A community within and between communities: multiculturalism, education and the Australian Romani community

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ABSTRACTS:

The main aim of this article is to discuss about the present situation of multiculturalism in Australia, analysing the problematics and criticism that emerge when focusing on the particular condition of the Romani community within the national policy framework. I will present the result of my fieldwork in Australia regarding this ethnic group while drawing, at the same time, a specific attention to the educational system and its capacity of dealing with ethnic and cultural diversity. In the first paragraph I briefly retrace the history of multicultural theories in Australia, illustrating its main characteristics and the main phases of its development. I will focus in particular on the gap existing between theory and practice of the multicultural discourse and the need for a new government approach. The second paragraph will highlight the situation of the Romani people using the findings of the fieldwork I conducted in Australia, mainly in Melbourne, over the last year. Finally, in the last paragraph, I will analyse the role of education within a multicultural framework focusing on the way the needs of a very culturally diverse school population, and particularly in relation to the Romani community, are addressed in order to guarantee an equitable distribution of learning outcomes.

Key words: Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, Education, Romani, Australia

METHODOLOGY

This essay is based on a study conducted over the last year on the Romani community in Australia, as part of a PhD project at the Swinburne Institute whose subject is a comparative analysis of the situation of the Romani people in Italy and Australia, more specifically in the metropolitan contexts of Rome and Melbourne. Field methods include mainly open-ended and semi-structured interviews with Romani participants, institutional actors (Multicultural Affairs officers, Ethnic Community councillors, etc.), but also with local key informants who have directly provided important information about the community itself. Participant-observation was used as well, although opportunities for that were very limited since it was very difficult to obtain entry into the Romani communities. Most of the material and information were collected through email correspondence, phone conversations but also through the participation at meetings with my informants in their households, private celebrations, official public

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events, exhibitions. A consolidated attitude within Romani communities in Australia of being reluctant to disclose one's own cultural background to outsiders, together with the absence of previous official data on this particular ethnic community, but also a general disinterest and passiveness of government institutions towards the inclusion of specific disadvantaged groups, they all represented a clear obstacle to the collection of precise information on the situation of the Romani people in Australia. This was more evident in the educational domain where there is currently no extensive research on this specific ethnic group. By examining the experience of the Romani community, particularly in Melbourne, this article places their perspective at the centre of understanding how multiculturalism works, while giving them a channel through which they can indirectly raise their voice and their doubts regarding the benefits that should come from the implementation of a multicultural policy.

BACKGROUND

Australia represents today one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. On 30 June 2009, of an estimated resident population of 22 million of people, about a quarter of them were born overseas[1] and 3.1 million people (16% of the population) speak a language other than English at home.[2] To give a broader picture, today Australia is a nation where people "speak over 300 languages, come from over 200 ancestries and practise more than 100 religions"[3] and multiculturalism became across the international political scenario the distinctive symbol and characteristic of a unique success story.[4] As a consequence, the Australian educational system has always represented a reflection of such richness of cultural and linguistic experiences, which has also influenced the way government policies have been constantly designed in order to guarantee community harmony and social cohesion. The fact that Australian schools today are characterized by many students for whom English represents an additional language or dialect (EAL/D),[5] has pushed the policy makers to implement the study of languages other than English, not just as a way to enhance economic and employment ends, but also as a tool to promote educational equity and personal satisfaction.[6] This development has been increasing since the 1970s, when multiculturalism was officially introduced and the empowerment of all ethnic groups and social justice became important principles in the political agenda. The community languages movement played a key role in shaping

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[1] Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010, *Fact Sheet 4 - More than 60 Years of Post-war Migration,* DIAC, viewed 19 November 2011, < http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/04fifty.htm>.

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010, *Year Book Australia*, cat. no. 1301.0, ABS, viewed 19 November 2011, http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/bb8db737e2af84b8ca2571780015701e/636F496B2B943F12CA257 3D200109DA9?opendocument>.

[3] Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils 2010, *Reclaim Multiculturalism*, FECCA, viewed 19 November 2011, <http://www.fecca.org.au/PDF/reclaimmulticulturalism.pdf>.

[4] Bowen, C 2011, *The Genius of Australian Multiculturalism*, Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, viewed 19 November 2011, <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/cb/2011/cb159251.htm>.

[5] Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2011, *The Australian Curriculum. Information Sheet: Diversity of Learners*, ACARA, viewed 11 December 2011, <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Static/docs/Information%20Sheet%20Diversity%20of%20learners.pdf>.

[6] Lo Bianco, J & Slaughter, Y 2009, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, ACER Press, Camberwell, Victoria.

multicultural education, which represented the most tangible aspect of the new approach.[7] Thus, retention and celebration of individual ethnic background replaced the expectation to conform and assimilate to the dominant Anglo-Australian culture.[8] Mainstream public schools have been since then constantly renovating the curriculum offered in order to address the diverse needs of their students, introducing the concept of languages education for all.[9] A commitment that involved initially only the secondary schools while later on, during the 1990s, languages programs were introduced in primary schools as well.[10] But the state-based system itself couldn't be able to meet such an educational challenge without a close collaboration with non-government institutions (religious, independent, but mainly ethnic schools, which are today over a thousand).[11] The development of strong partnerships was also included in the Melbourne Declaration Educational Goals Young Australians (2008).[12] And subsequently it became one of the fundamental asset for the creation of a National Curriculum,[13] aiming at addressing the regional differences in the Australian education system and the uneven distribution of learning outcomes, but also at eliminating the existing "inequities between and within public and private school sectors".[14]

But despite the positive changes introduced with the shift from an assimilative project to a multicultural approach and its translation into public policies, not every group has been able to benefit from the government openness towards the promotion of cultural diversity. Since the 1970s, in fact, when it was first introduced, multiculturalism experienced an irregular development and changing fortunes, always influenced by the ideological differences of the government in power, especially in relation to the purposes and extent of its enforcement.[15] Besides, the meaning itself of the concept of multiculturalism is still debated and does not lead to an univocal and shared interpretation, neither in terms of its content nor of its aims.[16] [17] From the specific analysis of the situation of

[7] Lo Bianco, J 2010, "Multicultural Education in Australia: Evolution, Compromise and Contest", *Draft for IALEI Singapore September 2010*, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
[8] McInerney, V 2003, "Multiculturalism in Today's Schools: Have Teachers' Attitudes Changed Over Two Decades?", *Annual Meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education Auckland, New Zealand November 2003*, School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, Sydney.
[9] Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood, Development and Youth Affairs 2005, *National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008*, MCEECDYA, viewed 11 December 2011, <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/languageeducation_file.pdf>. [10] ibid.
[11] Community Languages Australia 2011, *About Us*, Community Languages Australia, viewed 11 December 2011, <http://www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/AboutUs.php>.
[12] Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood, Development and Youth Affairs 2008, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, MCEECDYA, viewed 22 November 2011, <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_A ustralians.pdf>.
[13] Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2010, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 3.0*, ACARA, viewed 26 November 2011, <http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/The_Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_V3.pdf>.
[14] Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2010, *Submission to the development of a National Curriculum*, FECCA, viewed 12 December 2011, <http://www.fecca.org.au/images/stories/documents/Submissions/2010/submissions_2010036.pdf>.
[15] Lo Bianco, J 2010, "Multicultural Education in Australia: Evolution, Compromise and Contest", *Draft for IALEI Singapore September 2010*, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
[16] ibid, pp. 20-21.
[17] Henry, N 2010, *A multicultural Australia*, The Australian Collaboration, viewed 1 December 2011, <http://australiancollaboration.com.au/_factsheets/Multicultural_FactSheet.pdf#zoom=100>.

the Romani community in Australia, in fact, doubts emerge regarding the acclaimed success of the multicultural policy framework in guaranteeing the preservation of all cultures and an equal recognition and position within the Australian pluralistic national context. The case of the Romani people might surely materialize and emphasize some of the critical points of the Australian multiculturalism: the persistence of a white Anglo-Celtic dominant culture[18] and the primacy of learning English;[19] the survival of assimilative practices together with a slow process of de-ethnicization;[20] the existing gap between multicultural theory and practice, [21] "political vision and political will";[22] the absence of a tailored assistance towards disadvantaged and more vulnerable minority groups;[23] [24] exclusion and isolation as a by-product of an uneven competition with well-established and larger communities[25], mainly driven by market-based choices;[26] preference given to groups rather than individuals' needs, restricting thus the rights of one's own specificity to the belonging of neatly visible and homogeneous entities, basically as if they were members of "ethnic boxes".[27] This article explores the failure of the Australian multiculturalism particularly in relation to the experience of the Romani community, whose "ethnical and cultural invisibility", an historically and socially motivated behaviour developed as a consequence of hundreds of years of discrimination, represents a clear anomaly within a context where the promotion of cultural retention and the celebration of ethnic diversity became a distinctive part of the national identity and the concept of Australianness. I suggest that "self-help" for migrants, one of the four guiding principles of the Galbally Report in 1978 on which multiculturalism in Australia has been edified,[28] and which still plays a key role in settlement and inclusion services,[29] is not the right strategy

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[18] Jakubowicz, A 2003, "Auditing Multiculturalism: the Australian empire a generation after Galbally", *Address to the Annual Conference Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia, December 4 2003, Melbourne*, viewed 12 December 2011, <http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/ma_2.pdf>.

[19] Solved at McConchie Pty Ltd 2007, "Attitudes Towards the Study of Languages in Australian Schools. The National Statement and Plan - Making a difference or another decade of indifference?", *A report for the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council based on research conducted by Solved at McConchie Pty Ltd, June 2007*, viewed 12 December 2011, < http://www.languageseducation.com/attitudes.pdf>.

[20] Joppke, C 2004, "The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy", *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 55, issue 2, viewed 26 November 2011, <http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/socialchange/research/social-change/summer-workshops/documents/theretreatofmulticulturalism.pdf>.

[21] ibid.

[22] Solved at McConchie Pty Ltd, "Attitudes Towards the Study of Languages in Australian Schools. The National Statement and Plan - Making a difference or another decade of indifference?", p. 7.

[23] Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2011, "Enhancing and Celebrating Australia's Cultural Diversity through Language Learning", *A Response to ACARA's Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages April 2011*, FECCA, viewed 26 November 2011, <http://www.fecca.org.au/images/stories/documents/Submissions/2011/submissions_2011032.pdf>.

[24] Australian Education Union 2011, *Submission to the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia 6 May 2011*, AEU, viewed 26 November 2011, < http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2011/Multiculturalism.pdf>. [25] FECCA, "Enhancing and Celebrating Australia's Cultural Diversity through Language Learning", p. 5. [26] Lo Bianco, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, p. 59.

[27] Malik, K & Sebej, F 2010, "Multiculturalism at its limits? Managing diversity in the new Europe", Debate series *Europe talks to Europe*, Eurozine, viewed 12 December 2011, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-01-18-debate-en.html>.

[28] Koleth, E 2010, "Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and overseas", *Parliamentary Library Research Paper No. 6, 2010-11*, Parliament of Australia, viewed 12 December 2011, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/2010-11/11rp06.pdf>.

when dealing with a scattered and vulnerable community, like the Romani one, who is still struggling to survive within the multicultural mosaic. A conscious and strategic disengagement of the government actors should be thus replaced by a more proactive approach, aiming at re-establishing confidence in the institutional role of preserving and promoting cultural diversity. This is particularly needed in the case of a group which has always perceived education and schools merely as alien and coercive tools aiming at assimilating them within the dominant culture.[30]

1. MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA

"The public policy of multiculturalism, passed by the Trudeau Government in 1972, was according to the theory behind it, to establish an eventual cosmopolitan identity of Canadian citizenship. More political than social, this policy, has led to many discussions vis-a-vis the Ghetto nature that has evolved from it. The Mosaic has remained divided. The pluralistic idea of transculturalism (seeing oneself in the other), basically relying on the forces of society (not politicians), has a more interactive (for citizens) and egalitarian approach. With the breakdown of numerous border (both physical and psychological), which position is the more harmonious with a true citizenship for the world?".[31]

World War II represented a turning point in Australian history and post-war migratory flows had a significant impact on the ethnic composition of the population,[32] starting the process that slowly brought the dismantling of the White Australian policy.[33] Multiculturalism in 1947 was, in fact, still mere science fiction if we consider that almost 90% of the entire Australian population, which at that time was around 8 million people, were of Anglo-Celtic ancestry only.[34] But despite the official celebration made today by a broad political spectrum, "multicultural Australia" is not immune from criticism. James Jupp, for instance, still considers Australia as "the

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[29]   Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee 2007, "Answers to Questions on notice", *Immigration and Citizenship Portfolio, Additional Estimates 2006-2007, 12 February 2007, Question 118*, viewed 12 December 2010,
<http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/legcon_ctte/estimates/add_0607/diac/qon_118.pdf>.

[30] Morrow, M 2002, *Report from Australia by Marni Morrow to the IRU 5th World Congress July 2002*, Roma Network,   viewed 18 November 2011, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Roma_India/message/247>.

[31] Cuccioletta, D 2002, "Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship", *London Journal of Canadian Studies*, 2001/2002, vol. 17, p. 4.

[32]   Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, *Fact Sheet 2 - Key facts in immigration*, DIAC, viewed 27 November 2011, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/02key.htm>.

[33] Tavan, G 2005, *The Long Slow Death of White Australia,* Scribe Publications Pty Ltd., Melbourne.

[34]   Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1947*, ABS, viewed 28 November 2011,
<http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/A7EFAB2B5DAF4DD2CA2578EA0022EE5F/$File/1947%20Census%20-%20Bulletin%20No%2015.pdf>.

'most British' society in the world outside United Kingdom",[35] which to this day remains the leading source of immigrants to Australia.[36] Although the ethnic make-up of the nation has changed considerably since the end of World War II and the trend shows that the British share has been constantly falling since 1947, in 1999 the Australian population were still predominantly of Anglo-Celtic heritage (about 70%).[37] The term "multiculturalism" was introduced for the first time in 1973 under the Whitlam government (Labour), who has the merit of having officially removed the White Australia policy,[38] but was implemented as a national policy by the Fraser government (Liberal) in 1977.[39][40] This "political bipartisanship", according to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Chris Bowen, represents one of the founding elements of the Australian multiculturalism.[41] But while the policy of multiculturalism in a country like Canada, who coined and developed it since 1972 under the Trudeau government, had the merit to recognise what was already there, "an immigrant, multicultural and multilingual society"[42], in Australia this was not so obviously accepted.[43] In fact, it was argued that, just like the previous "white Australia", "multicultural Australia" was also the result of a top-down political action,[44][45] a response to the massive arrival of "continental European immigrants"[46] and the best and most effective way to avoid conflicts by assimilating them within the dominant culture.[47] After a significant initial push, multiculturalism experienced a series of ups and downs over the years, and faced its darkest time during the "Howard era", which lead to a constant de-emphasising, rather than a more solid affirmation, of the positive contribution/value of cultural diversity to Australian society.[48] The book "The Stew that Grew"[49] in 1990 symbolically represented the legacy of multiculturalism with a "white-centric" past and an assimilationist project, in other words a "White Multiculturalism", where the dominant culture plays a central role in mixing the migrant cultures, which are

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[35] Jupp, J 2002, *From White Australia to Woomera: the story of Australian immigration*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

[36] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003, *Australian Social Trends, 2003*, ABS, cat. no. 4102.0, viewed 20 November 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/af5129cb50e07099ca2570eb0082e462!OpenDocument>.

[37] *Price, C* 2000, "Australian Population: Ethnic Origins", *People and Place, vol. 7, no.4,* page 12-16.

[38] Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010, *Fact Sheet 8 - Abolition of the 'White Australia' Policy*, DIAC, viewed 27 November 2011, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm>.

[39] Australian Ethnic Affairs Council 1977, *Australia as a Multicultural Society*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.

[40] Galbally, F (chair) 1978, *Migrant Services and Programs*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.

[41] Bowen, *The genius of Australian multiculturalism*.

[42] Cuccioletta, Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship, p.1.

[43] Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: the story of Australian immigration*, p. 80.

[44] Tilbury, F. 2007, "The Retreat from Multiculturalism: The Australian Experience", paper presented at the 3rd *Global Conference: Pluralism, Inclusion and Citizenship, Salzburg, Austria, 16-18 November 2007*, viewed 30 November 2011, <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ati/diversity/pluralism/p13/Tilbury paper.pdf>.

[45] Lopez, M 2000, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

[46] Curthoys, A 2000, "An uneasy conversation: the multicultural and the Indigenous", in J Docker & G Fisher (eds), *Race, colour and identity in Australia and New Zealand*, UNSW Press, Kensington, Sydney, pp. 21-36. [47] Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*.

[48] Henry, N 2010, *A multicultural Australia*, The Australian Collaboration, viewed 1 December 2011, <http://australiancollaboration.com.au/_factsheets/Multicultural_FactSheet.pdf#zoom=100>.

[49] Gray, M, Gray, R & Bridgland, J 1990, *The Stew that Grew*, Walter McVitty Books, Glebe, N.S.W.

depicted as mere voiceless ingredients.[50] For more than a decade, during the right-wing Howard government (1996-2007), the term "multiculturalism" even dropped out of the political agenda to be replaced by a generic national unity, simply as a surrogate for assimilation, while affirming the Anglo-Saxon and Judeo-Christian core of the Australian values.[51] In Jakubowicz's words "the idea that Australia is a multicultural society has disappeared completely, leaving a bare recognition of cultural diversity as a demographic fact, rather than any sense of a multicultural policy framework".[52]

Another discourse runs parallel, but separate, to the effort to create a multicultural nation.[53] This goes back to the 1920s when advocacy movements affirming ideas of Aboriginal self-determination started to emerge.[54] Today, together with a "retreat of multiculturalism",[55] which is the expression of a delusional attitude coming from an Australia of Anglo-Celtic heritage,[56] we also assist a constant attempt at producing and re-producing a supposedly "unbiased" Australian history through the use of a selective national narrative.[57] Since the very beginning the British settler has been enacting different strategies in order to replace the Aborigines from their land; ethnic cleansing and punitive expeditions,[58] deportation in remote areas, Christianisation and the adoption of a policy directed to the "breeding out of colour".[59] These are only two, probably the best known, of the practices adopted against the Aboriginal people, whose main and most evident purpose was to eliminate the Aboriginal people from the "new home" of the British settlers. Some scholars used the terms "frontier conflicts"[60] and "genocide"[61] to refer to the first case, while, in the second case, the concept "Stolen Generation" [62] would describe the phenomenon of the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families. But there is nowadays a movement, quite blatant in its statements, which continuously opposes any efforts made in order to find the historical truth and to acknowledge the dark sides of the Australian history, with the effect of fuelling and

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[50] Hage, G 2000, *White Nation. Fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society*, Routledge, New York. [51] Howard, J 2006, *John Howard's Australia Day Address to the National Press Club*, Australianpolitics.com, viewed 20 November 2011, <http://australianpolitics.com/2006/01/25/john-howard-australia-day-address.html>. [52] Jakubowicz, A 2009, *Cultural Diversity, Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Education: Issues, Options and Implications for Australia*, AEU, viewed 24 November 2011, <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2009/AJakubowiczpaper.pdf>.

[53] Curthoys, An uneasy conversation: the multicultural and the Indigenous, pp. 21-36.

[54] Aborigines Protection League 1926, "House of Representatives: petition: a model Aboriginal state", *Australian Archives*, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

[55] Joppke, C 2004, "The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy", *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 55, issue 2, viewed 26 November 2011, <http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/socialchange/research/social-change/summer-workshops/documents/theretreatofmulticulturalism.pdf>.

[56] Johnson, C 2001, "The Treaty and Dilemmas of Anglo-Celtic Identity: from Backlash to Signatory", *AIATSIS Seminar Series May 14th, 2001*, viewed 30 November 2011, <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/docs/pdfs2001/Johnson.pdf>.

[57] Veracini, L 2010, "The Settler-Colonial Situation", *Native Studies Review*, 19, no. 1.

[58] Reynolds, H 1989, *Dispossession: black Australians and white invaders*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

[59] McGregor, R 2002, "'Breed out the colour' or the importance of being white", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 120, October, pp. 286-302.

[60] Attwood, B & Foster, SG (eds) 2003, *Frontier conflict: the Australian experience*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

[61] Palmer, A 2000, *Colonial genocide*, Crawford House Publishing, Adelaide.

[62] Read, P 1982, *The stolen generation: the removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, Govt. Printer, Sydney.

reinforcing a "collective consciousness of denial".[63]   In the struggles for justice between the opposing forces, the language used gets in the centre of intense contestation. It becomes a "war of words" ("stolen" or simply "separated", "removed" or "rescued"?), as suggested by Lorraine Johnson-Riordan,[64] triggering a much broader conflict over the interpretation of the national truth, which consequently fall into the definition of "the history wars".[65] One of the most famous Orwell's quotations, "He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past"[66], can help to understand why there is so much agitation and confusion around the interpretation of the national history.

Differently from many other former colonial contexts, Aboriginal people have never taken back possession of their land, and it is still questioned today if, in a dogmatic sense, a process of decolonization has ever occurred in Australia, which occupies a quite unique place in the scenario of post-colonial studies.[67] Over the years, important steps towards the recognition of the Aboriginal rights have been surely taken; the growing internal pressure coming from the Aboriginal movements and their advocates, in connection with the rising of international criticism directed against the ethnocentric and racial approach held by the Australian institutions, constituted the driven forces of this process.   But the situation prior to the British colonization has not been re-established and the natives' claims have not been met yet by the Australian government, which puts the Aboriginal people in the position of still living "on the frontier" in their own country.[68] It is, thus, not surprising that Indigenous people have been always protesting against the idea of being part of the multicultural discourse, since they don't consider themselves as belonging to an ethnic group among the others,[69] where migrants are also viewed by them as "another set of invaders"[70] and ethnicity occupies a marginalised and peripheral position distinct from the mainstream "Anglo-Celtic core culture".[71] A double problem also emerges from the potential idea of incorporating the Aboriginal people within a multicultural debate. The first one is related to the fact that according to multicultural theories all ethnic and cultural groups inside the nation should occupy an equal position, which is a goal not yet achieved since the Aborigines are still struggling to promote their rights while white Australians still occupy a position of dominance and control over them. Secondly, since multiculturalism is considered by many as a soft version and a continuation of the previous white Australia policy, Aboriginal people would continue to feel

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[63] McGrath, A (ed.) 1995, *Contested ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

[64] Johnson-Riordan, L 2006, "History wars/race wars: the stolen generations, contemporary racism and the question of difference", in G Worby & L Rigney (eds), *Sharing spaces: Indigenous and non-Indigenous responses to story, country and rights*, API Network, Australian Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA, pp. 113-36

[65] Macintyre, S & Clark, A 2003, *The History Wars*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

[66] Orwell, G 1984, *Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Facsimile Manuscript*, Davison, Peter. ed (Hardcover), United Kingdom, London.

[67] Curthoys, "An uneasy conversation: the multicultural and the Indigenous", pp. 21-36.

[68] Havemann, P 1999, "Comparing Indigenous people's rights in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: some signposts", In P. Havemann (ed.), *Indigenous people's rights in Australia, Canada and New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Auckland.

[69] Curthoys, "An uneasy conversation: the multicultural and the Indigenous", pp. 21-36.

[70] Docker, J 1991, "The Temperament of Editors and a New Multicultural Orthodoxy", *Island Magazine*, vol. 48, pp. 50-55.

[71] Strutton, J 1998, *Race Daze - Australia in Identity Crisis*, Pluto Press, Annandale.

subjugated within a system that has been created by the same people that have been dispossessing them from their land.

Although in the last few years, under Labour governments, a revised recognition   of the multicultural character of the nation has been experienced, there are still elements that can raise doubts about the real extent and depth of its application. In fact, while the last multicultural policy, Multicultural Australia United in Diversity (2003-2006), expired in 2006, a new multicultural policy has not yet been implemented,[72] representing an alarming policy void[73] and a sign of a still ongoing retreat from multiculturalism,[74] which is urgently reclaimed by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) and 100 other organizations and individuals across Australia, not only for its benefits to Australian democracy and economy, but also as a defining national asset.[75] There is, however, other significant data that is in clear contrast with the idea of multiculturalism in Australia as a successful story, as compared to the disastrous experience of Germany and France mentioned by the Minister Bowen.[76] For instance, the composition of the Parliament doesn't reflect the ethnic make-up of the population. In fact, only 7% of the Australian Parliamentarians are from non-English speaking backgrounds,[77] which projects the idea of a "monocultural" country rather than a multicultural one. The Police Force as well, which is the personification of the state and has in principle a key role in supporting the democratic process,[78] was over-represented in 2006 by British immigrants,[79] while, on the other side, Aborigines are over-represented in the criminal justice system,[80] which reinforces a systematic discriminatory attitude towards them, institutionalizing their social disadvantage, as also stated in a recent report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.[81]

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[72] Human Rights Law Centre 2011, "Culturally and linguistically diverse communities", *Universal Periodic Review of Australia - Joint NGO Coalition*, Fact Sheet 9, HRLC, viewed 21 November 2011,
< http://www.hrlrc.org.au/files/UPR-Fact-Sheet-9-CALD-communities.pdf>.

[73] Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2011*, Reclaim Multiculturalism! In Support of a National Multicultural Agenda for all Australians*, FECCA, viewed 21 November 2011,
<http://www.fecca.org.au/PDF/reclaimmulticulturalism.pdf>.

[74] Hewson, J and Migliorino, P 2010, "Policy should replace vacuum", *The Canberra Times*, 15 December.

[75] Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia   2010, *FECCA's Campaign to Reclaim Multiculturalism*, FECCA, viewed 30 November 2011,
<http://eccv.org.au/community/news/feccas-campaign-to-reclaim-multiculturalism/>.   [76] Bowen, *The Genius of Australian Multiculturalism*.

[77] Jupp, J, York, B, & McRobbie, A 1989, *The Political Participation of ethnic Minorities in Australia*, AGPS, Canberra.

[78] Police Foundation and Policy Studies Institute 1996, *The role and responsibilities of the police*, PSI, viewed 20 November 2011,
<http://www.psi.org.uk/publications/archivepdfs/Role%20pol/INDPOL-0.P.pdf>.

[79] McKernan, H 2008, "A multicultural police force? Representation of ethnic minorities in Victoria Police", *The annual conference of The Australian Sociological Association*, December 2-5, TASA, viewed 20 November 2011, < http://www.tasa.org.au/uploads/2011/05/McKernanHelen-Session-39-PDF.pdf>.

[80] Blagg, H, Morgan, N, Cunneen, C & Ferrante, A 2005, *Systemic Racism as a Factor in the Overrepresentation of Aboriginal People in the Victorian Criminal Justice System*, Report to the Equal Opportunity Commission and Aboriginal Justice Forum, Melbourne, viewed 29 November 2011,
<http://www.cjrn.unsw.edu.au/news_&_events/documents/Systemic%20Racism%20Report_update.pdf>.

[81] Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2010, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the convention. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Australia, Seventy-seventh session 2 - 27 August 2010*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, viewed 21 November 2011,

One of the critical points of Australian multiculturalism is that it seems to realize a mere coexistence of "cultures". This attitude, without a difference-consciousness/understanding as a goal to implement through government policies, can only lead ultimately to a "multiculturalism of fear", as theorized by Jacob Levy in 2000,[82] which is also constantly reinforced by the way "sensationalist media reporting and opportunistic political responses" describe ethnic crime.[83] Thus, the introduction of intercultural practices today, towards which a few institutional or independent advocates of this approach are moving on, can help to realize what multiculturalism itself seems not able to produce: a cross-cultural dialogue aiming at producing a mutual understanding, learning and changing. The intercultural approach, in fact, does not only support a strategy of recognition and respect for diversity, but it also presents "an interpretation of cohabitation which moves in the direction of valorisation of the positive content of the dynamics of exchange and redefinition of identity structures".[84] On the one hand, therefore, this new strategy is committed to the creation of the conditions for the "other" to fully develop its own subjectivity. On the other hand, this approach introduces more attention to all those who enter the field of the relation, no longer only foreigners but also the locals, leading to "a logic of relations" which, even if it doesn't eliminate conflicts, implies exchanges and borrowings.[85] And the time for this shift seems apparently right. Professor Mansouri values multiculturalism for its contribution to the recognition of all ethnic groups and the opportunity to maintain their own cultures, which didn't happen in many European countries, but it's important now to create a common cultural space and to enter into a different kind of "social contract", into a process of interculturality.[86] Of course he doesn't deny the fact that there are communities that in a multicultural Australia are still struggling to achieve equality and recognition in the public space. That's why more inclusion, active participation, but also a new dimension with interculture as its core, are required for a new policy articulation. The problem might be, as Mansouri states, that unlike Europe, Australia has a well-recognized multicultural policy, and might be difficult trying harder to replace an existing policy and to bring people to accept this new paradigm.[87] If the goal then is not to let the mosaic of cultures and ethnic groups remain divided, as Cuccioletta maintained when referring to the Canadian case and the creation of "ghettos",[88] a good start might be the recognition of the hybrid nature of the Australian population. Since 1788, in fact, Australia has been characterized by a great intermixture. According to Price, "at present at least 60 per cent of the Australian people are ethnically mixed while about 20 per cent have at least four distinct ancestries. In fact, the fastest growing ethnic group is not the Chinese, Lebanese, Filipino or any other rapidly growing immigrant group, but the category of people who are of mixed ethnic origins".[89] And since "cultures are

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/449/00/PDF/G1044900.pdf?OpenElement>. [82]
Levi, J 2000, *The Multiculturalism of fear*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

[83] Collins, J 2005, "Ethnic Minorities and Crime in Australia: Moral Panic or Meaningful Policy Responses", *Public Seminar organised by the Office of Multicultural Interest, Western Australia Perth, November 8th 2005*, pp. 1-27.

[84] Pompeo, F 2002, *Il mondo è poco* (The world is little), Meltemi Editore, Roma.
Italian version: "un'interpretazione del dato della convivenza che va nel senso della valorizzazione dei contenuti positivi delle dinamiche di scambio e ridefinizione degli assetti identitari".

[85] Susi, F 1995, *L'interculturalità possibile* (The possible interculturality), Anicia, Roma.

[86] Interview with Professor Fethi Mansouri, Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation Director, 21 October 2011. [87] ibidem.

[88] Cuccioletta, Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship, p. 1. [89]
Price, Australian Population: Ethnic Origins, p. 12.

not born 'pure'",[90] and appear less homogeneous and compact than one might imagine,[91] as the nation-states do as well,[92] and although they do both exist and have well-defined boundaries[93] which are constantly constructed and reconstructed,[94] the intercultural perspective, promoting an enriching reciprocity and exchange between cultures and the complexity of their relations, can thus offer an innovative approach that, starting from the recognition of cultural mutations (as a result of human interactions),[95] leads to a new form of society in which the articulation of the interaction between individuals and groups is enhanced and strengthened.

2. ROMANI PEOPLE IN MELBOURNE

"What is really needed most is large scale re-education of the public's perception of the Roma and this can only be achieved when more Romanies have a greater say in the education system so that an accurate and true portrayal of Romani history and culture could be taught in schools. The Romanies pictured, plus many others, are striving to achieve this so that sometime in the future Romanies can openly and proudly declare their ethnicity without fear of discrimination and be treated as equals in society".[96]

Romani people constitutes today the biggest ethnic minority group within Europe with a population of approximately 10 to 12 million people, who are scattered in almost all European member states.[97] These people, who since 1971, on the occasion of the First World Romani Congress held in London[98], refer to themselves as Romani, are generally named by non-Romanies, using different derogatory terms: "Gypsies", "Zingari",

"Zigeuner", "Gitanos", "Cigani" and so on. Romani scholars, activists and organizations for the promotion of a political representation of their community on an international level, are today engaged in the attempt to deconstruct the use of these fictional terms and to replace them with the shared and non-discriminating word

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[90] Fabietti, U (eds) 1998, *L'identita' etnica. Storia e critica di un concetto equivoco* (The ethnic identity: history and critic of an equivocal concept), Carocci Editore, Roma.
[91] Geertz, C 1995, "Ethnic Conflict: Three Alternative Terms, *Common Knowledge*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 54-65. [92] Anderson, BRO'G (rev. ed.) 1991, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Verso, New York.
[93] Amselle, JL 1998, *Mestizo Logics*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
[94] Halbwachs, M 1976, "Les cadres sociaux de le memoire" in Fabietti, *L'identita' etnica. Storia e critica di un concetto equivoco*, p.147
[95] Anolli, L 2004, *Psicologia della cultura* (Psychology of culture), Il Mulino, Bologna.
[96] International Romani Union & International Roma Education Organization (n.d.), *An insight into Romani history & culture*, Romani Sinti United Community Association of Queensland Inc., viewed 16 November 2011, <http://sintiromanicommunity.org/docs/WebBrochure.pdf>.
[97] Council of Europe 2011, *Working with Roma to improve their own lives*, Council of Europe, viewed 14 November 2011, <http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/source/documents/defendingRomarights_en.pdf>. [98] Kenrick, D 1971, "The World Romani Congress - April 1971", *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, vol. 50, parts 3-4, pp. 101-108.

"Romani"[99] but also to reframe their status to "a full nation without a territory" - as claimed by the International Romani Union (IRU) at the Fifth World Romani Congress held in Prague in July 2000[100] -, rather than being considered as a "nation in excess".[101] Despite the fact that most of the Romanies are EU citizens, they are generally described as stateless[102], thus as alien and foreigner people, a condition which systematically leads to their exclusion by the basic rights related to a full citizenship.[103] As far as the origins of the Romani people go, according to Professor Ian Hancock, of the University of Austin, Texas in the United States of America, one of the world's most prominent Romani scholars, who based his theories on lexical studies and the formation of the Romani language, this group originated from the north-west of India sometime in the first half of the 11th century AD.[104] Due to a number of military incursions by Islamic warriors[105] Romani people were forced out of India and moved westwards and settled in the Byzantine Empire around the 12th century after Christ , where, Hancock states, the Romanies constituted themselves as a population, acquiring their identity and language.[107] They have been thus living in Europe for hundreds of years since their first settlement, but they are still subject today to popular racism and episodes of intolerance, often reinforced by the discriminatory role played by the media and the public institutions themselves, which should instead represent the driving force for the promotion of their inclusion and a positive attitude towards them.[108]

In order to escape from often repressive and racist environments Romani people emigrated and settled in other parts of the world, Australia included. The Romani population in Australia represents a small minority and counts officially 654 people.[109] However, according to representatives of Romani organisations based in Australia, the real number is around 20-25.000.[110] [111] Although their presence on the land is as old as the first British

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[99] Hancock, I 2002, *We are the Romani (Ame Sam E Rromane Džene)*, University of Hertfordshire Press, Hertfordshire.

[100] Acton, T & Klímová, I 2001, "The International Romani Union: an East European answer to West European question?", in W Guy (ed.), *Between Past and Future. The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, University of Hertfordshire Press, Hertfordshire.

[101] Sigona, N & Trehan, N 2009, Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe. Poverty, Ethnic Mobilization, and the Neoliberal Order, Palgrave Macmillan, New York. Foreword by Etienne Balibar.

[102] Berkeley, B 2009, "Stateless people, violent states", *World Policy Journal,* vol. 26, no. 1 (Spring 2009), pp. 3-15.

[103] European Commission 2011, *EU and Roma*, European Commission, viewed 14 November 2011, < http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm>.

[104] Hancock, I. 2000, "The emergence of Romani as a koïné outside of India", in Thomas Acton (ed.), *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle*, The University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield.

[105] Barany, Z 2002, *"The East European Gypsies",* The University Press, Cambridge.

[107] Hancock, I (n.d.), *On Romani origins and identity*, RADOC, viewed 14/11/2011 <http://www.radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=art_b_history_origins&lang=en&articles=true>.

[108] European Roma Rights Centre 2010, *ERRC submissions to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (March 2002)*, ERRC, viewed 15 November 2011, < http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3782>.

[109] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Census of Population and Housing - Ancestry*, Cat. No. 2068.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, viewed 11 November 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au>.

[110] *At-glance: Who are the Roma?* 2010 [radio program], SBS Radio, 20 August.

[111] Morrow, M 2002, *Report from Australia by Marni Morrow to the IRU 5th World Congress July 2002*, Roma Network, viewed 18 November 2011, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Roma_India/message/247>.

settlement,[112] the real size of the Romani population is underestimated by the government. Using Marni Morrow's words, president of the Romani International Australia Inc., "the Roma in Australia do not generally appear in statistics as we are *hidden*".[113] In fact, Romani individuals are generally reluctant to disclose their ethnic and cultural identity and ancestry on arrival, due to the common attitude in Europe, from where they are fleeing in search of a new life, to associate their ethnicity with crime and other stereotypical misconceptions. As a consequence, Romanies have been classified in Australia by their country of origin (i.e., Macedonia, Albania, Romania, etc.). To confirm this, Yvonne Slee, president of the Romani Life Society of Australia, writes: "The early Romanies arrived in Australia on the first convict ships. Very few were identified as Romanies as they travelled under the nationality of the country they came from. Centuries of persecution have made them very cautious and secretive about their true cultural identity".[114] It is very likely that for many years the White Australia policy, which intentionally restricted "non-white" immigration to Australia[115], might have further reinforced in the Romanies a general attitude of suspicion and mistrust towards public institutions. The prevailing government approach to migrant settlement was, in fact, based on the expectation of "assimilation"[116] and only after the II World War important legislative changes were taken opening up immigration to Australia. [117] [118] [119]

The living conditions of the Romani who arrives to Australia are very different from those who live in many parts of Europe today: "the Roma who come to Australia from Europe have mostly integrated or assimilated into mainstream culture. Possibly this is caused by the fact that only the wealthy and assimilated Roma are welcomed here by the Australian government".[120] Most of them concentrates in the biggest cities, live in permanent housing and are mainly self-employed in small family-business activities.[121] These images are all clearly in contrast with the popular idea of the "Gypsy nomad, thief and dirty" common in Europe.[122] Apparently, not many even know about their presence in Australia, and not just members of the mainstream society, but also government officials of different States I have been in touch with over the last year of my research project. If being stateless in Europe describe the condition of otherness and exclusion of the Romani, in Australia they risk to lose their cultural connotation because of their fragmentation according to their nationality or country of origin, and the

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[112] Romany Australian United Perth WA 2009, *Bringing Romani culture and history to the world. Newsletter, issue no. 2*, Romany Australian United, Perth WA, booklet.

[113] Morrow, *Report from Australia by Marni Morrow to the IRU 5th World Congress July* 2002.

[114] Slee, Y 2008, "Australian Roma", in *Travellers' Time. The national magazine for Gypsies and Travellers*, Issue 35, Spring 2008, p.15.

[115] Jupp, J 2007, *From White Australia to Woomera. The Story of Australian Immigration*, 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[116] Calwell, AA 1945, *Immigration: a question of survival*, Hansard, Commonwealth House of Representatives, 2 August, pp. 3-6.

[117] Curthoys, A 2000, "An uneasy conversation: the multicultural and the Indigenous", in J Docker & G Fisher (eds), *Race, colour and identity in Australia and New Zealand*, UNSW Press, Sydney, pp. 21-36.

[118] Wyman, M 1998, "*DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*", Ithaca, Cornell University Press, New York.

[119] Carter, D 2006, *Dispossession, Dreams and Diversity: Issues in Australian Studies*. Pearson Education, French Forest, Australia.

[120] Morrow, M 2002, *Report from Australia by Marni Morrow to the IRU 5th World Congress July 2002*, Roma Network, viewed 18 November 2011, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Roma_India/message/247>.

[121] ibid.

[122] Carter, H 2002, "Race, Romanticism and Perspectives on Gypsy Education in Early Twentieth Century Britain", *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History*, Issue Five, December 2002, pp. 1-15.

consequent suppression of their cultural belonging. Just like in Europe, the Australian Romani thus experience loss/deprivation, which happens though in a different way. The mimic ability of the Romani people in Australia to merge within the mainstream society "unmakes" the typical chain of stereotypes associated with them. If in Europe the community exists as a result of repression, of an external pressure which produces internal solidarity, in Australia the majority of the Romani people chose to be invisible. As a consequence, the fact that the Romani community doesn't officially exist in Australia, as a strong, unite and visible body, it is a sign of a paradoxical situation: in both the European and the Australian cases, the Romani community doesn't exist in a positive way, but as the result of an institutional negative approach: repression in the first case, disavowal in the second one. Unlike Europe, in Australia, thanks to the implementation of a multicultural approach, there is surely the basis for a positive inclusion of the Romani people. But Romani people still seems to struggle with their past, with internal divisions (ethnic, national, religious) and sometimes with a lack of agreement around core issues, which, together with funding shortage and government passiveness, are preventing them from being united on an institutional level. Very dedicated Romani people in Australia from various organizations are firmly committed to promote a better understanding of their culture, but they also have to face the fact that they are scattered around a big country and the distance doesn't surely help to keep a regular communication and meetings. As Yvonne Slee maintains: "We try, but often we don't live in the same city maybe for very known reasons. It's not that it means we give up. It means we just don't lay our eggs all in one basket and try different ways".[123]

The Romani identity in Australia could be also described as being "undocumented". Borrowing a term which is generally used to describe clandestine or *sans papiers* migrants,[124] referring to people who entered a country without formal permission and thus violating the conditions of entry, Romani people in Australia are neither irregular, nor illegal, yet are somehow undocumented in a way that they are not clearly counted in official statistics and consequently cannot gain the privilege of a full citizenship and promotion of their culture. The common answer that I have received from most of the institutional actors with whom I have been in touch during my research is that if the Romani people don't make themselves the choice to come out, the city council, on a local level, and the government, on a broader one, will not make the effort to understand the reason behind their political disengagement, or, most likely, their fear to act openly. This clearly envisages a lack in the sense of institutional agency towards certain type of communities, which is in clear contrast with the general acclaimed commitment to multiculturalism as stated by the Gillard government in the 2010 report "The People of Australia".[125] One of the objectives of the new multicultural policy, in fact, is to encourage and celebrate cultural diversity by securing a voice to newcomers, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. There is thus a clear discrepancy between the theory and practice of multiculturalism, because only sporadically Romani people have been really able to find their own voice and speak up. Considering the fact that this group has always suffered discrimination

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[123] Personal letter from Y Slee, Romani Life Society of Australia, 3 October 2011.

[124] Krause, M 2008, "Undocumented Migrants: An Arendtian Perspective1", *European Journal of Political Theory,* vol.7, no.3, pp. 331-348.

[125] Australian Multicultural Advisory Council 2010, *The People of Australia*,   Department of Immigration and Citizenship, viewed 17 November 2011, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/pdf_doc/people-of-australia-multicultural-policy-booklet.pdf>.

wherever it has tried to settle, and Australia is not immune from it, the government should probably adopt a more proactive approach that could guarantee a tailored assistance to their needs and monitor that, as any other Australians, they receive an equal treatment. In this context it is surely interesting to analyse the position of Professor Mansouri, director of the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University, who associates the Romani to the Kurdish, since they are both stateless and don't come from any specific country - "if you take the Hungarians, so they are not Hungarians but they're Romani within, or they're Romani within the Italians so it's a minority within a minority"[126]-, representing an anomaly in the multicultural policy framework which poses a new problem - "Romani people are wanting recognition, not for themselves being people who came from a specific country but for being people who have specific cultural traits"[127]- that the government don't know how to manage. Mansouri continues, though, by saying that, compared to European countries, Australian multiculturalism would be surely capable to allocate Romani people's demands, but he also seems to identify perfectly what is the obstacle: ethnic politics. Using Mansouri's words: "Who speaks for who? Who's representing who? And who should the government be talking to when it wants to deal with this specific issue?".[128] Thus, the Romani "invisibility" and a lack of unitary collective representation - "with the other communities they're not facing any problems. It's the problem amongst, in the Romani community. They should get together and work out together more"[129] - do not surely help the government to enhance the correct strategy.

One of the findings of my fieldwork in Australia is that there is also a general ignorance - among the public and the policy makers - regarding the Romani culture, the endonym term "Romani" - often associated to Romanians or ancient Romans in Australia -, but also the exonym concept of "Gypsy" - which is used with very diametrical opposed connotations -. To the last term I have dedicated particular attention during my research. If it is possible to say that the mainstream idea that Australians hold about the "Gypsies" is related to a very romantic view, quite different from the one that still tenaciously persists in Europe with dramatic consequences for the members of this community, the language and the attitude used by some of the media in Australia vaguely reminds the European media in the way, in several circumstances, they have been misleading public information by disseminating anti-Romani messages, stereotypes and prejudices. [130] [131] According to Morrow, "the media is one place where hidden prejudices are verbalised, often using journalistic license to justify images created to play on other people's fears".[132] These are a couple of examples: a few recent articles published by the New Daily

[126] Interview with Professor Fethi Mansouri, Centre for Citizenship and Globalization Director, 21 October 2011.

[127] ibid.

[128] ibid.

[129] Interview with Mr Nick Redzeposki, Romany Community Victoria Inc., 19 November 2011.

[130] European Roma Rights Centre, osservAzione and Amalipé Romanò 2010, *Submission of the European Roma Rights Centre, osservAzione and Amalipé Romanò concerning Italy for consideration under the universal review by the United Nations Human Rights Council at its 7th session February 2010*, ERRC, viewed 18 November 2011, < http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/04/29/m00000429.pdf>.

[131] European Roma Rights Centre 2009, "Multiple Discrimination", *Roma Rights Journal of the European Roma Rights Centre*, no.2, 2009, viewed 18 November 2011, <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/roma-rights-2-2009-multiple-discrimination.pdf>.

[132] Morrow, M 2002, *Report from Australia by Marni Morrow to the IRU 5th World Congress July 2002*, Roma Network, viewed 18 November 2011, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Roma_India/message/247>.

Telegraph, in which the term "Gypsy season" was used to address the case of Irish Travellers in New South Wales, thus wrongly associating them with the Romani people;[133] or the broadcasting of the documentary "Gypsy child thieves" by ABC television in March 2010 which made constantly use of a highly derogatory language assimilating crime and ethnicity.[134] Although the chances for discrimination are kept low by the Romani's choice to be relatively invisible in the Australian context, there are still cases of racial discrimination towards them in strategic areas, such as employment and education.[135]

According to Slee the main problem for the Romani is a lack of recognition, rather than discrimination. Using her words, their cultural belonging "is misunderstood, sort of stereotyped, […] not understood as a culture, they sort of see us as a Hollywood gypsy and we do not seem to get the right acknowledgment for our culture here and it is very hard to get it across".[136] And there is also another phenomenon related to the term "Gypsy" and the way it is understood and used by white Australians, which somehow is revealing of an attitude categorizable as "ethnic forgeries" - misappropriation or faking ethnic authenticity - which is not new in the case of the Aboriginal people.[137] There are clear cases in which "Gypsyness" as describing a "life style" or a specific "cultural trait" can be dissociated by its broader and more unifying meaning in ethnic terms. There are thus white Australians founding bands playing "Gypsy music", or companies selling "Gypsy Holidays" or "Gypsy horses", excursionists defining themselves as "Gypsy travellers", and although their intentions are genuinely positive, they have shown an obvious unfamiliarity with Romani culture, but probably also a need of liberation which attends the act of transcending one's own ethnic or class category. Unlike the Americans who, according to Deloria, need Indians in order to define themselves as Americans,[138] Anglo-Australians might have found in the "Gypsies" a way to assert their connection to the land and the irrational, to savour both civilized order and savage freedom. While "ethnic mimicry" exists also among the Romani themselves, mainly as a way to survive within national political scenes where they are excluded as a collective political subject and their identity is denied,[139][140] for white Australians this strategy has different purposes. Would have been possible for white Australians to embrace Aboriginality, instead of this sort of "Gypsyness", in order to relate themselves to an idealized form of "noble savagery"? This in the end remains a sign of a settler society ("destroy and replace"[141]) in the way settlers can make the use they want of the term "Gypsy", using it for themselves in a positive way, but labelling others with the negative stereotypes related to it. There is thus a clear abuse and misuse of the term "Gypsy" which leads to different behaviours within the

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[133] Morri, M 2011, "NSW Government target modern gypsies, the new organised criminals in massive blitz", The Daily Telegraph, viewed 01 September 2011, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw-government-target-modern-gypsies-the-new-organised-criminals-in-massive-blitz/story-e6freuy9-1226123969376>.

[134] Chachipe 2010, *Complaint against "Gypsy child thieves"*, Chachipe, viewed 12/December 2011, http://romarights.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/complaint-abc-090410.pdf>.

[135] Morrow, *Report from Australia by Marni Morrow to the IRU 5th World Congress July 2002*.

[136] *At-glance: Who are the Roma?* 2010 [radio program], SBS Radio, 20 August.

[137] Nolan, M & Dawson, C 2004, "Who's who? Mapping hoaxes and imposture in Australian literary history", *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4, October, (v)-xx.

[138] Deloria, PJ 1998, *Playing Indian*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

[139] Sigona, *Figli del ghetto. Gli italiani, i campi nomadi e l'invenzione degli zingari*.

[140] Duijzings, G 2000, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, Hurst & C, London.

[141] Wolfe, P 2006, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", *Journal of Genocide Research*. vol. 8, no. 4, December, pp. 387-409, Routledge, viewed 30 November 2011, <http://www.hawaii.edu/amst/pwolfe/PWolfeArticles/PWolfe_EliminationNative.pdf>.

Romani community. Some prefer to be completely disassociated with that word - "I don't want to talk about the Gypsies, you know, because I'm not related"[142] - also because it implies automatically a discriminative attitude; while others reckon that, although "Gypsy" has a highly derogative meaning, it should belong to the Romani people and outsiders shouldn't be allowed to use it inconsiderately.

> We were given the name Gypsy when we first arrived in Europe by the Europeans our culture has been known under that name for over 600 years so even if we would rather be called by our real name when people bother to ask we're still known as the Gypsy culture from all these years we can't just put the word away it always comes with us, especially in English speaking countries. We say Romani, they say "explain", then it goes back to we were called Gypsies. So it sticks. Outsiders should not use the word Gypsy as it will make it so blurry in the end that no one knows what's the true culture and what is not. It makes everything worse for our already misunderstood culture and we need a break and be understood.[143]

Anglo-Australians are thus allowed "playing Gypsy" without provoking any sort of negative reactions, while the Romani seems not to be allowed to be themselves, to reveal their ethnicity and promote their culture, because if they do, they would be discriminated or stigmatized.

And culture is an important aspect in people's lives: "a culture gives you a sense of belonging, the reason why we want to preserve your culture is because it defines who you are. If you lose your culture you're gonna feel like you've lost something of yourself, in yourself, you're gonna feel like something has died, disappeared".[144] Thus, the promotion of one's own culture becomes crucial in the process of integration within the social fabric. "To promote heritage in all its diversity improves self-image and confidence in the shared future, increases well-being and reinforces the social cohesion on which a common vision of the future can be constructed and implemented for a peaceful and prosperous society".[145] This is especially true for a community like the Romani, for whom culture is everything. According to Slee, in fact, "we have no government, army, even embassy to turn to when it comes to Romani culture".[146] Thus, being stateless means that they don't have a nation-state where they can go back or that can protect them in case they need. Metaphorically then, culture becomes a physical place, their own state. In the case of the Romani people the government doesn't seem to be able to support them efficiently in their struggle to emerge. Quite the opposite! A protracted institutional disengagement produced, even in some of the most active members of the Romani community, a sense of discouragement and fatalism. Romani like Yvonne and Nick both share the same passion, and keep working hard to let their voice to be heard wherever they can but it's not an easy

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[142] Interview with Mr Nick Redzeposki, Romany Community Victoria Inc., 19 November 2011.

[143] Personal letter from Mrs Yvonne Slee, Romano Sinti United Community Association of Queensland Inc. President, 18 September 2011.

[144] Interview with Mr Peter Mousaferiadis, Cultural Infusion, 19 October 2011.

[145] Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport 2011, *The role of culture and cultural heritage in conflict prevention, transformation, resolution and post-conflict action: the Council of Europe approach*, Council of Europe, viewed 18 December 2011, <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/News/CultureReconciliation_en.pdf>.

[146] Personal letter from Mrs Yvonne Slee, Romano Sinti United Community Association of Queensland Inc. President, 5 October 2011.

task. Yvonne is now afraid of disappointment,[147] while Nick hopes he doesn't have to teach their children to keep hiding.[148] The introduction of the intercultural approach, which was presented in the previous paragraph as a way to overcome the contradictions of the multicultural policy, can be thus immediately undermined by the lack of one single piece of the multiethnic mosaic. Intercultural dialogue will be ineffective without creating a common ground where all communities have the chance to express themselves without fearing of being discriminated.

3. MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

> The multicultural character of Australia is central to the Australian story. Governments should tell this story. Our political leaders should have no difficulty in presenting 'multicultural Australia' as an important part of the 'national identity' they frequently invoke. […] Schools and other educational institutions play a vital role in developing Australians' capacity to meet the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity. They are uniquely placed to develop young people's ability to live together and embrace the opportunities that arise within a diverse society.[149]

Although a positive engagement of the Australian government towards human rights issues has been recognised, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has recently expressed serious concern about the fact that Australia still needs to take urgent measures to address racism and inequality regarding a number of Australian laws, policies and practices,[150] especially in relation to the situation of the Indigenous people and the insufficient implementation of previous recommendations regarding their socio-economic disadvantage.[151] In the same report the CERD has also highlighted other ongoing issues of discrimination: racial hatred experienced by members of certain minority groups; the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers; the impact of Australia's anti-terrorist laws and the urgent need to take action against the stereotypical association of

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[147] Personal letter from Mrs Yvonne Slee, Romano Sinti United Community Association of Queensland Inc. President, 18 September 2011.

[148] Interview with Mr Nick Redzeposki, Romany Community Victoria Inc., 19 November 2011.

[149] Australian Multicultural Advisory Council 2010, *The People of Australia*, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, viewed 17 November 2011,
<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/pdf_doc/people-of-australia-multicultural-policy-booklet.pdf>.

[150] Human Rights Law Centre 2010, *Race Discrimination: UN Committee Releases Report and Recommendations on Australia*, HRLC, viewed 21 November 2011, <
http://www.hrlc.org.au/content/topics/business/race-discrimination-un-committee-releases-report-and-recommendations-on-australia-28-august-2010/>.

[151] Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2010, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the convention. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Australia, Seventy-seventh session 2 - 27 August 2010*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, viewed 21 November 2011,
<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/449/00/PDF/G1044900.pdf?OpenElement>.

certain groups with terrorism. Education, in this context, is called to play an important role in combating racism, discrimination and in building a democratic, cohesive and culturally diverse society.[152] The CERD has positively acknowledged the initiative that was promoted in 2008 by the Australian Education Ministers,[153] to create a national curriculum, including human rights issues, which is currently being drafted by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in consultation with the Australian Human Rights Commission.[154] The implementation of an Australian curriculum aims at promoting equity in education, providing the same quality of teaching and learning materials for all young Australians from Foundation level to Year 12 in all schools. Today the Australian educational system is recognized internationally for its high quality, excellence and innovation offering innovative teaching, modern infrastructures and facilities and a welcoming multicultural environment. Each year it attracts more than 400,000 students from around 200 countries, and has established strong international links particularly with the Asia-Pacific region.[155] According to the last Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009, in fact, which surveys 15-year-olds students in the principal OECD industrialised countries every three years, Australia was ranked among the top 10 countries showing not only high performance of the school system.[156] Despite that, education and schools in Australia are not free from criticism, as claimed by Murdoch in his 2008 Boyer lectures on the ABC. In an increasingly competitive world, the people that schools are really meant to serve by providing a solid education and better chances to improve their future standard of living are left further and further behind. [157]

Before the emerging debates about a multicultural education in the 1970s, and consequently the enhancement of cultural diversity within a policy frame, the Australian government has been trying to keep State and Church separate and to create a non-sectarian and secular public education. This strategy, though, didn't lead to a unitary education system as expected. The wealthiest religious private schools survived the state orientation towards an "egalitarian and democratic" White society, from which also the Indigenous and Chinese populations were excluded. [158] The bi-partisan rise of multiculturalism and its central recognition and nurturing of cultural diversity brought then to a consistent reform of this dual public-private system but also raised anxiety about the

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[152] Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood, Development and Youth Affairs 2008, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, MCEECDYA, viewed 22 November 2011, <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_A ustralians.pdf>.

[153] Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority c. 2008, *A curriculum for all young Australians*, ACARA, viewed 22 November 2011, http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Static/docs/Information%20Sheet%20A%20curriculum%20for%20all %20young%20Australians.pdf

[154] Australian Human Rights Commission 2011, Education and Community Engagement, AHRC, viewed 21 November 2011, <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/education/index.html>.

[155] Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *About Australia. Our System of education*, DFAT, viewed 24 November 2011, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/education.pdf>.

[156] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010, *PISA 2009 results: executive summary*, OECD, viewed 24 November 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/60/46619703.pdf>.

[157] *Lecture 4: Fortune favours the smart* 2008 [radio programme], The Boyer Lectures, ABC Radio National, 23 November.

[158] Jakubowicz, A 2009, *Cultural Diversity, Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Education: Issues, Options and Implications for Australia*, AEU, viewed 24 November 2011, <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2009/AJakubowiczpaper.pdf>.

potential creation of "a cluster of tribes".[159] Together with cultural transmission, the expansion of financial support to both state and religious systems and the introduction of an ethno-cultural education, the government also shifted towards a market oriented model aimed at transforming the education system from public to private.[160] This brought to a "withdrawal from intercultural interaction, into monocultural isolation with only carefully controlled interactions with 'Others'".[161] The victory of a conservative coalition, the centre-right Ministry under John Howard, and a series of international events during the 1990s have exacerbated the shift towards the rediscovery and readoption of "Enlightenment" values, with a clear appeal to a "Judeo-Christian heritage",[162] and a shared sense of national history, while calling for an end to multiculturalism.[163] Still today, though, despite the good auspices and reform attempts, history education, which plays an important role in forging the way the national project is shaped, reformed and transformed, in a country like Australia is merely reduced to a national narrative,[164] or , at the very least, a "bicultural" history, with only one mention to "multicultural" and none to "cultural diversity".[165] It is thus alarming the fact that high schools students have poor levels of historical knowledge, but also teachers do not have neither the appropriate training and expertise, nor adequate resources.[166]

If we take a closer look at the results expressed in the PISA reports during the Howard ministry in which Australia was ranked in the Top Ten list in terms of the quality of the education system, in terms of equity the situation is quite different. According to McGaw, "even some of the best performing countries in the world have gaps between high and low performers and between students from socially advantaged and socially disadvantaged backgrounds".[167] In fact, although "Australian 15-year-olds perform relatively well, poorer performers are left further behind" compared to countries such as Finland, Korea and Japan where high-quality and high-equity go together.[168] In Australia social background can still have a relatively stronger effect on the educational performance of the students. The challenge is to promote the role of education in building a cohesive society within a system where the schools themselves often create divisions in terms of gender, faith, social background, wealth, geography and so on, especially in the light of a growing presence of the non-government sector reinforced by the Australian policy of choice.[169] It will then be important to encourage collaboration among different schools in order to develop

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[159] Blainey, G 1984, *All For Australia*, North Ryde, NSW.

[160] Jakubowicz, *Cultural Diversity, Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Education*, p. 4. [161] ibid., p. 4.

[162] Tilbury, F 2007, "The Retreat from Multiculturalism: The Australian Experience", *Pluralism, Inclusion and Citizenship,* 3rd Global Conference, Interdisciplinary.net, Salzburg, Nov, 2007, viewed 24 November 2011, <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ati/diversity/pluralism/pl3/Tilbury%20paper.pdf>.

[163] Van Onselen, P & Errington, W 2007, *John Winston Howard: The Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

[164] Clark, A 2008, *A Comparative Study* of *History Teaching* in *Australia* and *Canada,* The History Teacher's Association of Australia, viewed 19 December 2011, < http://www.historyteacher.org.au/files/200804_HistoryTeachingReport.pdf>.

[165] Jakubowicz, *Cultural Diversity, Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Education*, pp. 11-13. [166] Clark, *A Comparative Study* of *History Teaching* in *Australia* and *Canada*, p. 9

[167] McGaw, B 2004, "Quality education: Is the sky the limit?", *OECD Observer*, no. 242, March 2004, OECD Observer, viewed 25 November 2011.

[168] McGaw, B 2006, *Education and Social Cohesion*, PowerPoint presentation delivered at the University of Melbourne, Faculty of Education, Melbourne, Dean's Lecture Series, May 2006, available on EDFAC website <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/news/lectures/>.

[169] McGaw, "Quality education: Is the sky the limit?".

not only bonding social capital, which is a common by-product of the schooling process, but also bridging social capital.[170] On a federal level the government should set high standards for the schools while ensuring that the states implement them; at the same time a close cooperation with Australian business should be encouraged in order to define the skills and knowledge to be taught.[171] Besides, education should become the primary resource towards a cosmopolitan citizenship, driven by a global oriented consciousness and based on the adoption of three basic principles: secularism, mutuality of recognition and multicultural engagement in interaction and dialogue.[172] To think the same way regarding education as the primary tool for teaching to young people about cross-cultural perspectives is Professor Fethi Mansouri, of the Centre for Citizenship and Globalization.[173] Mansouri considers education - on which he has concentrating a lot of his work - as the sector where Multiculturalism has been particularly less successful, and where the government should invest more implementing intercultural practices. According to Mansouri:

> When you support ethnic communities to establish the, what we call the Saturday language programs, ethnic language programs, […] it complements what you learn in the school, in the state school system. […] It becomes problematic if the mainstream school system doesn't also offer, and as I said systematically, a notion of intercultural relations or understanding or, you know, intercultural perspectives, at least, and it should not just be electives or one unit it should also underpin the pedagogical approach because you operate in a classroom that is highly diverse.[174]

But in the end, regional differences in multicultural education, a lack of clarity around its meanings, content and practice, the absence of issues related to diversity coming from "immigrant-sourced pluralism" within the National Curriculum, become the signs of what Lo Bianco defined as the two axes of multiculturalism, the descriptive and the normative ones.[175]

Although there is still a long way to go, and there are often signs of a retreat, a lot has already been done to address two of the major socio-historical Australian issues. On the one hand, the government continues to implement policies aiming at improving the situation of the Indigenous people as part of a process of reconciliation with non-Indigenous Australians, by targeting existing inequalities in terms of life expectancy, educational achievement and employment opportunities.[176] On the other hand, the centrality of Asian peoples and cultures has largely been recognized and promoted both for their contribution to the making of Australian history and, mainly,

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[170] McGaw, *Education and Social Cohesion*, p.32.
[171] *Lecture 4: Fortune favours the smart* 2008 [radio programme], The Boyer Lectures, ABC Radio National, 23 November.
[172] Jakubowicz, *Cultural Diversity, Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Education*, p. 16-17.
[173] Interview with Professor Fethi Mansouri, Centre for Citizenship and Globalization Director, 21 October 2011.
[174] ibid.
[175] Lo Bianco, "Multicultural Education in Australia: Evolution, Compromise and Contest", p. 21.
[176] Australian Human Rights Commission 2011, *Close The Gap. Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality*, HREOC, viewed 26 November 2011, <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/health/index.html>.

because of the strategic position of Asia in the future development of the national economy. [177] [178] But, one of the biggest concerns today is in relation to the other "ethnic" communities, especially the smaller ones (either recently arrived or long established) which might not benefit from the same government attention. "The knowledge of languages other than English",[179] for instance, which is one of the learning areas for which the Australian Curriculum will be developed, was identified as a priority in the Hobart Declaration on Schooling in 1989, but since then the engagement towards the realization of this goal has significantly diminished[180], as the whole multicultural framework itself.[181] [182] While the Australian Curriculum generally makes a major investment in students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D),[183] "less commonly taught languages tend to be fragmented, under-funded, and suffer from the lack of a singular Australia-wide curriculum for teachers and students to follow".[184] This situation raised the concerns of both the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) who have noted merely a limited reference to a pluralistic and multicultural ethos in the documents that are intended to prepare the National Curriculum. They have thus recommended a stronger conceptualization of cultural and ethnic diversity in order to address the specific barriers faced by people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds[185] and "cultural polarisation"[186] between public and private schools, where Anglo-Australians have been recently concentrating because "public schools are increasingly viewed as ghettoes"[187]. Romani people in Australia belong to one of those communities facing the hardship of promoting their own culture. In fact, despite a brief but significant experience, there are no Romani language schools in all Australia at the moment.[188] Marni Morrow, president of the Romani International Australia Inc., has been able to run for 11 years the only Romani School in Australia, teaching Romani history, language, music, dance, although recently she has been forced to close it,

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[177] MCEECDYA, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, p. 4.

[178] Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2010, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 3.0*, ACARA, viewed 26 November 2011,
<http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/The_Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_V3.pdf>.

[179] Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood, Development and Youth Affairs 1989, The Hobart Declaration on Schooling, MCEECDYA, viewed 26 November 2011,
<http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceecdya/hobart_declaration,11577.html>.

[180] Jakubowicz, *Cultural Diversity, Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Education*, p. 9.

[181] Joppke, C 2004, "The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy", The British Journal of Sociology, vol. 55, issue 2, viewed 26 November 2011, http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/socialchange/research/social-change/summer-workshops/documents/theretreatofmulticulturalism.pdf>.

[182] Australian Education Union 2011, *Submission to the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia 6 May 2011*, AEU, viewed 26 November 2011, < http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2011/Multiculturalism.pdf>.

[183] ibid., p. 17.

[184] Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2011, *Enhancing and Celebrating Australia's Cultural Diversity through Language Learning*, *A Response to ACARA's Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages April 2011*, FECCA, viewed 26 November 2011,
<http://www.fecca.org.au/images/stories/documents/Submissions/2011/submissions_2011032.pdf>.

[185] Australian Education Union 2011, *Submission to the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia 6 May 2011*, AEU, viewed 26 November 2011, < http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2011/Multiculturalism.pdf>.

[186] Ho, C 2011, *'My School' and others: Segregation and white flight*, Australian Review of Public Affairs, May 2011, viewed 26 November 2011, <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2011/05/ho.html>.

[187] ibid.

[188] Interview with Ms Ramajana Rusitovic, Romani International Australia Inc. Secretary, 31 October 2011.

mainly due to a lack of public funding.[189] Yvonne Slee, of the Romano Sinti United Community Association of Queensland Inc., is engaged in giving presentations and small talks about Romani culture in schools, dreaming of opening a school on her own where her children can learn their history, language and culture.[190] Nick Redzeposki as well, of the Romany Community Victoria Inc., shares the same hope. They were both denied the possibility to open a Romani school, as well as a space on SBS Radio, apparently because the size of the Romani community is not statistically relevant. At the moment Nick runs, on a voluntary basis, "The Romani Show", a cultural program on a local community radio station.[191] All this doesn't surely seem to be a guarantee that Romani people will be able to preserve their culture and pass it on to their children. The only place, thus, where they can keep teaching their language and traditions is at home.

In June 2007 the situation about the education of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) was in need of urgent actions in response to decades of policy neglect[192] which is enduring since the 1980s.[193] The Howard government, with the removal of the NALSAS funding, the rhetoric about Australian values and the importance of learning English, the focus on Australian history, had contributed to worsen a climate of general apathy towards languages education, representing a clear attack to the fundaments of multiculturalism.[194] But even after the recent new turn towards multiculturalism the situation of the educational system seems not to have changed too much. The fact that children acquire their first language more successfully at home and in their local community rather than in a more formal educational setting should be warning sign for a country which aspires to be multicultural and multilingual.[195] Australia has today a "largely untapped resource of community bilingualism"[196], but apparently the existing tensions between economic ends and social justice, English language literacy and the need to recognize the claims of regional languages (Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese) or belonging to other categories (European and Indigenous), they all clearly constitute an obstacle to the implementation of a plan that could guarantee adequate opportunities for children to receive instruction in or of their language. One of the factors that at the moment is affecting the enhancement of a multilingual education is though a basic priority: there is a shortage of qualified teachers.[197] In all of this is thus noticeable a clear discrepancy between aspirational statements and practical responses. Despite the intention to invest in languages as an important aspect of human growth, of intellectual and cultural enrichment,[198] it looks like that in the end who will take advantage of this commitment will be once again the larger and more consolidated communities and that economic reasons will guide the choice of the languages to

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[189] ibid.

[190] Personal letter from Mrs Yvonne Slee, Romano Sinti United Community Association of Queensland Inc. President, 5 October 2011.

[191] Interview with Mr Nick Redzeposki, Romany Community Victoria Inc., 19 November 2011 [192] ibid.

[193] Solved at McConchie Pty Ltd, "Attitudes Towards the Study of Languages in Australian Schools. The National Statement and Plan - Making a difference or another decade of indifference?", p. 6.

[194] ibid, p. 19.

[195] Lo Bianco, J & Slaughter, Y 2009, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, ACER Press, Camberwell, Victoria. Foreword.

[196] ibid, p. 4.

[197] Group of Eight 2007, *Languages in Crisis - A rescue plan for Australia*, Group of Eight, viewed 14 December 2011, < http://www.go8.edu.au/__documents/university-staff/agreements/go8-languages-in-crisis-discussion-paper.pdf>.

[198] Harrington, M 2008, "Schools Assistance Bill", *Bills Digest*, no. 37, 2008-09, 10 October 2008.

be involved in this process. For instance, the introduction of a strongly recommended bilingual curriculum[199] might become reality soon,[200] but this chance is gonna have specific directions and recipients. At the moment there are more concrete problems to be solved before to get to that point. In fact, if it is possible to find already bilingual schools offering classes in Italian (Italian Bilingual School) or in German (Bayswater South Primary School), it is impossible to find a school teaching Romani language. This surely represents an urgent issue for the Romani people, and not just as a way to proudly come out as a community and to contrast and heal their fears of being discriminated, but to preserve their language and culture, and, basically, to survive.

CONCLUSIONS:

This article   showed that although Australia today presents a very diverse population and a highly promoted multicultural policy there is still a clear gap between the theory and practice of multiculturalism. This is mainly related to the presence of a white Anglo-Celtic dominant compound   in the key points of the Australian decisional system, the remains of a settler society which has not been completely removed and dismissed, which projects externally the idea of a "monocultural" country rather than a multicultural one. This should be a worrying detail for a nation which strives for tolerance and equality. The challenge of building an "imagined community", [201] in which all groups and interests are equally taken into account by the government and its representatives, then it is a challenge which is lost already before to start. Besides, Hage refers to a "triangular Anglo-ethnic-Aboriginal relation"[202] as characterizing contemporary Australia. This still constitutes not only an impediment to the implementation of real multicultural practises - if first it's possible to clearly define what multiculturalism is and the position/role of each "ethnic" group within the nation -, but also to the consideration of new and alternative cross-cultural theories, such as interculture and metissage. In the 21st century, in a highly publicly celebrated multicultural state, categories such as "Aboriginal", "British", "continental European" and "Asian" are still commonly displaced in public discourses and look clearly and neatly separated from each other, representing the theoretical tools which are used to interpret and make sense of the reality of a context where people come from very diverse cultural background. And although the primary elements of cultural heritage and ethnic diversity overlap and mix with each other on many levels, outside the framework around which it is fabricated the narrative of a multicultural Australian national identity, they all simply remain as single and disconnected parts of the all, struggling to interpenetrate with each other within a more cohesive and inclusive discourse, especially when it is about competing for public recognition and resources.

The case of the Romani people is revealing of the limits of Multiculturalism regarding its aptitude to guarantee an equal treatment to all ethnic groups within the national framework. Europe and Australia represents

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[199] Lo Bianco, J & Slaughter, Y, *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, p. 4.

[200] Tomazin, F 2011, "Vic schools to teach bilingual curriculum", *The Age*, 15 May, viewed 14 December 2011, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/vic-schools-to-teach-bilingual-curriculum-20110514-1enlu.html>.

[201] Tilbury, F 2007, "The Retreat from Multiculturalism: The Australian Experience", paper presented at the *3rd Global Conference: Pluralism, Inclusion and Citizenship, Salzburg, Austria, 16-18 November 2007*, viewed 20 November 2011, <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ati/diversity/pluralism/p13/Tilbury paper.pdf>.

[202] Hage, G 1995, "The limits of 'anti-racist sociology'", *The UTS Review*, 1:1, pp. 59-82.

and configure two very different contexts, but they do present many similarities as well, especially in the way, with differing degrees of pressure, Romani seems to be forced to assimilate or conform to the dominant culture, rather than being supported in their struggle to emerge. Besides, the focus on the educational system also shows that multiculturalism itself it is not only unable to provide each ethnic group with the necessary tools for promoting one's own culture but also to create the basis for developing inter-ethnic and cross-cultural relations. There are surely initiatives that show a new emerging intercultural attitude towards cultural diversity, promoting an interest in cross-cultural knowledge, but they only represent isolated islands, research niches of alternative approaches within an ocean made of multiculturalism, and still cannot reach the national narratives or the mainstream mythology. Australian government is still trying to promote and fully implement multiculturalism, where each ethnic or cultural group seems to be asked to occupy a specific place and hold a precise role within the nation, while creating and re-creating its image as a multicultural society, despite its internal contradictions. Besides, the fact that Australia is still going through an unfinished process of decolonization make hard the idea of implementing, when only even debating, a new invasive strategy requiring mutual understanding-learning-changing as entailed by intercultural theories, if first the bonds with the colonial past remain in place. Not to mention the total absence of discourses more controversial implying hybridism and metissage, which somehow displace an underlying current of criticism directed to both multiculturalism and interculture.