions under which participation, citizenship, and legitimacy become possible.

At the same time, the analysis does not reduce inclusion policies to domination alone. The analyzed frameworks contain genuine commitments to redistribution, anti-discrimination, infrastructural improvement, and participation. Yet these commitments coexist with categorization practices, monitoring systems, and a territorial governance framework that continue to position Roma populations as administratively manageable subjects of intervention.

The findings, therefore, point less toward a simple contradiction than toward a structurally ambivalent model of governance in which inclusion simultaneously operates through support, regulation, recognition, and normalization. More equitable inclusion frameworks would require moving beyond vulnerability-based categorization toward forms of governance that redistribute not only resources, but also political agency and spatial legitimacy. This would involve expanding participation beyond consultative representation and recognizing Roma

communities not merely as beneficiaries of intervention, but as political actors with greater agency over the production of urban space and the governance of inclusion itself (Young, 2000).

Conclusion

This article has shown how Roma inclusion policies across European, national, and regional levels govern ethnic difference through interconnected forms of urban and administrative governance, focusing on La Cañada Real Galiana as a paradigmatic case. Rather than operating solely as instruments of social support, inclusion policies function as spatialized technologies of governance that combine administrative categorization, monitoring, and urban intervention to regulate Roma presence, visibility, and belonging (Sigona, 2005; Magazzini, 2020).

In policy discourse, La Cañada is repeatedly framed as incompatible with legality, infrastructural order, and contemporary urban life, transforming structural housing inequalities into spatial problems requiring technical and territorial solutions. Rather than representing an exceptional governance failure, La Cañada condenses broader European and national inclusion rationalities into a territorially concentrated form, making visible how inclusion, spatial normalization, infrastructural governance, and administrative legibility converge within urban margins (Yiftachel, 2002; Wacquant, 2008).

By centering policy discourse, this study shows that inclusion governance is not uniform across scales: at the European level it operates primarily through epistemic frameworks of legibility, monitoring, and coordination, while at the regional level it becomes territorialized through urban intervention, infrastructural regulation, and the management of informal space. The findings call for a critical reassessment of inclusion frameworks that prioritize normalization and relocation over structural redistribution, participatory frameworks, infrastructural justice, and the recognition of Roma communities as political actors with greater influence over the production and governance of urban space (Tremlett, 2014; Creţan et al., 2021; Holston, 2008).

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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