

Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization Contexts in Local

Hungary
Romania
Serbia

edited by
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and
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CENTER FOR POLICY STUDIES
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About the initiative

Background

The Regional Roma Survey 2011 was a joint endeavor of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) with the support of the World Bank and the European Commission. Two complementary surveys were carried out with the aim of mapping the current socio-economic situation of Roma **households** in select EU and non-EU countries. Both surveys included a common core component addressing key questions of education, employment, housing, health, free movement and migration issues, and discrimination experiences. The UNDP survey focused on social and economic development aspects and the FRA survey on the fulfilment of key fundamental rights. The surveys applied the same sampling methodology in countries of overlap allowing for the development of a common dataset on core indicators.

The 2011 UNDP survey approached the phenomenon through an in-depth study of the broadly understood living conditions of selected families in 108–112 local communities in each of the twelve Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries that were involved in the research (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and the then non-EU Member States of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova and Serbia). Multilateral discussions by the UNDP Bratislava Regional Center, the Center for Policy Studies at Central European University (Budapest, Hungary), and two programs of the Open Society Foundations (Roma Initiatives Office and Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program), as actors closely engaged in shaping European policy debates and knowledge on the Roma, acknowledged that **a contextual inquiry** on the key factors perpetuating Roma marginalization at the municipal and community level will enhance the value and the exploratory power of these 2011 household surveys.

The contextual inquiry: "Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities"

The contextual inquiry explored the economic, political, demographic, and social forces at local level which shape practices and consequences of social exclusion and potential pathways to inclusion in three countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Romania and Serbia. A multi-layered approach was designed to implement this research idea: the locality (municipality) of ethnically mixed communities composed the first level; the Roma communities, neighborhoods or segments of selected localities were examined as the second level; and inter-ethnic relations within the selected localities were identified as the third level of the research approach. In the data collection and analysis, three **Phases** were arranged in a sequence, where each phase informed the selection of sites for the one that followed.

In **Phase 1** the UNDP 2011 Survey served as the basis for collecting statistical data in 12 countries to provide a detailed mapping of the institutional, political, economic conditions of municipalities that shape the household's access to services in education, labor market participation and opportunities in participating in public life.

Phase 2 focused on a representative sample of municipalities (20–30 per country) in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia to explore basic local social services and infrastructure provisions, conditions of political participation of the Roma, and local interventions targeting Roma inclusion. This research phase relied on structured field research collecting both quantitative and qualitative data on spaces in which Roma people dwell in significant numbers within the locality.

Phase 3 targeted 5–6 municipalities each in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia to explore the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations among individuals, families and communities at local level in the social, economic, political, and cultural domains of life.

Implementing partners

Phase 1 was coordinated by the UNDP Bratislava Regional Center (Slovakia). Team members: **Andrey Ivanov**, **Jaroslav Kling**

Phase 2 and 3: conceptual design and comparative analysis was carried out by the Center for Policy Studies at Central European University (Budapest, Hungary). Team members: **Júlia Szalai** (Principal Investigator), **Violetta Zentai**

Fieldwork in Phase 2 and 3 was carried out in cooperation with three institutions:

- Research Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Budapest, Hungary), coordinating Phase 2. Team leaders: **Katalin Kovács** and **Tünde Virág**
- Desiré Foundation (Cluj, Romania), coordinating Phase 3. Team leader: **Enikő Vincze**
- University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for Sociological Research (Belgrade, Serbia). Team leader: **Slobodan Cvejić**

Support and funding

The Center for Policy Studies at the Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) led the research initiative with contributions from experts of the UNDP Bratislava Regional Center. Two thematic programs of the Open Society Foundations—the Roma Initiatives Office and the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program—have provided support and funding.

Publications

The country reports presented as chapters in this volume are based on the much longer, English language final reports drafted for Phase 2 on Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. These reports are available upon request from the local organizations that implemented the research in the three target countries.

Executive summary

The research was inspired by the conviction that **settlements and micro-regions**, together with their economies, institutions, public services, and local communities are not only the locations of but active **agents in shaping social exclusion and inclusion** in Central and Eastern Europe and South East Europe. Further, qualitative data collection and analysis on the faces and causes of Roma marginalization refine and complement quantitative results and partly substitute for ethnic data lacking in most countries concerned. Finally, whereas disparities between micro-regions are often measured, the interplay of socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, and employment situation within these micro-regions, in particular the ones where marginalized Roma live, is not documented thoroughly. Complex qualitative inquiries can contribute to exploring these disparities within the micro-regions and their frequently segregating outcomes in different national contexts.

In order to consider the relevance of different national contexts to local practices of marginalization, **Hungary, Romania and Serbia** were selected for closer scrutiny. This selection embraces states of first wave and second wave accession, and of accession status related to the European Union. These countries have developed different models of incorporating their national minorities, including the Roma, during state socialism and afterwards. These countries are following diverging developmental paths regarding their post-1989 economic and political transformations. The research has mapped marginalization in micro-regional and settlement contexts against these national conditions.

The research has endorsed the general knowledge on post-socialist transformations which generated important macro-structural conditions for marginalization. On the one hand, the post-socialist economies, profoundly shaped by neo-liberal ideals and benign hopes for quick integration in the global economy, have turned many of the low-educated citizens vulnerable or even redundant. Earlier universal schemes of welfare provisions were dismantled and the new ones emerged in support of the middle classes at the expense of the lower strata. This has resulted in an increasing **impoverishment of the vulnerable groups** often concentrated in particular micro-regions. Instead of solidarity mechanisms, most of those who are not poor have embraced a desire for maintaining social and territorial distance from the impoverished. Maintaining the distance is often achieved and justified by positing the poor, and in particular the poor Roma, as “non-deserving”. The non-poor try to distinguish themselves through squeezing out the poor from the spaces they formerly shared. To this end, they are able to use state support and resources. Examples of status-driven struggles for separation can be observed in all domains of everyday life.

On the other hand, the post-socialist economies have received unequal shares of foreign capital favoring the more developed regions while leaving other ones on the decline. Regional and development policies have not been able, or only to some extent, to resist these forces. **Regional and territorial polarization** has intensified in all three countries concerned. Further, as part of the devolution of state power and in pursuance of neo-liberal public policy agendas, decentralization of various kinds has been introduced. This has redefined the division of responsibilities between the central and local authorities in delivering public services by reducing the burdens of the former. As a consequence, local policy making has become more significant and is often

believed to be more democratic and inclusive than the central one. This has proven to be a false expectation in many places of the larger post-socialist region. We have found that even in Serbia and Romania, which are decentralizing more reluctantly than Hungary, **local power holders** and the supporting middle class often use local institutions and resources to serve their own needs without much hesitation. Universal rights and norms, including European principles of non-discrimination and social inclusion, are weakened in such circumstances.

By looking at education, access to work and employment, the patterns and qualities of housing, and the state of Roma participation in public and political life, the research intended to map how inequalities in power and interest representation induce **marginalization** and **exclusion** by **segregating** to various degrees **Roma communities** from the mainstream. Segregation is understood in the academic and policy thinking as an enduring spatial confinement and separation of certain groups in society marked most importantly by socio-economic (class) or ethnic (religious, language) differences, or often by their combination.

We explored the everyday patterns of life in the selected settlements and micro-regions to capture the links and separation of the mainstream and the segregated parts of the settlements. Despite some commonalities the **causes and mechanisms of spatial segregation** vary from country to country.

In **Hungary**, the social and territorial polarization of the country is paramount. Segregation has a strong class based characteristic in so much as impoverished Roma live in segregated areas but also often mixed with impoverished non-Roma. Different Roma groups often live separately from one another within the settlement. In larger settlements Roma communities are often segregated. One can observe Roma and non-Roma to cooperate and share the same spaces both in smaller and larger communities. Some spatial separation often occurs in these localities as well yet the boundaries are often permeable or blurred.

In **Romania**, Roma groups are differentiated by their traditional crafts as well as by their language, religion and forms of family life, and the type of relationships they have with the majority population. These cleavages are reflected in the spatial separation of these groups. In addition, a new group has emerged as a result of local policy practices that define some Roma families and individuals as illegal and deprive them of their properties and in fact of all their citizens' rights.

In **Serbia**, a general disparity between municipalities in the north and the south prevails. Interestingly, this is more pertinent in institutional practices than in economic provisions (e.g. the way in which local administration interprets the process of redistribution). More important is the difference between large municipalities on one side, and all other municipalities on the other. Cities and town centers offer more opportunities for Roma, who, in exchange, face more discrimination and segregated living conditions in those areas. Yet, they have more opportunities for both formal and informal work, easier access to social services and non-institutionalized support (NGOs), bigger local budgets, easier communication of local administration with central level institutions, concentration of human resources and institutional capacities.

The three country studies uncover that marginalization is not a homogenous experience: there are substantial differences in its intensity across and within communities. Marginalized communities are structured by differing socioeconomic conditions, access to work, public services, and development, and internal web of relationships of cooperation, support, and often of subordination. The in-depth local research showed that the majority–Roma minority distinction

is not always the only or the main divide in the lives of the ethnically mixed communities. We observed internal **separation among different Roma groups** that organize their lives and social relations in distinct ways and also enact their own authority relations within their micro-communities. In several other cases, the boundaries between the majority and the minority became blurred both in cognitive and practical terms. Roma are often reluctant to identify themselves in ethnic minority terms; they prefer to describe themselves by socioeconomic categories in order to belong to the institutional and social spaces that the majority possesses. It is worth noting that when the research inquired about the legitimacy and efficiency of political representation of the Roma in these communities, Roma citizens were more prepared to consider the relevance of their ethnic belonging.

The relational nature of marginalizing practices is well-known in social science and social policy research. Our inquiry provides further observation on how two domains of life tend to propel harsh separation and subsequent exclusion in other domains: **residential segregation** in urban locations and in remote “Roma-only” villages on the one hand, and the exclusion of Roma from **formal employment** or segmented local/regional labor markets, on the other. At the same time, most research and policy efforts focus on reducing segregation across and within schools. While such endeavors are important, experiences unequivocally show that the results tend to quickly fade away unless educational inclusion is embedded in complex programs that address Roma residential marginalization and assist Roma in getting access to formal employment. In addition, our findings confirm that without mobility and the means to commute, Roma continue to be caught in their ghettoized conditions.

Regardless of the degree of spatial separation, Roma citizens whom this research reached rarely share the language that the mainstream representatives use to articulate **public affairs in the localities**. The problems and concerns of the Roma community appear as an alienated realm with little implications on the public life of the community-at-large. Whether reflecting upon education, employment or the quality of infrastructure, Roma can hardly enter the policy dialogue that is driven by the experiences and the concepts shaped by the majority. Lack of access to knowledge, language, and majority discourses operates in a self-perpetuating cycle of separation of the mainstream and the Roma in local public affairs. The latter group remains the passive problem holder in the eye of the majority.

Although in all three countries formal institutions of **Roma political representation** are in place and have contributed to more visibility of the Roma in recent years, the general distrust that most Roma show undermines the legitimacy of these institutions. The distrust derives from the fact that Roma leaders’ authority is weak, and many of them are involved in distributing welfare benefits by local governments which leads to internal conflicts. Roma are often manipulated by politicians before elections with promises that are never kept. On the rare occasions when Roma political representation is successful, we find inter-ethnic relationships dating back to state-socialism, or the activity of an outstanding, talented and charismatic individual. Roma participation in the **distribution of development funds** occasionally happens, mostly in the planning but rarely in the implementation phase.

The research has revealed that **effective mobilization** of Roma has certain preconditions. Beyond exploring the power of social networks and informal liaisons, and leadership potentials in the Roma communities, Roma themselves need to be able to use the category of ‘Roma’ for collective self-identification without stigmatizing outcomes. Those, however, who have been discriminated against for decades, have deeply internalized low self-esteem, often tainted by self-hatred, and

have very little faith in a better future. Furthermore, extreme poverty does not render to Roma the time or ability needed to engage in local politics which might then lead to societal changes.

The country studies also identified **positive examples of local inclusion** of the Roma. In such cases it was either a smooth long history of inter-ethnic cohabitation and/or pioneering local leaders that could bring about inclusive policies. Or, in some micro-regions with better economic prospects, Roma have the chance of finding employment in nearby town centers and escape poverty. New waves of both international and domestic migration also offer alternative routes to possible social mobility. These family based or individual paths of escape decrease marginalization but do little to foster local inclusion. The research has revealed that the opportunities to break the cycles of social marginalization largely depend on the actions, perceptions, and inclination of the mainstream population and institutions in the given communities.

The currently completed phase of this complex research initiative offers some **policy lessons**. First, our findings call for understanding residential segregation in **complex spatial terms**. Segregation affects Roma to varying degrees even within a particular micro-region. It follows that policies for desegregation should embrace whole clusters of settlements by considering the potentials of helping the Roma become mobile on a daily basis to access employment and education opportunities, and public services. Designing policies and actions solely within the rather static bureaucratic boundaries of administrative units may even deepen the territorial inequalities and further marginalize Roma in the most vulnerable conditions.

Second, desegregation policies should recognize the differences in the causes and varieties of marginalization across localities, and the **varying degrees of separation or cooperation** of the Roma and mainstream society. Policies addressing the inequalities of socioeconomic conditions should mobilize measures to redistribute local assets and welfare in order to reduce inequalities in basic livelihood. In other cases, the key issue is to reinvent or revitalize local economies by external (redistributed) resources. Yet in other cases, recognition of Roma skills and crafts might lead to attempts at desegregation by invigorating local markets and forms of Roma – non-Roma cooperation.

Third, **conflicts between different Roma groups** related to traditions, language and religion (as in Hungary and Romania) or generated by political divisions (as in Serbia) become sources of enduring segregation. Whereas internal divisions are normal state of affairs in any social group, these could weaken or even block collective action and self-protection. Low levels of cohesion, weak self-representation and failures in attaining recognition for the entire Roma community intensify their defenselessness and put the collective at the mercy of the deeply prejudiced majority. In light of this, (re)building trust and cooperation within the marginalized ethnic community should be a primary step to enable all other desegregation actions.

Fourth, due to the relational reasons and nature of segregation, policies of desegregation should be rooted in a design that **synchronizes actions** across areas of housing and infrastructure, education, and employment. Our research did not explore specificities of prevailing health issues in marginalization, yet this field should be added to a complex intervention logic. Such policies require a good deal of flexibility in order to cut through bureaucratic boundaries between the key policy areas. Comprehensive frames and actions also require a conceptualization of poverty, exclusion and ethnic segregation caused by intersecting forces and processes in macro-level developmental, regulatory and distributive measures. Nonetheless, bottom-up experiences, wisdom, and comparative local insights need to genuinely be taken into consideration in macro-level policy making.

In addition to the above discussed issues of social inclusion policies, our research also articulates a delicate political and policy puzzle. It seems that until the mainstream population feels it legitimate to actively segregate the Roma, inclusion policies have little chances to induce enduring change. If it is true that feelings of material insecurity and the desire to reinforce social status through separation by the middle classes is one of the major causes of active segregation, one has to contemplate how to tackle these widespread social inclinations. An extended understanding to the principle of 'explicit but not exclusive' might be needed which goes beyond the question of targeting efficiency. It raises the need for combining social justice paradigms with political compromise. An adequately refined social justice paradigm, which sorts out various aspects of vulnerability of people and groups in society, may bring justice and politics close to each other.

INTRODUCTION: OVERALL APPROACH AND RESEARCH METHODS

Júlia Szalai

Introduction

The past decade has brought about an important shift in studying the lives, conditions and prospects of Roma communities and their members in multi-ethnic contexts across Europe. While earlier research focused on poverty and social inequalities as the general state that determines the deeply disadvantaged positions of Roma in a range of social, economic and political domains, recent studies consider marginalization and exclusion as more appropriate concepts for expressing the hard inequities and the drastic deprivation of human and minority rights that characterize Roma poverty as a case for deeply racialized inequality. Moreover, a number of studies on the socioeconomic situation, career opportunities and social positions of Roma in different countries of Central and Eastern Europe revealed rather significant variations in the degree of poverty while also demonstrated marginalization and exclusion all across the region. These new results raise an important question: how far are poverty and exclusion just the two faces of the same phenomenon that are generated by identical factors and processes but that markedly differ by their materializations? Furthermore, what are the social, economic and political forces behind exclusion in cases when poverty is not among the primary drivers? And the opposite question also holds: how can we explain cases of Roma inclusion when, despite remarkable poverty, members of the minority community are well incorporated into a larger multicultural local community? Such a two-way partial incongruence between poverty and exclusion has drawn attention to exploring the causes, mechanisms and manifestations of discriminatory forces producing Roma marginalization and exclusion; while the divergences of the two phenomena also inspired inquiries into those social, economic and power relations that work toward non-discrimination and inclusion.

This intellectual shift had its role in shaping one of the most ambitious initiatives of the past years, i.e. the 2011 UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey (henceforth: UNDP survey) about Roma marginalization. The UNDP survey approached the phenomenon through an in-depth study of the broadly understood living conditions of selected families in 108–112 local communities in each of the twelve Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries that were involved in the research (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and the then non-EU Member States of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova and Serbia). While several of the indicators applied by this large-scale survey were meant to measure the state of marginalization, it came as an important conclusion that these indicators signal at best how marginalization and exclusion translate into the lives of individuals and families, but their use remains uncertain and limited in accessing the background forces that produce the individually experienced manifestations of the phenomena by embracing and affecting whole Roma communities as living entities. This conclusion has led to reconsidering the concepts of marginalization and exclusion as the state of entire communities and it inspired, in turn, the designing of a new research that targets the collective aspects of these two tightly linked phenomena.

The research project “Faces and causes of Roma marginalization in local communities” evolved as an attempt to focus on the collective constituents and processes of marginalization and exclusion and their variations according to national contexts. Our attempt at revealing the impact of historically developed and preserved patterns on Roma–non-Roma relations and their institutionalization advocated the drawing of a country sample that reflects regional differences in the social histories of multi-ethnic mingling. At the same time, this country selection was expected to meet some further requirements: on the one hand, it had to show the implications of differences in economic development on the extent and depth of exclusion, while on the other hand, it had to allow for exploring the differential impacts of European Union membership on the observance of equity, human and minority rights, and efforts of Roma inclusion. Out of the pool

of the 12 countries that participated in the 2011 UNDP survey, three countries were selected as the ones matching these considerations and also showing readiness to run the research: Hungary, Romania and Serbia.

In accordance with the overall goal, the major aim of this new research project was to reveal and typify those conditions and local dynamics that produce and reproduce marginalization and exclusion of Roma within the locality where they live; further, that severely hinder individual and familial attempts at breaking out by processes that, regardless of their will or intention for such identifications, relate to people as members of a certain deprived and stigmatized community. At the same time, the research also strived to explore the rare—but existing—attempts at changing the prevailing state of affairs and opening up pathways toward Roma inclusion on the local level. It follows that it was various Roma collectives occupying different positions on an invisible scale ranging from drastic exclusion to successful integration/inclusion that were in the focus of our research.

As already mentioned, we were aware that a good deal of ethnic/racial distinctions and the concomitant experiences of marginalization and exclusion affect Roma as individuals. However, this time we turned our attention towards processes and mechanisms that, despite their personal efforts and varied life strategies of defense and self-defense, inescapably impact Roma *as members of given collectives*. This made it necessary to study these collectives as undividable entities, that is, to take a step away from the frequent approach that “replaces” the notion of the community by a simple aggregate of its members, and this way considers the mean values of the individually measured indicators as the characteristics of the community.

However, apart from the weaknesses of such a replacement and also apart from the involved statistical uncertainties, the reasons for focusing on the collective aspects of marginalization and exclusion are not self-evident. It seems worth recalling briefly our main considerations.

First, as mentioned above, the overwhelming part of recent studies on Roma have addressed ethnic and social discrimination and exclusion through their impact on individuals and families. Research on deep poverty, educational processes or access to employment among Roma has recurrently turned to members of individual households and did so on the basis of representative population samples. This way the Roma surveys have produced important information that could be compared to similarly designed “mainstream” surveys on the given subject (education, employment, living conditions, etc.). Hence, we have a good deal of analyses to show similarities and Roma-specific departures by reflecting on the respective data on societies-at-large. At the same time, the collective dimension nearly always has remained in the background and, at best, some *hypotheses* have been formulated on its probable impact on the individual cases (mostly conceptualizing it by reference to social capital, on the one hand, and the cultural aspects of identity formation, on the other).

The second reason for focusing on entire Roma collectives was to contribute to the development of a set of powerful indicators for *measuring ethnic inequalities within localities* that appear from the outside as held together by public administration and/or municipal divisions. However, as we know from in-depth ethnographic research, “entities” appearing as such might be deeply segmented along social and ethnic lines. Still, a set of indicators highlighting the internal inequalities are painfully missing. Given that poor Roma tend to live at the lower ends of such internal segmentations from where they have very limited outreach to other parts of the locality or beyond, there seemed to be a great need for developing techniques and indicators that reveal in a robust way how such collective cases of ethnic (even more: ethno-social) discrimination come about.

The third motivation for putting local collectives as living entities into the center was of *political nature*. Being aware that the politicization of Roma marginalization and exclusion has been a severely understudied aspect of collective life, our inquiry aimed to bring into the spotlight the mechanisms that shape the representation and that give the “voice” of the Roma communities. By listening to the views, opinions, assessments, and explanations of local Roma we intended to reveal the workings of local power relations, the institutional potentials and hindrances of making Roma needs and views an influential part of local policy-making, and also the forms by which internal divisions of the Roma community(-ies) are channeled into local negotiations (or, for that matter, that remain suppressed and/or unheard).

Finally, the fourth consideration for linking with the above mentioned UNDP survey was of practical nature. By building our selection of localities on the sample of the UNDP survey (as introduced below), the community focus of our inquiry aimed to generate knowledge that provides for a *compound two-level approach* to Roma marginalization, and offers an opportunity to assess ethno-social inequalities within the localities. This latter consideration gained momentum from analyzing community-level aggregated data on education, employment, unemployment, housing and living conditions, etc. in comparison to meaningful break-downs along socioeconomic and ethnic lines. Since aggregate data on institutions, organizations and services take the municipalities or other administrative entities as their unit of observation, such data do not allow us to see internal structuring and inequalities of the locality. It follows that generating data according to the identifiable ethnic and social segments with contents that are similar to the aggregated municipal ones promised to become a powerful tool to assess the usage of the aggregations while it also revealed sometimes dramatic inequalities in their background.

In order to exploit the above advantages of a new, community-centered research on Roma marginalization and exclusion, a three-level approach was designed in which we focused on inter-related yet different aspects of the problem and so scrutinized the samples that had been selected accordingly. For proceeding from the more general aspects toward in-depth inquiries in carefully selected localities, the three levels were arranged in a sequence, where each phase informed the selection of sites for the one that followed. In order to emphasize this processing nature of the research, we call the three levels Phase 1, 2 and 3.

The three-level approach to data on various aspects of the daily lives of Roma required a *multi-step design* and the application of *a combination of several methods*. At the most general level in Phase 1, collecting information about the locality served the above-indicated two purposes of mapping aspects of local life that appear as “conditions” for all members of the community while providing insight into internal divisions and inequalities. The second level of Phase 2 targeted the Roma segments in selected local communities: a closer look at the immediate conditions and relations of separate (often: segregated) ethnic enclaves within the locality revealed the impacts of the inequalities on and discrimination against Roma as these influence the daily practices of schooling, working and accomplishing routine household chores. Research in Phase 2 also allowed for seeing the remarkable inequalities and the ensuing conflicts within those Roma communities that are deeply divided by different origins, languages, faiths or departing histories of migration. The third level of Phase 3 focused on the daily workings of inter-ethnic encounters in various domains of everyday life and also in local politics and policy-making. This in-depth study was designed to reveal the local social histories of exclusion and integration/inclusion by looking at the family-histories of inhabitants of the earlier studied Roma segments, and also by exploring the achievements and failures of formal and informal ways of political self-organization.

In addition to the sequential design that allowed for a critical approach to an aggregated view of local communities and the accompanying deep, though often invisible, ethno-social divides, the research was conceived as a series of dialogues between the research teams and the local Roma communities. This choice partly followed from the philosophy of the whole endeavor: our study served *as much to collect new knowledge as using this knowledge by the very actors who provide it—the Roma collectives*. This required ongoing discussions about the fieldwork results and elaborating a consensus regarding the meanings and the validity of one or another indicator or symbolic fact. Further, as introduced above, the various forms of participation and the involved obstacles represented a focal issue in all of the three phases of the research. In this context we had to ask ourselves: since, demonstrably, there is a multitude of arenas where Roma have a lot to say, so why would research be an exception? If one of our main goals is to assist the development of Roma monitoring as a way of applied research, should not then the necessary experimentation be a joint activity of Roma and non-Roma research participants?

Besides these value-choices and politically driven considerations, the involvement of Roma researchers promised additional gains. It was obvious that, given their sensitivity to certain gestures, words, cultural symbols and messages, Roma members of the research teams would observe and acknowledge a number of important phenomena that non-Roma might misinterpret or not even notice. Such risks might be exceptionally high when approaching the domains of community life that had been understudied so far—political and civil participation in the first place.

Another consideration in favor of setting up multi-ethnic research teams was the hope to breach the inevitably present thick walls of distrust between Roma and the “gadjo” researchers. We were well aware from the outset that the prolonged experience of betrayal and misuse by the majority society cannot be washed away by a few nice words of even the most honest and dedicated non-Roma scholars. However, the good and cooperative nature of the relationships of equal Roma and non-Roma partners in the country-teams was thought to at least create an opening—and the actual experience of the fieldwork justified these ideas.

With all these considerations in mind, *the setting up of multi-ethnic research groups was a collectively decided fundamental rule of the study*. The collaboration across ethnic lines was meant to carry through from the designing of the country-specific elements to the implementation of the two phases that involved new fieldwork. Building up cooperation and ongoing collaboration was, however, not an easy task. The three country-teams had three different histories of earlier multi-ethnic cooperation and these histories greatly impacted the ways in which collaboration in this research actually took place.

The leader of the Romanian team, Enikő Vincze has been deeply engaged in Roma movements against segregation and for extended Roma rights. Having been involved in a wide network of Roma activists and scholars, it was easy for her to mobilize a group of dedicated young Roma to participate in this new research. If at all, the difficulty here was to set apart activism and research. The research team was able to faithfully distinguish between the two, as showed by the exceptionally rich fieldwork material gathered. The fieldwork also served to provide new inputs into activism in return.

The Serbian team leader, Slobodan Cvejić also had longstanding involvement in Roma issues, though more from a policy research perspective. He has conducted extensive research on Roma integration in Serbia, and since 2000, with a special focus on Roma access to social services and political participation. Based on his research experience he advocated for mainstreaming Roma

issues in different national and local strategies. His strategy to build up his multi-ethnic team was to involve two young Roma intellectuals—a medical doctor from Southern Serbia Marjan Muratović, with a broad outreach to the Roma community, and a young sociologist Nenad Vladisavljev from the northern province of Vojvodina—who then both recruited an excellent group of Roma researchers and activists. To make their team a genuinely cooperating unit, the researchers went to the various sites as a group and kept ongoing discussions about the individual experiences as a permanent feature of the way they worked.

Katalin Kovács and her research team in Hungary count among the best experts on regional inequalities with a history of several influential community-based research projects about Roma deprivation and segregation. After a series of negotiations with young Roma scholars, a strong and capable team had evolved. During team building exercises special attention was paid to clarifying the roles of the researchers and the methodology was discussed extensively. Ultimately genuine cooperation was achieved and fruitful and extensive contacts have developed across ethnic lines. In retrospect, non-Roma researchers were grateful to their young Roma colleagues for new insights into the less visible aspects of relations between people and families within the Roma community, while the Roma scholars appreciated the methodological expertise they could acquire from the experienced non-Roma members of the team.

All in all, Roma—non-Roma cooperation enriched the research in all three countries. It benefited by the quantity and the quality of the data and information that could be collected. Perhaps even more importantly: it also raised the level of trust of the visited Roma collectives and helped them share knowledge and experience that Roma rarely provide to outsiders.

At the same time, our experiment for breaking new ground in Roma research multi-ethnic involvement brought about some *important lessons*. First, it turned out that the preparation of such endeavors requires quite some time. It is rarely a given that Roma and non-Roma intellectuals work together, hence, the construction of a multi-ethnic team should involve the organic development of mutually respectful and equal relationships—and this cannot happen from one day to the next. Second, while the history of earlier collaborations might ease and speed up team building and cooperation, it also might pull the research activity into “accustomed” directions, thereby causing a certain “blindness” toward new areas, facts and trends.

Of course, all these temporary difficulties can be rather easily overcome. And the ultimate balance sheet of this research shows that the gains are certainly bigger than these transient minor troubles.

As the reader might see in the subsequent chapters, multi-ethnic cooperation and collaboration has led to revealing new frames and new dimensions of discrimination on ethnic grounds while it also helped to bring up those mentally and culturally constructed forms of segregation that often work as invisible institutions in maintaining a rigid divide between the Roma and the majority groups of the local communities.

* * *

In addition to introducing some general socio-demographic and economic data with regard to the selected localities, this volume presents the results of the Phase 2 research. These include the three country studies discussing the domestic problems of Roma marginalization and exclusion in Hungary, Romania and Serbia and also a fourth study that presents the results of a cross-country comparative analysis on some key issues of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion.

Before going into details of the research design of the three phases, let us outline some considerations about the two key concepts of the study: exclusion and inclusion.

Key concepts

While there are different definitions of the phenomenon in the literature, the mainstream conceptualization—following in the footsteps of Peter Townsend, Tony Atkinson, Amartya Sen, and others—considers social exclusion as a state of affairs of being deprived of the means and conditions of equal social membership and meaningful participation in the life of mainstream society. One of the very important findings of Phase 2 of the “Faces and Causes...” research is the refined classification of what it means for entire communities to be excluded. As we learn from the three country studies, *exclusion is not a homogenous category* bearing on all members of the given community in the same way: there are substantial differences in its degree and extent. These differences have implications on practically all aspects of the lives of those affected, be they men or women, younger or older members of the community. As could be expected, the studies make it clear that social exclusion is a *collective phenomenon*: it is entire neighborhoods and communities that are affected. At the same time, these *excluded communities are usually structured* by the differing socioeconomic conditions (varying degrees of poverty), access to work (formal and informal), and an internal web of relationships of cooperation, support, help and—often—subordination.

As the three country studies reveal, the collective nature of exclusion is also underscored by its visibility, most easily identified in *spatial segregation*. Whether less obvious or sharply demarcated at first sight, excluded communities live apart from the majority and spatial segregation is as much a product as a self-perpetuating cause of the daily reproduction of their excluded living.

Together with this, *poverty* (though to differing degrees and depth) is a distinctive feature of this collective phenomenon, again, working as much as a cause as a consequence. By portraying the varied manifestations of exclusion, the three country studies show how, for the most part, *poverty and racialized exclusion intersect* in the reproduction of poor educational attainments, the high degrees of unemployment, the extremely low chances of getting access to proper employment and work, and the constant struggle to provide for basic needs. This way the three country studies encourage a closer look at the differing factors and dynamics in these distinctive domains. At the same time, the discussions also show examples of joint family efforts successfully combating poverty, yet remaining stuck in a marginalized position with occurrences of direct exclusion. Such cases reveal the conditions in which intersectionality between poverty and exclusion starts to fade away, though the potentials for escaping exclusion still remain scarce and weak. These findings have far-reaching implications for the politicization of racialized exclusion and also call for new approaches in policy-making.

It is worth noting that, in many cases, those experiencing social exclusion are aware of their excluded status and such awareness usually deeply influences their identity, behavior, actions, plans and steps taken. However, awareness is not a precondition of being excluded. As we know from research and experience, excluded people might protect themselves by the acceptance of the status quo and respond by intensifying their relations to and participation in the group of similarly deprived people. This way, paradoxically, collective exclusion may be even intensified and may provide ground for fixing the given state of affairs by tendencies toward ethnic (ethno-social) enclosure. However, at a closer look it becomes clear that, on their own, responses

within the deprived community actually do not change the state of exclusion. It is the reactions and orientations of the non-Roma majority that determine whether they enter into negotiations about change, or make attempts at intensifying refusal and separation (by building on tendencies of Roma enclosure as a “good excuse” and as a demonstration of “concordance of values and will”). Therefore, when studying the phenomenon, it is mainly the *historic trends and the current constellation of inter-ethnic factors* behind the prevailing state of exclusion that one has to take into account. In order to explore the state and dynamics of exclusion, it is important to reveal the differences that appear in the physical, social and personal conditions of participation between marginalized Roma, on the one hand, and the non-Roma majority making up the “mainstream”, on the other hand, and also looking at the dominant explanations for these differences, together with the attempts from both “ethno-social ends” at either fixing or changing the given conditions.

The case of inclusion is perhaps even more complex. First, we have to clarify the difference between *integration* and *inclusion*. Although the two terms are often used as synonyms, actually there are important differences between them. Social integration is an act on the part of the powerful groups (the “mainstream”) to create conditions that open the gates for entry and participation for members of the Roma minority¹. It usually means that formal steps are taken in certain professional domains: schools make attempts to raise the number of Roma students in their student body; local desegregation programs are launched by changing the rules of streaming and tracking in public schools; training programs are initiated to raise Roma employability, etc.² However, such innovative steps of integration are confined strictly to the given domain while the horizontal lacing of them is regarded to belong to the competence and agency of some undecipherable actors “up above” (politicians, high-ranking civil servants, etc.).

While integration is a *precondition* for inclusion, to attain the latter, there are additional requirements. Social inclusion means that members of the minority community feel at home in the larger community, they do not experience any hindrances of preserving their minority status while also claiming equal membership in this larger community. With such dual membership, they do not see any difficulties in negotiating equal relations and partnership in shaping various aspects of life of the entire locality and their own conditions within it. They freely participate in the various domains of everyday life in their capacities as members of the minority and the larger community, respectively. Finally, they perceive opportunities for upward mobility to be equal and are capable of choosing career paths much in line with options for the majority. In brief, besides creating integrative conditions, social inclusion also implies *changes of the ways in which people from the majority and the minority shape their day-to-day relationships*, while it also assumes evolving *new attitudes* and changes in the perceptions of the “other”. Hence, without aiming to change the qualities of inter-ethnic relations, it may well be the case that efforts toward integration do not bring about actual social inclusion, what is more, they may even reinforce patterns of separation and estrangement.³

1 The term “Roma communities” is always meant to embrace “Gypsy-ized” non-Roma living among or around the marginalized/excluded ethnic minority group.

2 It is not incidental that the examples that come to mind are primarily from the educational domain where attempts at integration through formal institutional change are relatively easy, or at least, easier than in employment, housing or local redistribution.

3 One of the frequent examples is that of Roma students in integrated classes who often feel isolated (even excluded), because their placement in a majority class was not accompanied by any change in the attitudes and behavior of the non-Roma classmates who continue to regard them as “alien”.

Therefore, while inclusion incorporates integration, the former has important further implications on the patterns of inter-ethnic relations.

First, developing inclusion is a *long-term process*: it implies that the members of the Roma and non-Roma community engage in a lasting way in increasing the encounters with the “other”, whereby cumulative experiences gradually raise *mutual trust and* develop *closeness*—however, all of this takes time. Second, moving from exclusion toward inclusion assumes *negotiations* about deliberate changes in the prevailing conditions of exclusion by *institutionalizing new agreements* and *new forms of participation*. The new forms of institutionalization have to be based on new relationships and new contents of partnership. Hence, moving towards inclusion is always a process of gradual steps taken for changing the existing arrangements of *power and control*. In short, inclusion always implies a *political momentum*. Third, movements toward inclusion involve new terms in *inter-ethnic cooperation* based on the principles of *partnership and equality*: such new terms of inter-ethnic coexistence require regular efforts at both ends which, in turn, presuppose new openness and a supportive attitude of the majority. Last but not least, inclusion on the local level remains fragile and incomplete without *macro-level institutions* (primarily laws and regulations concerning minority rights, education, labor, housing, welfare, etc.) working toward the same goals and thus creating real and virtual spaces for equal and mutually respectful relations of society-at-large while also framing and supporting such relations within the communities. This is not to say that inclusive trends cannot develop even in, tacitly or openly, exclusionary macro-level environments. However, such isolated local initiatives remain on the level of welcome “good practices” with limited hopes for introducing them elsewhere.

Such a conceptualization of social inclusion makes it clear that, while the conditions matter (as they do in the case of opposite trends towards exclusion), the focus of the approach should be on the *dynamic factors initiating change*: on the shifting contents and qualities of inter-ethnic relations and the reflections thereof by the minority,, including their self-definitions and identities.

Finally, in addition to the above, a brief note regarding *poverty* as the pervasive condition behind exclusion and as an often mentioned obstacle to inclusion. Again, poverty is an outcome of complex and long-term processes. Moreover, there might be important forces and powerful agencies at play behind its maintenance with a focus on Roma. Evidently, Roma poverty serves to justify the higher positions of the non-Roma who often do not live amidst better material conditions than their Roma neighbors, but enjoy some priority in access to local resources and work—simply by regarding them “deserving” while Roma are distinguished in a stigmatized way as “non-deserving”. Further, differences in the public attitudes toward the non-Roma and Roma poor help to fine-tune the local labor market by offering somewhat better jobs to impoverished (but not yet excluded) non-Roma. This is often thought to positively impact competition and also to help maintain discipline and self-assured rigor. Furthermore, actions and organizations in relation to poverty attract employment for the local middle classes: new openings in social services, education, childcare, other caring activities, health provisions, administration, etc. offer work for those whose employment might be shaken amidst the ongoing cuts and lay-offs in public administration and the public sphere in general. Hence, it is not only the prevailing socio-economic conditions, but the interplay of interests behind maintaining (Roma) poverty and the associated exclusionary tendencies. It follows that, besides identifying how different degrees of poverty contribute to exclusion, it was the task of the research to reveal the *interplay of interests* behind its maintenance, or their changing patterns that allow for certain movements toward inclusion via mitigating material deprivation among Roma.

Some considerations of the research design

While “living in marginalized conditions” was a unifying feature of the Roma communities embraced by the 2011 UNDP survey, it could be assumed that neither the degree, nor the actual content (quality) of marginalization is identical in the various local societies that Roma are part of, nor are the manifestations of marginalization the same throughout regions and across countries. On the one hand, rather substantial differences may arise from the supposedly highly varying *relational aspects* that bind these segregated Roma units to the larger community of their locality. On the other hand, great variations might be induced by the differing ways of how ethnic segregation by inhabitancy is turned into *social exclusion* through its *intersectionality* with other forms of marginalization. In consideration of these aspects, “living in marginalized conditions” has to be seen as an outcome of complex dynamics that, beside the play of macro-level economic, social, and political processes, are produced by the workings of closely related formal/institutional and informal/interpersonal relations between the local majority and the Roma community.

While theories of social exclusion on ethnic/racial grounds acknowledge and emphasize the indicated dynamics of macro- and micro-level forces and encounters, relatively little has been done in developing the necessary toolkits for measuring the *intensity* of marginalization and exclusion in their impacts on ethnic minorities, let alone on Roma communities. What is more, existing studies have concentrated on selected localities and/or groups by approaching them with different methods, hence, painfully little has been done toward developing a set of measures and indicators that would facilitate comparative endeavors.

The concept and the methodology of the “Faces and causes...” research was developed in recognition of the pressing needs for elaborating a set of tools and indicators that make studying Roma marginalization and exclusion an integral part of the broader field of ethnic/racial studies. Furthermore, the design was conceived with clear policy-implications in mind. On the one hand, there was an aim to provide a set of tools and measures that facilitate *regular monitoring* of Roma exclusion/inclusion in local communities and also on the national levels. On the other hand, the research purported to *inform policy-making* by revealing the variations in the prime forces behind local-level Roma exclusion, and thus contribute to raising the efficiency of national and local-level policies for Roma inclusion.

By taking into account the above conceptual and more practical considerations, the research intended to understand Roma marginalization/exclusion in its embeddedness in the workings of the local societies-at-large. By looking at local communities as complex entities of social, political, economic, and (inter)cultural relations, the study aimed:

- to uncover the varying degrees and the constellations of marginalization (understood as different forms of deprivation from participating in various aspects of the community’s life);
- to explore how deprivation is produced by the various forms of institutional discrimination within the local economic, social, and political structures;
- to investigate the forms and the quality of inter-ethnic relations in certain major areas of public and private encounters;
- to develop a methodology and a toolkit for regularly monitoring local-level Roma exclusion/inclusion; and
- to depict the meanings, forms, and potentials of Roma exclusion/inclusion in local policy-making and politics.

In order to fulfill the outlined aims, the research applied a combination of methods that range from local-level data-collection to in-depth interviews (with key representatives of the community-at-large and the local Roma collective, respectively), and, further, to deliberative- and focus group-discussions on how marginalization/exclusion and the potentials of Roma inclusion are experienced and perceived within and outside the local ethnic minority community.

At this point, a few considerations have to be made on operationalizing the notion of the “locality”. On the one hand, in geographical and administrative terms a “locality” means a unit of people and institutions that, be they towns or villages, are defined by clear boundaries. Depending on the traditions and structures of public administration, a locality might be identical with a municipality (like in Hungary) or a meaningful commune (like in Romania and parts of Serbia). At any rate, official statistics as well as developmental plans usually refer to these well identifiable units. On the other hand, the “locality” can embrace larger and less clearly identifiable geographic units within which people move for meeting various needs: children might commute to school in a neighboring town; adults might find employment in another relatively close locality; when one needs documents, or wants to buy a new TV, for that matter, he will travel for meeting such needs to a nearby center. In brief, the social meaning of the “locality” can be grasped by looking at larger geographical areas with high propensity of inter-locality commute.

It was important to consider from the perspective of measuring the depth and extent of marginalization and exclusion, whether Roma exclusion is intensified by not having access to the provisions of these larger spatial areas, or whether commuting becomes an—as of yet underestimated, but still important—countervailing factor of exclusion.

The research design took notice of both concepts of the “locality”. While our data collections made use of the existing municipal/commune-level statistics and information, and made an attempt to double-check them by people’s perceived access to the locally given conditions, the research also mapped the actually available opportunities to travel and commute in its impact on Roma marginalization and exclusion. Such a dual approach was facilitated by simultaneously looking at localities in the customary sense of the term and also as constituents of a larger *cluster* of settlements that is made up by a network of thickly interconnected towns and villages with communities that perform a significant degree of commuting and mutual usages of services and provisions.

Finally, our multi-level approach to the collective aspects of Roma marginalization and exclusion required a careful selection of the respondents whom our inquiry approached as the *representatives* of their community. It was relatively easy to identify the institutional actors: leaving aside variations in competence and knowledge, mayors or leaders of a commune could justifiably be regarded as “spokespersons” of the locality merely due to their official responsibility; headmasters of the schools could be authentic sources to describe the general features of local education; local entrepreneurs could be approached as true representatives of the interests and limitations that drive the local economy; etc. In brief, given the rather developed institutionalization of mainstream services and provisions, institutional leaders were easily identifiable actors to give voice to what one could consider the representation of the majority’s side.

However, as indicated above, a core aim of the research was to see all these descriptions, rationalizations and narratives in *relative and dialogical terms* by exploring also the minority’s side. We were interested not only in the diversity of opinions, but thought also of the structural aspects of the community’s life as perceived potentially differently by those who occupy markedly different positions in these structures. Hence, it was our aim to identify those who are regarded as the

“spokespersons” of their Roma community, irrespective of their formal or informal designation, and involve them as the representatives of their collective. Of course, such a process of identification was easier and more straightforward in cases of existing minority organizations. But it was important in itself to reveal that informal leadership (or authenticated representation) generally existed also in conditions where it was not “labeled” by any formal acknowledgement.

Nevertheless, our attempts to reveal the structuring of the Roma community have led to some unexpected difficulties. On the one hand, it turned out in several cases that one cannot speak about a Roma community in singular: deep divides often accentuated by *inner segregation* separated different Roma groups that organized their lives and relations of daily encounters distinctly apart and did not see themselves under the same leadership and representation. In these cases, our fieldwork had to adjust to the conditions: different groups were approached through different procedures of representation that ultimately resulted in the multiplication of the local Roma voices.

Another set of difficulties arose in those cases when the borders (both physically and mentally) were *obscure* between the majority and the local Roma minority. In such circumstances Roma often were reluctant to identify themselves in minority terms; they preferred to describe themselves by purely socioeconomic categories, perceived to belong to the competence and the responsibility of the local-level institutional representatives and leaders, just like any other group. It was rather important to see that such an attitude of washing away the ethnic divides seemed to work with regard to most domains. However, when approaching Roma political representation and issues of participation, the sharp majority/minority divide reappeared and Roma who saw themselves rather well included in the local society revealed painful cases of collective deprivation and exclusion. In fact, narratives about the political domain disclosed issues of very poor or fully lacking representation by pointing to the weak performance of the informally designated leaders—who otherwise were considered as their trusted authentic “spokesperson” with regard to all other domains targeted by our research.

Some notes on sampling

In accordance with the multi-level construction of the research and also in consideration of the potential use of its methods and techniques for replicating parts of the data-collection for monitoring local facts and trends by the Roma communities, our “Faces and causes...” study relied on applying a combination of a number of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The choice was determined to a large extent by the distinct purposes of the sequencing phases that in a sense represented a *progression from aggregate generalizations through multi-sided collective perceptions and interpretations to insights into internal structures and the specificities of personal experiences in inter-ethnic encounters*. A brief overview may highlight how the different logics of sampling and the “phase-specific” combination of methods aimed to serve the overall goal of understanding Roma marginalization and exclusion as molded, on the one hand, by the interplay of important macro-level factors, while shaped, on the other hand, by local histories and conditions that define inter-ethnic relations.

As mentioned earlier, Phase 1 was built on the assumption that certain qualities of the locality work as general conditions that deeply influence the lives of all inhabitants. This seems true in several aspects. The prevailing demographic structure determines important needs in childcare, education, employment or, for that matter, in age-specific healthcare and care for the elderly.

At the same time, data on the state of the local infrastructure signal how these different needs can be met and fulfilled. By looking from a different perspective, the level of education of the adult population or the spreading of formal qualifications for a range of occupations greatly determine how local economic policy can assist economic development and how it can combat unemployment and poverty. The list can continue. In sum, such an aggregated classification of the settlements can be considered as a *norm*: it tells about the level of conditions that, by assuming internal equality, could and should work for all social groups and for all families and households. At the same time, by comparing the local indicators of individual settlements to the country-level aggregate values opens a window to see how settlements with substantial Roma communities become skewed and what the major areas of their disadvantages are. It was such a logic that dictated the sampling: Phase 1 aimed to produce such numeric indicators for all the 108–110 localities that had been involved in the 2011 UNDP survey in Hungary, Romania and Serbia.

By reflecting on knowledge and experience about substantial inequalities within the local communities, Phase 2 aimed to deconstruct the notion of “general conditions” and looked at the internal structure of the local communities as shaped by the spatial manifestation of ethnic differentiation. The leading aim was to reveal how conditions that can be perceived as “norms” when taken in aggregation vary in different parts and for different groups of the locality, and how these differences are seen and interpreted by the members of the diversely affected groups. In addition to portraying how geographic and institutional segregation inform these differences, Phase 2 also made it a primary aim to reveal how the members of the Roma community approach and understand these processes and how their understanding can be used as a basis for follow-up and monitoring. This latter goal implied that all characteristics of the community (ranging from its demographic features to education and employment and also to the qualities of the infrastructure) were approached from the two simultaneous perspectives of non-Roma and Roma informants.

While below we return to some further details of the Phase 2 research, two peculiar features have to be stressed in the current context of sampling. First, by partly repeating and partly deepening the data collection on a range of characteristics of the locality and its constituting ethnic segments, fieldwork in Phase 2 allowed us to *cross-check* the data that were collected in Phase 1. The fieldwork pointed out highly congruent aspects where respondents confirmed the validity of the official measurements, while in other aspects the inquiries revealed great departures among the views of our informants and highlighted the uncertainties and the low degree of validity of the collected data. Sampling in Phase 2 aimed to draw the pool of localities from the large group of settlements that were approached in the Phase 1 research by taking into account the potentials of such a cross-checking between the formally acknowledged and the individually perceived realities of daily living.

Second, as pointed out above, our research applied two approaches to what a locality means. On the one hand, the *customary interpretation* was maintained by considering units that are surrounded by clear boundaries and that are served by a range of institutions that embrace their population in a distinctive way. On the other hand, it was our aim to follow processes and movements within a larger unit of neighboring settlements and to find out ethnic inequities and inequalities within such broader spatial and social entities. For meeting this second aim, our Phase 2 sampling identified *clusters of settlements* as one of the levels of observation, while it also maintained the traditional approach to the individual localities. In order to simultaneously meet the two requirements, out of the total pool, 5–6 clusters were defined in each country that

embraced 30–40 settlements constituting similar structures by involving an identified center (mostly a town) and the “satellite” villages. In most of the cases, the original UNDP selection eased the (re)construction of the clusters, but on some occasions, a choice had to be made between the first and the second consideration: in these cases, preference was given to the relationships in a unified cluster by drawing new settlements into the sample.

Driven by attempts at revealing the variations of experiences of exclusion and the potentials and limitations of the politicization of these experiences in local Roma communities, sampling in Phase 3 followed yet a different logic. In contrast to Phases 1 and 2 that focused on the institutional aspects of marginalization and exclusion, Phase 3 turned to individuals: it aimed to explore how parents and older students saw schools and how they perceived the prevailing forms of selection usually resulting in ethnic differentiation to the disadvantage of Roma. By approaching the different domains of adult life, research in this phase also made attempts to explore the personal histories of choosing certain occupations and navigating the formal labor market which is rather unfriendly to the knowledge and the traditional skills of Roma. Further, as an important part of the endeavor, we sought people’s visions and opinions about the formal and informal efforts for improving living conditions and the frequent widening of the ethnic scissor in this regard. Finally, as its equally important aim, Phase 3 inquired into how informal views and opinions slowly transform the collective narratives that, in turn, gradually become elevated to the level of local politics and that are voiced by the, mostly informally elected, local Roma leaders. Through interviewing them, important new knowledge could be collected on the construction and the conditions of trust within the Roma community and also on the personal efforts and qualities that make these leaders the authentic representatives of the collective.

Given that the conditions and their perceptions in all the mentioned areas are deeply impregnated by the general state of exclusion vs. inclusion, the sampling procedure in Phase 3 followed a two-level selection. Based on the already available information about the exclusionary vs. inclusive character of the settlements that were involved in Phase 2, and also by taking into account the different manifestations according to the degree of urbanization, five types of communities were selected: a poor village with Roma majority but with a substantial share of non-Roma among its inhabitants; two segregated and sharply excluded urban Roma communities with distinct levels of poverty and destitution; two different urban segments demonstrating a certain degree of inclusion, but markedly differing according to their Roma inhabitants’ standard of living. Such a combination of the three aspects of urbanization, the standard of living and the degree of exclusion/inclusion remarkably narrowed down the list of settlements to host the Phase 3 research. This methodology was affirmed when we arrived at communities that were open and welcoming to a personal approach. We were handed over from one to the next: the families with children whom we asked about their personal and familial experiences of inter-ethnic encounters on the different terrains of daily life were ready to introduce us to neighbors and friends who then, in turn, helped us establish contacts even with community members who were apparently less tightly incorporated into the internal network. One can say that the “snowball approach” worked perfectly and this fact alone gained some importance. It showed that the often blamed behavior of Roma “indifference” and “disaffection” is not some mythical collective trait, but a product of the deficiencies of the prevailing inter-ethnic relations and the fact that Roma are fully deprived of the potentials for change. As soon as a dialogue (this time a research effort) turns to issues with importance in people’s lives, they are ready to pay attention and voice their views—Roma and non-Roma alike. The widespread interest in the community also helped in another regard: it was easy to find those who—whether in a formal or informal sense—could be considered as the authentic representatives and acknowledged leaders of the community.

With their involvement, our research was able to establish links between the different formations of expressing political will and it also could follow the paths of politicization in its two-way shaping between the individual complaints and claims and the formal domains of negotiations and actions.

On approaching exclusion and inclusion in local communities

As the discussions so far made it clear, our “Faces and causes...” research was constructed in a way that the subsequent phases closely followed each other by providing an ever more complex understanding of the local constituents and processes of marginalization and exclusion and their manifold impacts on the daily lives of the Roma communities. Such a construction required close coordination in sampling and also in the phrasing of the leading inquiries of each phase. While this way the three phases remained tightly bound together and were meant to make up a multi-sided whole, the distinct phases also preserved their independence: taken as individual pieces of research with their given lens of inquiry, all three parts represent self-contained approaches to the broad issues of ethnically charged marginalization and exclusion.

It was this latter consideration that inspired us to compile this volume based on findings that have arisen from the research in Phase 2 as a distinct and independent part of the overarching project. In defining Phase 2 as a stand-alone study, it was vital to set its intellectual boundaries. While our inquiry in this phase focused on the collectively experienced forms and manifestations of marginalization and exclusion as the products of the internal structure and the prevailing internal inter-ethnic conflicts on the level of the locality, it did not address (though took into implicit consideration) the issues of redistribution and power on the macro-social level, and paid at best sporadic attention to individual variations in experiences and perceptions. Simply put, Phase 2 provided a *meso-level approach* to marginalization and exclusion by bringing those forces, paths and processes to the fore that are produced and reproduced by the communities as living entities and that, as such, inform and shape their members’ ways of thinking and the steps for countervailing actions.

Such conceptualization of the local community implied its understanding as a structure composed of distinct units that are interconnected by the play of different institutions and different degrees of power to influence, shape, and rule its internal relations. Hence, the primary task of the local investigations was to reveal these varying structures and to position the local Roma communities within them. By assuming that these structures manifest themselves in visible differences of poverty and well-being of the different neighborhoods and appear in the state of housing and infrastructure as well as in the differing densities and qualities of services and provisions, the first part of the research was based on the method of organized “*socio-tours*”. In order to gain an overall view about the locality and a first impression about its internal structuring, the researchers walked through the settlement like tourists, and sketched a rough map of the distinct units they observed. With these rough maps at hand, they entered the second phase of the tour by asking randomly chosen inhabitants about their own map that usually proved more refined in details and also in their justifications.

These short dialogues with Roma and non-Roma members of the local community provided important information in several aspects. First, they revealed a range of less visible divisions as informed by the departing histories of old and new Roma migration or by separation along linguistic or religious lines. Second, these dialogues helped disclose forces of marginalization and

exclusion even where ethnic borders remained obscure in the physical sense of the term. Third and perhaps most important, the mirroring views of the Roma and non-Roma locals on the divisions within the community pointed to meaningful sources of agreements and conflicts between the majority and the minority. In cases when the perceptions markedly differed from one another by ethnicity, one could assume some ongoing hidden struggles for and against the prevailing distinctions, while a high degree of agreement indicated the acknowledgement (though not the approval) of the segmentation as a core aspect of Roma—non-Roma cohabitation.

At any rate, the subsequent rounds of the socio-tours and the involved views on the physical and mental formation of the community concluded in having rather refined *maps* of the locality, ones that pointed out the segments where ethnic segregation shaped the daily conditions of Roma living and that also indicated to a certain extent the depth and the magnitude of the prevailing inequalities embedded in the relations by which such segregated segments were bound to other constituting parts of the community. An additional advantage of the socio-tours was establishing contacts that helped identify the circle of potential informants for the next stage of the research. While part of the circle was predetermined by institutional affiliation and formal assignments, the advice of the randomly approached informants was primarily useful in identifying the authentic Roma representatives and (informal) leaders.

In the second stage of the Phase 2 research, the earlier identified segments of the community became lively terrains of distinction by looking at their functioning in the fundamental areas of everyday life. By looking at education, access to work and employment, the patterns and qualities of housing, the conditions of living, and the state of Roma participation in public and political life, the research intended to map how *inequalities in power and interest representation* induce marginalization and exclusion through the collective identifications of stigmatized Roma communities as undivided entities living in segregation, apart from the mainstream. The units taken into consideration for the data collection were the ones identified by the socio-tours and drawn up in the socio-map of the locality. This way the socially stratified structure came into direct visibility, and this allowed us to make straightforward comparisons between the mainstream and the segregated parts of the settlement as well as to measure the inequalities in a number of aspects of the daily living between people inhabiting the well-situated parts and the Roma communities of the impoverished and excluded segments.

As official data collections regard the localities as undivided units, our inquiries into the different segments could not rely on readily available lists, descriptions and statistics. Therefore a new approach had to be invented and implemented. This was the mobilization of *informants in a twin relation*: on all subjects we asked data, estimates and assessments from experts representing the mainstream (and usually voicing the knowledge, needs and claims of the majority) and a group of Roma informants who were considered by the ethnic community as best representing their case. It goes without saying that detailed and exact numeric data could not be expected from such an approach, if for no other reasons then because such data were never collected in the deep breakdowns that our research aimed to reveal. But the production of these kinds of “exact” statistics was not among our expectations. Instead, the new approach was meant to fulfill some other functions—and as the reader of this volume will see, it really did. The first important contribution was the valuable verification that the collected information provided by double-checking the existing administrative data. Let us take one of the simplest examples: the number of schools in a settlement. While the official data collections count with schools consisting of several units as a single administrative entity, our informants reported the number of functioning units as actually serving the given segment. This way the schools working as “Roma-only” provisions in

the segregated parts of the locality could be identified as existing and working educational services, though their actual role in keeping Roma children away from the mainstream otherwise never appeared on the surface. Likewise, the decomposition of the settlement-level data on the quality of the roads or the accessibility of the sewage system in different segments allowed for assessing how meaningful the regularly collected settlement-level data are if used for assessing the conditions and needs of the different social and ethnic groups of the local population.

However important the contribution of our research to the validation of the regularly collected statistics was, the true advantages of the applied methodology were more of sociological nature. By asking our informants in a rather detailed way about the various aspects of daily living, we gained insights into how *public discourse* articulates and interprets general knowledge about the existing conditions, constraints and conflicts in one or another area. In this regard, it was less the reported figures and numeric values than their *contextualization* that mattered. The interpretations of our informants revealed the politicization of the issue at stake in the sense of the readiness of the group to enact change or, for that matter, to make efforts to defend the status quo. The twin-informant approach divulged further important aspects. It revealed great unevenness and deep schisms along ethnic lines. As a rule, our Roma informants rarely shared the public discourse as reflected by the mainstream representatives. As if they lived in another locality, they gave accounts of different problems in a different language with different interpretations. If taken as the reflection of the discourse and the articulated claims of the Roma community, then one of the main findings of the endeavor was to see and demonstrate that the case of the Roma community is excluded from the mainstream discourse and politicization, and it appears as an alienated phenomenon with no implications on the public life of the community-at-large. It simply follows that, whether discussing education, work or the existing conditions of infrastructure, Roma are less familiar with officially acknowledged details and thus can hardly enter the policy-dialogue that is driven by the experiences and their discursive reflections as shaped by the majority. In this sense, our research pointed out massive inequalities in power that are generated and maintained by a great unevenness in the capacities for entering the discourse of the dominant policy-questions. It became clear that for lack of a minimum consensus in the nature and the rationalization of the problems that representatives of the local majority and the Roma minority consider as key issues for discussion and policy-making, the needs, complaints and claims of Roma often do not achieve public recognition, and thereby Roma remain excluded from even entering the discussion.

Inequalities in access to the language of the public discourse about the recognized facts, needs and claims of daily living signify important lessons for one of the primary aims of the applied methodology: the identification of the themes and indicators that could serve regular monitoring by those who are directly affected—the Roma community. As mentioned above, beside tapping the internal structure and the degree of inequalities within the locality, data collection in Phase 2 was meant to assist the identification of a pool of information rooted in widespread experience and general knowledge of Roma who this way had the potentials and the capacity to reflect their status within the community and to express perceptions about the trends of change. In principle, one could think of two alternative ways for constructing such a pool: either to take the list of established indicators as presented by the existing statistics and local-level documentations and ask for their assessment and completion by the twin-representatives; or to start from how Roma see and rationalize the state of affairs in the different domains and translate their conceptualizations into comparable data that are then presented for evaluation and commenting by the representatives of both sides.

For sure, the experimental nature of the research suggested following the latter path. And the findings confirmed the choice. Hence, with a perspective of later continuation and repetition, data collection in Phase 2 focused on certain problems as articulated by our Roma informants and broke them down to a bunch of indicative dimensions for which both the Roma and non-Roma representatives were asked to make estimates and to express also some evaluations. This way data collection in Phase 2 functioned as an ongoing dialogue which, aside from providing information, pointed toward the creation of a *common language* and also towards devising a set of *mutually accepted conceptions*.

However, the potentials for these developments turned out to be rather unevenly distributed across the domains. As the chapters of this volume demonstrate, segregation as a pervasive form of discrimination is not only acknowledged but rather well documented in education, hence the representatives of the two communities could refer much to the same facts and figures (though their arguments and evaluations obviously differed and sometimes even contradicted). At the same time, discussions about employment and work revealed remarkable departures at the very foundations of a meaningful discourse: while our non-Roma informants were inclined to focus on formal employment and to explain the high degree of Roma unemployment by deficiencies in education, qualification and also in moral attitudes, our Roma representatives emphasized experiences from the world of informal labor and argued about widespread discrimination as the main cause of low Roma employability in the formal terrain. The departures were similarly sharp regarding participation and Roma political representation: while the non-Roma informants tended to underscore the potentials of the existing institutional frameworks and point to Roma “disinterest” and “disaffection” as the sources of low participation, the Roma representatives gave accounts of the “emptiness” of the same formal fora and called attention to practices of discrimination in actually taking them as meaningful institutions by the majority. In these and similar cases of substantial incongruence in conceptualization and evaluation, important decisions had to be made in selecting the aspects and dimensions that the list of the variables to be monitored should contain. The choice was not simply technical but it had certain political implications. By considering the Roma discourse as the point of departure, our research aimed to assist the incorporation of those issues and facts into a *shared public discourse and future policy-making* that so far had been squeezed into informality and the exclusivity of minority exchanges. The selection of the types of data and information to be collected was driven by the intention to create a collection of indicators that, while allowing for regular follow-up and insightful monitoring, provide meaningful yardsticks to the evolving discourse.

The third stage of the research in Phase 2 maintained a sense of dialogue, though approached it through the application of a set of more conventional methods of qualitative study. The major aim at this stage was to explore the local mechanisms of ethnicized marginalization and exclusion as they manifest themselves in the various domains of daily life. Based on earlier research experiences it could be expected that the main aim would need to be translated to the specificities of each domain with its own design and, further, important variations between the countries also could be assumed. By considering the latter aspect, the country teams had their freedom to select the institutions for closer scrutiny. On the basis of knowledge accumulated during the socio-tours and through the data-collection in the respective fields, it was at the liberty and the responsibility of the teams to decide about the terrains of *educational exclusion and inclusion*, or to invite a circle of local employers for discussing the causes and mechanisms of ethnic segmentation on the local labor market, etc. At the same time, the methods and the techniques of exploration remained identical across the countries and the fields. Whether in ethnically differing classes

within a formally integrated school or in a specialized unit for the “mentally ill”, the manifestations of Roma exclusion in education were revealed by the combination of teacher- and parental focus group discussions, interviews with teachers, uniformly structured class observations, and discussions with the headmasters and the (mostly informal) Roma representatives of the domain.

Due partly to less *ex ante* knowledge about the institutional structures but also in response to widespread reluctance for participating in interviews and group-discussions about the ethnic aspects of *employment, unemployment and work*, the research applied a different toolkit in mapping the formal and informal labor markets and Roma involvement therein. The data on ethnic affiliation of the employees and the registered unemployed were collected by relying on the informed opinion of the HR-representatives whom the employers asked to keep records, and then our Roma informants were commenting on the lists and the massive inequalities that these usually revealed. The dual approach was complemented by the cooperating employers concerning their local policies and their consideration for and against extending Roma employment. In addition, our Roma informants and a group of Roma representing the diverse occupational and employment statuses in the community engaged in a structured discussion about accessing the formal sphere of labor and being squeezed into informality, respectively.

Inquiries about the *housing conditions* and the *state of the infrastructure* in different parts of the locality could rely on rather detailed statistics that were collected with similar topical structures and along similar ways of measurement in the three countries. These data could be fruitfully complemented by the findings of the socio-tours and by summarizing the major lessons of group-discussions within the Roma community. As it turned out, the sharp inequalities in housing, the very poor conditions of infrastructure and the severe limitations in access to services that Roma living mostly in segregated corners of the locality experience are widely acknowledged. The unmet and suppressed needs in these domains are deeply politicized issues of public life within the minority community. The language of the discourse and the arguments about the deep injustices involved are well developed to enter the wider public arena beyond the borders of the Roma neighborhoods and it has proven ever more difficult for the ruling majority to resist listening to these arguments and claims. This general experience called our attention to a closer investigation of how Roma claims become parts of the local development plans or how these are squeezed to the margin by the local power struggles around redistribution and investments. It followed that exploring the history of the local developments and the recognition or misrecognition of Roma claims in shaping them became one of the leading topics of the Phase 3 research on local inter-ethnic relations and the conflicts and compromises that inter-ethnic encounters reveal.

Finally, our attempts at exploring the characteristics of Roma *participation and representation* through a broad understanding of “politics” and by asking for reflections, as in the other domains, largely failed. This was due to several reasons. On the one hand, much in accordance with the general understanding in the mainstream discourse, Roma took the notion of representation in the strict sense of the term by attaching formal duties and formally notified commitments to the concept. Given the weak formal structures of ethnic representation, they tended to give accounts of the non-existence of collective political participation and the non-functioning of any representational practices. True, the group-discussions and the individual interviews with our informants frequently pointed to people whom the collective entrusted in an informal way but their recognition was largely considered as an internal matter and a transient appointment that easily withers away by the changing conditions or simply by personal will. On the other hand, the failure in applying the dual approach that properly worked in the other domains followed from the above discussed deep schisms of public and political discourse. Given the widespread expe-

rience that the needs and the claims of the Roma community remain excluded from the mainstream public discourse and are also left out from local policy-making, it was a natural conclusion to consider these matters “irrelevant” in political and policy terms and to characterize the state of participation of the minority as driven by “the rule of silence”. This way our Phase 2 research in the political and policy domain revealed confronting views about the general state of Roma exclusion. Representatives of the majority argued with moral and habitual aspects to demonstrate Roma “estrangement”, while the Roma informants pointed out important holes in the formal structures of interest representation and the general tendencies of squeezing the Roma case into informality and rigid segregation. Based on these lessons, our Phase 3 research took a new start to explore Roma political participation and representation through an in-depth exploration of the conditions and processes of how Roma needs and claims become acknowledged in the public discourse of the local community and how these needs and claims reach local policy-making and development plans or remain ignored by them. A collection of the relevant documents about the history of recent development projects and also a few organized public meetings around these issues with the involvement of rank-and-file members of the minority community provided the raw material for a series of case studies that tried to reveal the case-specific and the more general aspects of the “politicization of the case of Roma” in the more inclusive or rather exclusionary communities in the three participating countries.

As these last sentences indicate, research in Phase 2 opened several new paths to the next step of the study by calling attention to the workings of interpersonal relations as embodied by the inter-ethnic encounters in the various domains. In a certain sense, the findings of the two phases mutually reflect on each other. While Phase 2 introduced needs, claims, rhetoric and rationalizations on the levels of the Roma and the majority communities as meaningful entities, research in Phase 3 dismantled these entities by turning to the study of personal perceptions and argumentations. While Phase 2 and Phase 3 are thus closely linked, it is legitimate to look at them as distinct endeavors with distinct logics and methodologies. By taking into account the relative scarcity of research about entire Roma communities while these communities to a large extent frame and shape what their members can do and how they can navigate their daily lives, we considered it important to disclose the characteristic patterns and mechanisms of these communities as powerful entities. Driven by these thoughts and recognitions, the reader will find three country studies and a comparative analysis about the regulatory processes involving a range of Roma communities with largely differing positions and relations in local communities; communities that mobilize a variety of means and actions to maintain clear-cut ethnic distinctions and separation or to move toward a certain degree of inclusion. The chapters focus on the collective experiences as expressed and interpreted by the local Roma communities and the local majorities, and follow how the often contrasting views and rationalizations find their ways in structuring the various terrains of everyday life. A systematic analysis of the evolving structures and their functioning hopefully offers new insights into the shaping of collective identities as potential personal resources in inter-ethnic encounters. At the same time, we hope they also enrich our understanding of the implications that discrimination and exclusion have on the sensitivities and the collective representation of Roma needs and claims, which are so easily disregarded.

FACES AND CAUSES OF ROMA MARGINALIZATION

Experiences from Hungary

Monika Váradi and Tünde Virág

The “**Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities**” inquiry explored the economic, political, demographic, and social forces at municipal and community level which shape practices and consequences of social exclusion and potential pathways to inclusion. **Phase 2** of this research focused on a representative sample of municipalities (20–30 per country) in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia to explore basic local social services and infrastructure provisions, conditions of political participation of the Roma, and local interventions targeting Roma inclusion. This research phase relied on structured field research collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This short country report is based on the **Final Country Report on the Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Hungary**, edited in June 2013 by Tünde Virág, with contributions from Márton Czirfusz, Katalin Kovács, Szilvia Rézműves, Gyöngyi Schwarcz, András Száraz, Dezső Szegedi, Gergely Tagai, Annamária Uzzoli, Monika Mária Váradi, and Zsuzsa Vidra. Katalin Fehér and Anna Hamar also contributed to the fieldwork.

ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Autonomy Foundation
ERFA	European Regional Development Fund (<i>Európai Regionális Fejlesztési Alap</i>)
LHH	Most Disadvantaged Micro-Regions (<i>leghátrányosabb helyzetű kistérségek</i>)
RMSGs	Roma Minority Self-Governments
SEN	Special Education Needs
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SZOCPOL	Social Housing Subsidy (<i>szociálpolitikai támogatási rendszer</i>)

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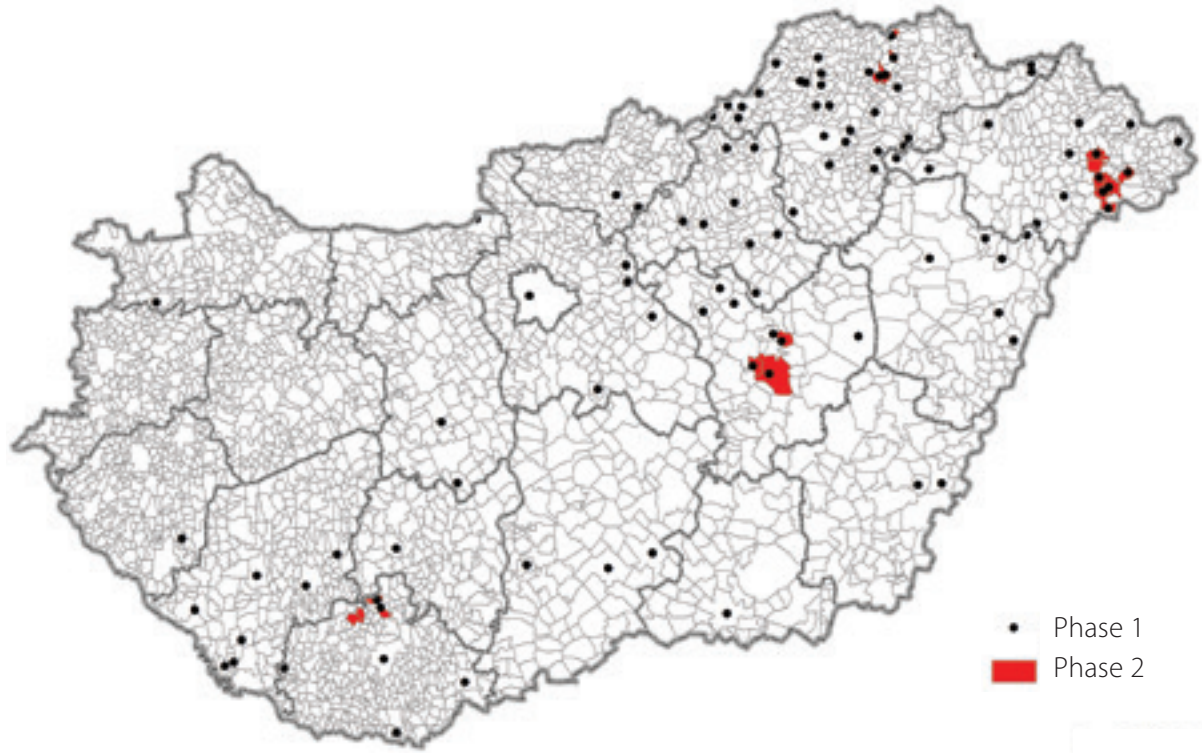
As part of the “*Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization...*” project, our fieldwork-based research aimed to reveal, through statistical data, estimations, and interviews, the different causes and faces of Roma marginalization across 20 localities situated in four regions of Hungary. The selected research clusters, consisting of 3–5 settlements with administrative and organic (functional) linkages, represent Hungary’s typical rural areas with significant residential segregation: two variations of hilly areas with tiny villages and two configurations of North Great Plain settlement patterns having larger towns and villages. All of them are in peripheral and disadvantaged regions, as measured in geographic and socioeconomic terms (Sásd and Törökszentmiklós belong to the so-called “inner peripheries”, Encs and Mátészalka-Nagyecsed to the outer peripheries). The degree and the characteristics of segregated neighborhoods are, however, different between and within these clusters, providing good opportunities for a deeper understanding of the faces and causes of Roma marginalization.

The micro-regions of Encs and Sásd are areas with tiny villages where—due to decades of selective internal migration—ethnic and social homogenization, as well as the ghettoization of small settlements, had already started during the 1970s and 1980s; at the moment, these are the micro-regions of the cluster where the proportion of the Roma population is highest compared to the total population. The significant difference in social history between these two micro-regions is due to the fact that while several ethnic communities (Hungarians, Germans, Beash Roma and Hungarian Roma) have cohabited for a long time in the micro-region of Sásd, ethnic mixing is limited to Roma living alongside Hungarians in the micro-region of Encs. Various patterns of coexistence and cooperation have been formed between Roma and non-Roma in Sásd; in other words, among all the micro-regions where we have carried out fieldwork, it is the Sásd micro-region where local society has the highest degree of tolerance and acceptance of differences. Here the economic and possible spatial exclusion of Roma has not resulted in a deterioration of relations between Roma and non-Roma, and neither can one record the formation of ethnically segmented institutions.

Conversely, though non-Roma families do accept the realities derived from the superior numbers of Roma in the micro-region of Encs by necessity, they still restrict their utilization of the settlement’s symbolic spaces and institutions. The micro-region of Mátészalka-Nagyecsed has medium-size villages located in the eastern periphery of the country; the characteristics of social history, ethnic composition and ethnic and religious mixing show different patterns in almost every village. There are settlements where Catholic Germans live alongside Hungarian Roma; others mix Protestant Hungarians with Vlach Roma; while some feature a combination of Protestant Hungarians, Vlachs and Hungarian Roma. Due to this variation, the patterns of inter-ethnic cooperation are also quite variable, ranging from extreme exclusion to everyday cooperation. Törökszentmiklós is a rural town on the inner periphery of the Great Plain Region; here Roma families live in a completely separate world. The “Roma town” situated at the edge of Törökszentmiklós, and the families who live there, have limited relations with the town itself; Roma are invisible to town dwellers, who remain “blissfully unaware” of the whole Roma neighborhood and its inhabitants. The societies of the two villages loosely attached to Törökszentmiklós within the same micro-region developed—as a result of the relationships between Roma and non-Roma, and the elimination of the local Roma settlements—in two radically different ways over the past few decades: one settlement has both Roma and non-Roma families coexisting without conflict

and cooperating with one another, while non-Roma families have basically “fled” the other one which has become a stigmatized ghetto settlement within the micro-region.

Map 1. The Hungarian sample



By Márton Czirfusz 2012.

2. Different faces of spatial marginalization of Roma segments

The elimination of segregated Roma neighborhoods started in the early 1970s and rearranged the spatial distribution of Roma families. Since to date no integration of habitation has taken place locally or nationally, segregation continues to determine spatial distribution.¹ The elimination of Roma segregated neighborhoods was a definitive intervention having strong effects upon the spatial and social segregation/coexistence of Roma and non-Roma. Since the programs were coordinated by the village/town councils, it was the power structures within the area of competence of the given council that designated the areas where Roma families could move from the populous Roma segments. The manner of eliminating segregated neighborhoods—i.e. whether the Roma families that moved into the village were given plots of land at the edge of

¹ The Ministry for Social and Labour Affairs started its program for the elimination of Roma segments in 2005, re-regulating its general rules gradually year by year. The program, seeking radical changes in the habitation conditions of people living in ghetto-like environments, was operating exclusively with Hungarian resources, as the provisions of the ERFA Decree disallowed using EU resources. As a result, 31 settlements started such programs with varying experiences and results.

the village or further away, or whether they were scattered throughout the settlement—was primarily determined by the size of the Roma segment and the number of families living there, as well as by the previous coexistence between the Roma and non-Roma populations. Local villagers were trying to make certain that the village would receive only as many Roma families as the majority population could “tolerate.” That allowed differentiating between Roma families. Eliminating Roma neighborhoods took place gradually, first by letting the “regular” Roma families deemed worthy of trust into the village which most thought as a sign of recognition by the majority society. At the same time, this course of action naturally left a concentration of “deviant” families unable to adapt in the Roma segment. Village society was more accepting towards those Roma families with whom they were sharing a workplace, whom they had known from earlier periods and with whom they had shared positive experiences and events which eroded feelings of mistrust. This was especially true in the Sásd micro-region where Roma and non-Roma men were working in the mines, while Roma and non-Roma women often worked together at the agricultural co-operatives. In villages where the majority society was unable to have control over the incoming Roma, non-Roma families were shocked by new Roma neighbors appearing daily, which frequently led to the “flight” of non-Roma families.

The conditions of habitation of Roma families have been significantly transformed over the past two decades: the state granted one-time, non-refundable assistance to every family for the construction or renewal of their home based upon the number of children (the so-called “social housing subsidy”²), and later a similar funding mechanism was created for increasing the availability of used flats or homes (called “half social housing subsidy”). During the Socialist era, this form of assistance extended to Roma families with regular income and provided them with an opportunity to establish homes; however, with the same assistance losing value, and with the lack of other sources of income after the system changed, it was barely sufficient to reproduce low-quality dwelling units. Although the subsidy was rather high, by itself it was usually insufficient to construct an entire flat or house. Without adequate drainage of water, sewage and insulation, the conditions of such houses quickly deteriorated, which was further aggravated by owners frequently heating only one room of the house during winter (Őrszigethy 1999). The municipal government appointed plots for the construction of “social housing subsidy” homes for poor/Roma families mostly at the edges of settlements. Thereby a new form of segregation began to appear in most settlements: the “social housing row.” Frequently it was “habitation units of reduced value”³ from the segregated housing of the 1960s and 1970s that were rebuilt during the new “social housing subsidy” campaign in the same neighborhood, effectively perpetuating exclusion of habitation.

The settlement policies of the 1960s and 1970s caused significant societal changes in areas with small villages and settlements at the peripheries; due to a lack of jobs, closing institutions, and a denial of development grants, everyone that was able to do so moved out of such settlements. Due to selective migration, the societies of such settlements were homogenized, both ethnically and from the point of view of their social composition. The most characteristic factor in the creation of the “Gypsy villages”—Roma-only localities formed as a result of such processes—was not the strengthening of ethnic concentration, but rather a process of selective migration based on

2 Its usual abbreviation in Hungarian is *szocpol*.

3 Designated as Category CS = “habitations of reduced value.” This State program, started in the late 1970s, mostly sponsored single-room homes with kitchens but without “*komfort*” [the term “*komfort*” in Hungarian refers to bathrooms, water closet, modern heating, sewers and insulation] for the Roma moving in from the former segregated neighborhoods.

social status, independent of ethnicity. Stunted societies were formed in these villages where the overwhelming majority of the population has been affected by poverty, low levels of education, and permanent exclusion lasting for several generations (Havas 1999). Outmigration has been less characteristic or nonexistent in settlements—usually larger ones—with better transport and where jobs and operating institutions were easily accessible, either locally or by daily commute, thus keeping local societies differentiated and stable. Thanks to the successful strategies of assimilation based on continuous employment—primarily during the decades of socialism—and to the educational ambition which naturally appeared in the next generation, local Roma society was also differentiated in settlements enjoying more favorable circumstances. Though that process stopped at the time of the system change and reversed in many locations—since the overwhelming majority of Roma families today live excluded from the labor market and from the majority population—such differences between various types of Roma families, with respect to their relationship with the majority society and their survival strategies, have remained. These differences are also reflected by the spatial positioning of Roma within settlements, as well as in the character and extent of spatial and social segregation.

The spatial distribution of Roma families, their situation within settlements, and their connections to majority society are further complicated by the numbers and percentages of Roma within the total population. Though our research sampling included only settlements with a significant number of Roma families, there are a higher number of Roma inhabitants in the investigated towns (Törökszentmiklós, Nagyecsed, Encs and Sásd); however, Roma percentages within the total population are low in each of these four locations. While a Roma community counting several hundred people is barely perceptible in the everyday life of a larger settlement—due to spatial segregation within large settlements or country towns and the segregated use of institutions whereby Roma and non-Roma can get by without ever seeing each other, even a few additional Roma families in a smaller settlement of, say, 300-500 people, represents a significant ratio. In these contexts they cannot be ignored in everyday life or in the use of institutions. In other words, Roma and non-Roma families tend to establish an everyday practice of living together in settlements with smaller numbers—even if by necessity—while this is frequently avoided in larger, more segmented settlements.

Based on the above, we can differentiate three main types of spatial distribution in the local Roma communities in our sample:

1. There are settlements and parts of settlements where the entire Roma community lives apart from the majority society, in spatial as well as social exclusion, without forming a part of it, and the spatial and social boundary between Roma and non-Roma is sharp. The Roma families living in such contexts have no social ties with members of the majority society, or only to a very limited extent; as a result, their access to job opportunities, resources and information is also minimal. Most families living in settlements—or parts of settlements—separated by a sharp boundary only have access to segregated institutions. We can differentiate two subgroups of spaces segregated from the majority society by sharp boundaries.

- 1.1 Roma families living in varying socioeconomic situations live in one location within the settlement, separated by sharp physical and mental boundaries that are maintained by the uncompromising exclusionary attitudes and practices of the majority society. Their contact with local institutions and organizations is minimal.

- 1.2 The societies of the neighboring settlements think about Roma-only localities, with the majority society drawing a sharp boundary around the entire village. Families living in such settlements are spatially and socially separated from other social groups, and moving out is next to impossible.
2. Due to partially accepting a behavior displayed by majority society—meaning that “regular” Roma families who are able to “assimilate” are accepted by the majority society—Roma live dispersed according to financial status and type (e.g. groups of origin, economic and social status, autochthonous and newcomers). This may result in a varied spatial positioning of Roma families within the settlement, mirroring the relationship of the majority society towards the various types of Roma families.
3. Generally, a peaceful coexistence has been established between the two ethnic groups in settlements with a high proportion of Roma—most from the small villages, for example—where the members of the majority society, unable to move away, cannot avoid Roma in their everyday lives, where some sort of cooperation has existed between Roma and non-Roma over the past decades (for example, employment or client/patron relationships), and where coexistence has largely been free of conflict. The rules for living together, spatial and social boundaries, and the access to institutions by Roma and non-Roma are constantly negotiated. Though the majority of Roma live in one or more well-defined streets within such settlements, the spatial and social boundaries between Roma and non-Roma are blurred. The former Roma neighborhood only exists in the local memory, and exclusion or segregation is not a part of the local practices or narrative.

2.1 Sharp boundaries—symbolic walls

2.1.1. *Sharp boundaries within the settlements*

Among the settlements we researched, the number of Roma is highest in Törökszentmiklós, where it is estimated to be 1,800–2,000 people, but their proportion of the total population is the lowest, at less than 10%. During the socialist period, while the majority of the local non-Roma worked at nearby factories and plants, they primarily commuted to Budapest, and many even moved there. Therefore, families frequently have relatives in the capital, and almost everyone has acquaintances there. Roma families live in two segregated areas near to each other which are slowly merging. A well perceived sharp boundary separates the streets of the segregated neighborhood from the other parts of town. Locals call it “The Great Berlin Wall”, which is also an accurate depiction of the state of the wall’s infrastructure. Though the ghetto lies a few kilometers away from the town center, ghetto dwellers often try to enroll their children—mostly unsuccessfully—at another school in the middle of the city which has a majority of non-Roma students. Due to the structural changes made by the municipal government and the churches (changes in the ownership of schools, amalgamation and reorganization of institutions), most Roma children will eventually end up in the segregated “Gypsy school” near the ghetto. In other words, the whole town is striving towards keeping the ghetto and its Roma families isolated from the center of the city and from majority society.

While the ghetto appears, in the eyes of the city, as a uniformly stigmatized and criminalized area, stepping inside the neighborhood one can find streets and houses of various statuses which can be understood as a reflection of the past 40 years of campaigns for eliminating Roma segments

as well as the different economic situations of the various Roma families. The dwellings along the former Roma segment are still inhabited to this day, having been transformed into homes with the support of the “social housing subsidy” program in the 1970s. The “buildings of decreased value” were built at the edge of town during the 1970s, followed by a number of “social housing subsidy” houses that were built in the 1990s. In the ghetto, better built and more livable homes are situated next to shacks that are ready to collapse. This demonstrates how Roma families in this town have only been permitted to live on this one street, irrespective of their financial situation. At the same time, all families living in the ghetto must contend with the mountains of refuse piling up in empty lots, stray dogs, and a preponderance of alcohol, drugs and prostitution in their neighborhoods. Many families suffer from these problems and people are aware of those responsible. But families remain largely helpless. Police will not take action in the ghetto if they can avoid doing so. What helps the everyday lives of families living in the ghetto is the presence of small congregations, especially from the Pentecostal Church, the Baptists, and the Assembly of Faith.

2.1.2. Sharp boundaries around settlements—differences between Roma-only localities

Villages we regard as being in the process of ghettoization are those which are increasingly homogenous from an ethnic or social point of view, have more Roma families than non-Roma, have a high proportion of children, and a low rate of employment. At the same time, there are significant differences between various settlements regarding the process of ghettoization, even when they have similar social or economic statistics. Most of these differences appear in the degree of organization of local society and its ability to lobby for its interests, as well as in its connections to the markets for informally organized, seasonal, or occasional work. Some spatial indicators of the degree of organization of local societies is whether there are fences around houses, a precondition for being able to keep at least a minimum degree of order around one’s home and the ability to manage the garden; whether trees are still standing in public areas or yards; or whether elements of residential housing are torn down or spared. From the point of view of the cohesion of the Roma community, it is important if there are still some “exemplary families”—Roma or non-Roma—in the settlement whose examples and behaviors can be followed and emulated. With a certain degree of organization, processes leading towards poverty can still be turned around. All of our settlements are poor, but where poverty has remained unchanged for several decades, with no intervention to counteract it, the balance of the entire settlement has been upset; being poor has transformed itself into deep, sustained poverty. Only survival is valued for people contending with such adversity; should they need it, they will chop up parts of their own roof house for firewood, cut down a fruit tree right before it bears fruit, or even steal the bell from the bell tower of the local church.

One of the Roma-only localities we researched is an iconic symbol of deep poverty. The outer appearance of the village mirrors local society. The public institutions have varying degrees of neglect, with only one common denominator: they all have bars on their windows. The primary school is in a deplorable state; no renovation has taken place for years, and the paint is falling off the walls. The new preschool building has been operational for some years; a fence with locked gates and bars protects it from vandals. All the streets of the village look similar. Houses have been razed (“*here one house disappears every week*”); there are damaged homes without fences, with only temporary cables to hook up electricity. The ownership of homes is unclear as families frequently move from one house to the next, and relatives live with one another according to what seems best at any moment. At the same time, one can find a few exclusive homes on almost every street; there are homes with sophisticated workmanship, painted in garish colors,

surrounded by ornate fences with gates featuring lions. The lowest level of differentiation from local society is shown by the fact that more and more Roma families have recently enrolled their children in schools located in neighboring villages—which were otherwise struggling with an insufficient number of students—instead of the local school where *“all they would learn is to swear.”* In other words, better-off families living in the village plan their futures elsewhere.

Omnipresent stray dogs also reflect the chaotic state of the village; the municipal authority has no funds to collect the animals, though everyone knows they run around unvaccinated for years. If you leave your home, you must carry a stick with you; this is simply a rule of everyday life. The struggle for survival naturally involves theft and break-ins every day. According to the estimates of family services, about 10% of the adult population is in jail. There is no permanent police station in the village, but drugs are present, as is prostitution, which involves more and more young girls between the ages of 15 and 17. Bankruptcy proceedings were started against the municipal government two years ago, and last year the District Attorney charged the mayor and a significant portion of the local representatives with the embezzlement of funds paid out under the “social housing subsidy” program. Though every one of the accused defends themselves, the municipal government has largely ceased to function. The family assistance administrators work every day, together with the district nurse for young mothers and childcare, and local school-teachers, trying to fill in for the functions of the state and its system of institutions.

The other Roma-only localities in the Encs and Sásd clusters function better. Within these settlements, the relatively dense network of client-patron relationships still helps maintain organization of everyday life. Although it also keeps Roma families in a state of dependency, it provides something akin to safety. There is a dead-end tiny village in the Encs cluster, where the village is interwoven with informal relationships and top-to-bottom hierarchical structures based upon personal relationships. The leaders of the village, including the mayor, the assistant mayor and the “village caretaker” (who is at the same time a representative in the municipal government) organize the everyday lives of families. It is the “village caretaker” who provides the availability of various institutions and services (health care, weekly shopping, pharmacy, and official administrative procedures), while it is the mayor who makes decisions on the resources received by the village. That all of this is conducted informally, based upon a paternalistic system, is exemplified by the welfare policies of the municipal government: there are no applications, no submissions, nor committee decisions; whoever is in need of money can ring the mayor’s doorbell and have a conversation with him. The mayor will usually give loans, which are deducted from the next month’s social assistance. The mayor’s benevolence (or lack of) directly influences the lives and opportunities of families.

2.2 Spatial reflection of the differentiation and formation of layers among Roma families, a varied representation of segregation patterns

The town of Encs has all types of variation: a stigmatized ghetto across from a better-looking segregated neighborhood, a village-like area with blurred boundaries, and an area where some Roma families live scattered throughout town. One of our experts summed it up like this: *“There are three kinds of Roma families in Encs: the ‘well-to-do’ who can easily make a living, the middle category who will listen to what they’re told, and a third type who no one can handle.”* That categorization appears in an even more differentiated form spatially: most of the “well-to-do” live along the other side of the railway line in the middle of a field, in “residential units of reduced value” built on a

street far away from the center of town, or in homes built under the social housing subsidy program in an orderly neighborhood—although separated from the rest of town—with cultivated gardens and domestic animals. We had an interviewee from the municipal government who did not even regard that part of town as a segregated neighborhood due to its orderly exterior. She placed that street within the mental map of the town, despite its physical distance. Some of the Roma families of Encs live in the poorer parts of town which look more like a village, designated in various development documents as a segregated neighborhood; however, we did not regard it as one in our research since none of our interviewees did. One reason for that is the status of this area has been greatly advanced by infrastructural developments in recent years.

Fügöd was a small village attached to the town in the 1970s, with patterns of segregation following those discussed above: there are a few elderly non-Roma people residing in the middle of the neighborhood/former village, along Main Street, where houses are relatively ordered, and about 300 Roma people live on three streets with buildings of “reduced value” at the end of the village in edifices constructed in the 1990s. There are no fences or yards; most households use illegally connected electricity; they have no bathrooms, plumbing, or modern heating; and families get water from public wells which are closed from time to time.

The spatial and social differentiation of Roma families is also reflected in the system of educational institutions: the primary school in the center of the micro-region in Encs has always been considered an elite school in the region and the town. Thanks to the good reputation of the school, it has been flooded with children from better-off families from the neighboring countryside and has never suffered from a lack of students. A side school⁴ with primary classes has been operating in the neighborhood of Fügöd since the 1980s, taking exclusively Roma children from the Roma segment. The city school was unable to handle the behavioral problems and low knowledge base of the children arriving at the upper four grades from the segregated side school. The school leadership decided last year to “help the children” by starting the upper four grades at the Fügöd school as well. There has been a strong social expectation of the city to keep the ghetto school of Fügöd operational, and to extend it to an eight-grade institution—thus keeping “problematic children” away from the town and the “regular” children.

One typical reason for the separate Roma neighborhoods in the same settlements of the Mátészalka-Nagyecsed cluster is the difference between Hungarian and Vlach Roma. The eastern part of Nagyecsed—a historical part of that town—has been mainly populated by Vlach Roma; quite densely in certain parts though not on a single block. The boundaries of these parts have become blurred, partly due to the social hierarchy within the Vlach Roma community, and partly due to non-Roma also sinking into poverty. Hungarian Roma live at the other end of the town, where they reside along two streets mixed with non-Roma poor, but forming a clear majority on three additional streets. This neighborhood is physically as well as socially separated from the rest of the town, and though there are no sharp boundaries, everyone regards the streets at the edge of town as a segregated Roma neighborhood. Hungarian Roma living here traditionally have no social relationships with the Vlach Roma living in the other Roma neighborhood at the opposite end of town. Roma and non-Roma inhabitants generally feel that the Vlach Roma are better educated and wealthier, and they have living environments and procreation habits that more closely approximate the non-Roma population, while the majority of Hungarian Roma are uneducated, live in poor, mostly neglected environments, and have a larger number of children. We

4 A side-school (*tagiskola*) is a primary school for grades 4 through 7 subsumed as a sub-unit of a central school.

have not heard of conflicts and differences between Vlach and Hungarian Roma, but there are no mixed marriages between the two groups either. Today, two factors at play have started to build bridges between these two communities: one is the Assembly of Faith Church which enjoys great popularity among both Hungarian and Vlach Roma, so they frequent the local assembly together; the other is development programs, where Roma involved in the design of the projects come exclusively from the ranks of the Vlach, but in the majority of cases, they work with Hungarian Roma in order to advance their social integration.

2.3 Blurred boundaries, the necessities of living together/side by side

In smaller villages the growth of the number of Roma families, together with the proportion of Roma within the total population, have made the inhabitants realize that Roma families have become a part of their everyday life. Whether they like it or not, Roma and non-Roma have become neighbors, seeing each other every day in the street and at the supermarket, making it harder and harder to maintain segregation/separation. Roma families live on almost every street in the villages; a sort of coexistence by necessity has been established between Roma and non-Roma families. This “forced cohabitation” appears as peaceful coexistence in everyday life, and is reflected as such in the narratives of the people we spoke with in most settlements. There were some locations where it was summarized as follows: *“The Schwaben taught them [the Roma] to work”* (a village notary); while someone else commented, *“We all learned to live side by side with each other”* (a village notary); while again, others put it as follows, *“The question is no longer whether we exclude some people or not, it is whether we can live side by side”* (representative working on social affairs). Based on these responses, it appears that both Roma and non-Roma families accept the new boundaries created by the growing number of Roma. At the same time, hidden conflicts can be perceived under the surface in many settlements, as the majority society frequently marks out new boundaries. Even if they have to abandon segregation in terms of living space, they try to hold onto it in their use of institutions, primarily through access to schools and religious services.

Today in the village of Forró, located in the Encs micro-region, Roma families live on every street. Many can list streets with a majority or a completely Roma population. This is also signaled by the uniform row of houses built with the social housing subsidy, but the condition of these streets and the buildings are barely different from other parts of the settlement enjoying a higher status. These days almost everything has been reconstructed in the traditional Roma neighborhood of the settlement; all the buildings have been enlarged and newly built asphalt roads provide access to the homes. This is due to the fact that there are still members in a majority of those families who find jobs in the construction industry, thanks to their earlier work connections, and are thus able to provide a basic standard of living for their families. Another factor is that when the local government applied for infrastructure development tenders, they included all the streets of the village in their plans. The existence of the former Roma segregated neighborhood only remains in people’s memories. Despite the fact that everyday coexistence between Roma and non-Roma is relatively free of conflict, and that the leaders of the settlement talk about local Roma in pleasant terms, non-Roma do not enroll their children at the local school, but rather at the primary school in the neighboring town; Roma do not participate in the strong Catholic community which includes the local elite.

Mindszentgodisa, in South Transdanubia, is a settlement established from three formerly separate villages, with Hungarian, Roma, and Schwabisch inhabitants. One street at the edge of

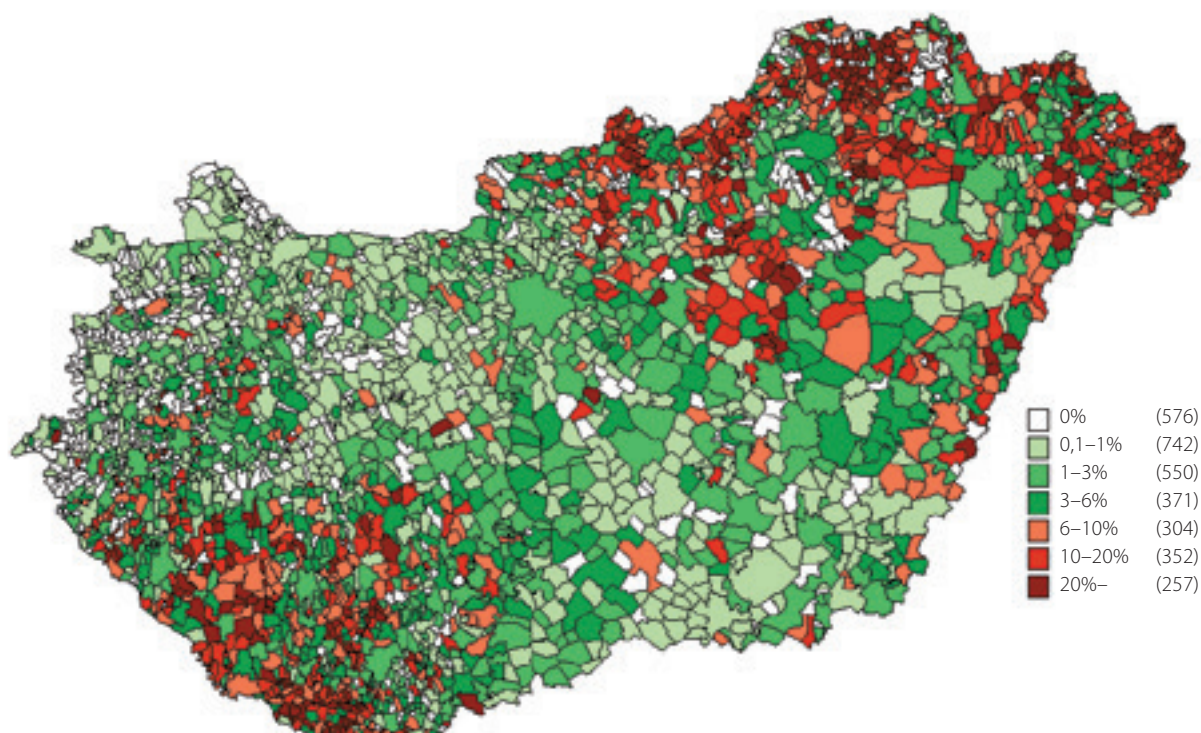
the former village of Godisa was established for the Roma families, who previously lived in a segregated neighborhood at the edge of the forest; its name is Újtelep [New Settlement]. Later generations of Roma in Újtelep gradually moved into the increasingly vacant houses, and now Roma form the majority in Godisa. Despite that history, the Roma and non-Roma we interviewed there were equally disinclined (with the exception of the mayor) to look at either Godisa or the streets inhabited by Roma as a world separated from the rest of the village, either in spatial or social terms. Local discourse on poverty and Roma does not see poverty as an ethnic problem, as it affects both Roma and non-Roma. Teachers talk about “*blonde Roma children*” born from mixed marriages. The collective memory of the village includes experiences of shared work, commuting, and pursuing leisure activities together, and there are still client-patron relationships between Roma and non-Roma who jointly use the institutions of the village such as the preschool and the primary school. (Another characteristic is that both educational institutions have Roma and German ethnic programs of education, and that not one local person expressed wonderment when a talented Roma student once participated in a county competition for the recitation of German poetry.) In this case, we can say that the mere fact that Roma—even if impoverished—live intermixed with others does not give rise to local inhabitants regarding their streets and areas as segregated or homogenous units from an ethnic or social point of view.⁵ It’s the normal type of Gypsies that live in Újtelep. We’ve never even called it a ‘Gypsy neighborhood’ or anything like that. They’re not ‘kolompár’,⁵ they aren’t loud; they don’t fight each other loudly, the way you can see on TV. Újtelep is simply a street name; it could have any other name, Ady Endre Street for example.” (Member of local council)

The local Roma were presented in the Baranya County area as peaceful, “regular” folks, and co-existence was unanimously described as being free of conflict. Where conflicts were mentioned at all, it was not linked to “our Gypsies,” i.e. Roma families who had been living there for a long time, but rather to Roma who recently moved in, and who were perceived as having a different culture and an unwillingness to integrate.

At the same time, the appearance of peaceful coexistence reflects a delicate balance resulting from lengthy processes of bargaining and agreements, which could be disrupted at any moment by the change of a single circumstance or an extraordinary event that would bring hidden conflicts to the surface. As witnessed in other settlements, it could be enough to turn the life of the village—thus far seen as peaceful—upside down if a mayor is elected with a very strong commitment to a “law and order platform”. Punitive measures regulating the poor and Roma, as well as an openly racist way of talking to the local elite, calls forth old grievances and prejudices from the memory of the majority, generating fear for Roma families. It can also happen that the area in which the Roma families live appears to be a “good investment” to someone speculating in property, or that the local actors in the economy simply feel more and more that their abilities to compete economically are harmed by the presence of Roma families. The leaders of the settlement cannot, or would rather not, represent the interests of Roma families over those of the economic entrepreneurs who are intertwined with the local elite. Another source of sharp conflict between local Roma and non-Roma is when a single, more populous Roma family happens to move into the settlement, which can “tip the balance” of Roma that can still be “sustained” by the settlement and its institutions (e.g. schools).

5 Vlach Roma are called *kolompár* by the Bheas of Baranya County – the original meaning of the word is “wandering metalworker”.

Map 2. Settlements of Hungary in 2011 by the rate of self-declared Roma population



By Bálint Koós 2013.

3. Limited opportunities in public education

The system of public education in Hungary is selective, segregated, and polarized (Havas, Kemény, and Liskó 2002; Havas and Liskó 2005; Kertesi and Kézdi 2012). A close relationship exists between the level of education attained and the family background of students. School systems do not attempt to balance out the inequalities of children arriving from various economic, social, and cultural environments. In fact, they often exacerbate them. Most children coming from poor families, both Roma and non-Roma, face exclusion, will endure a school career replete with failure, and will probably not receive any qualifications that will allow them to enter the primary labor market. In other words, Hungary's system of education contributes to the cycle and permanence of poverty and social exclusion. This is despite the fact that attempts have been made by the Ministry of Education between 2002 and 2010 to remedy the extreme inequalities of the Hungarian public education system through several corrective measures. Free school choice by parents posed the greatest obstacle for the former government targeting integration for it had been the major cause of the phenomenon known as "white flight"; however, as of now no one expects any successive governments to deprive parents of that right, widely regarded as an important achievement of the 1989/90 regime change. Despite this, research has shown positive results for integration, such as the improvement of the results of students studying in integrated classes, as well as the improvement in their self-esteem and self-confidence (Kézdi and Surányi 2008). The government that came to power in 2010, however, talked about the total failure of integration policies; even the expression "integration" itself was replaced by "catching up" in the text of the new Act on Public Education, which also included other radical reforms.

3.1 At the edge of schooling—the situation of Special Education Needs children and private students

The number of Special Education Needs (SEN) children, as well as their segregated or integrated education, was developing in accordance with legal regulations and state financing. After the 2003 modification of the Act on Public Education, the number of SEN children did not decrease; the budgetary requirements put special emphasis on SEN and actually incentivized schools to classify as many children as possible as meeting SEN qualifications. Their numbers only started to decrease after another modification to the law in 2007. At the same time, the number of SEN students studying in integrated education consistently increased, while the number and proportion of students educated in a segregated environment decreased. In other words, both the notion of SEN and the labeling of such children were preserved, even though integration was being carried out (Eróss and Kende 2010).

The only school in our sample where both the number and the proportion of SEN children are sufficiently high so that only half are taught in integrated classes is the Encs primary school. Most pupils in that class are from the ghettoized part of town and could not be educated at the local side-school. In other schools we researched, the majority of SEN children were taught in an integrated fashion. Integration characteristically involves the introduction and the putting into practice of innovative methods of teaching that serve inclusive education.

A significant difference is seen among the teaching staff of the various schools based on their level of commitment towards taking concrete steps towards desegregation. There are institutions where the renewal of a teaching methodology has been necessary due to competition for grants, i.e. it was the only way for them to receive EU funds to renew their infrastructure. When methodological changes are implemented by force or necessity, against the will of the teachers, and when emotional acceptance is lacking, integration will remain only formal. The majority of teachers at the Sásd primary school still hold the opinion that the interests of SEN children suffer as a result of integrated teaching. They feel that SEN children can still enjoy success in their own smaller groups with methods customized to their skills, and that they are simply lost in large classes and plagued by failures due to a difference in ability too great to bridge, not to mention being ostracized by their peers. Since the attention of teachers is too focused on trying to cope with SEN children, the interests of the other non-SEN children suffer, and therefore some cannot develop at an adequate pace. There are schools where SEN education is officially integrated, but in practice SEN children are handled in separate classes (Hungarian grammar and literature, history, and mathematics), and are grouped with other students who suffer from learning disabilities or behavioral problems. We must add that teachers committed to inclusive teaching and who incorporate it into their daily practice have also emphasized that integration can only be successful in small classes and with a small number (e.g. 2–4) of SEN children per class.

The number and proportion of home-schooled students were extremely low in the schools we researched. The only exception was the side-school of the Encs primary school, where children coming from the ghetto soon became too old due to absenteeism, grade repetition, or early pregnancy, and as a result they were classified as private students. Typical practice at the majority of schools is that the process of qualifying someone as a private student is only initiated as a last resort, with the schools trying to keep children within the system of institutions for as long as possible, or at least until they complete eight grades of primary school. Unfortunately, in the settlements with the worst poverty, more and more girls are classified each year as private students due to pregnancy.

3.2 Patterns of segregation

In the primary schools of the settlements we researched, the proportion of Roma children was not simply higher than the national average,⁶ it was also higher than the proportion of Roma compared to the total population: the estimated rate of Roma students at more than half of the schools exceeded 60%, especially in the villages (e.g. 13 of the 25 schools researched). In other words, one could declare that Roma and/or poor children study almost exclusively at village schools which lack the resources to finance the higher costs of commuting to city schools. At the same time the schools in cities or local centers are trying—even at the cost of losing possible development funds—to sustain segregation. The local elite and the middle class always find ways to keep their children away from the Roma and/or poor children. Non-Roma parents, and recently even Roma parents who are better off or who strive towards upward social mobility and have ambitions for the schooling of their children, rely upon the free choice of schools. Many refuse to enroll their children in the district where they belong, opting instead to send them to one of the neighboring small towns with a lower proportion of Roma, in institutions that purportedly provide higher levels of school services. In the micro-regions we researched, such schools existed in Nagyecsed, Mátészalka, Törökszentmiklós and Encs.

The high proportion of Roma children at the district schools in the settlements researched in the micro-region of Sásd (Mindszentgodisa, Vásárosdombó) is due to earlier instances of selective migration involving the small villages of the school districts, with the effect being the aging of the non-Roma society and the higher number of Roma children. “White flight” is generally not characteristic of the schools within the Sásd micro-region; with few exceptions, parents enroll their children at the district primary school, there is no traffic between the schools of the micro-region, and children are rarely enrolled in schools outside the micro-region. One reason given by our interviewees was the familiar atmosphere of the schools, with individual attention paid to each child, and education customized to individual children. There is no way segregated schooling of Roma children could take place in these schools due to the low number of children, and none has taken place so far. Schools that accept more and more disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma children face the problem, though, that traditional methods of discipline and pedagogy simply do not work with children struggling with a whole list of social and cultural disadvantages, in addition to learning and behavioral problems, all arising from their roots in poverty. We can say that such schools are forced to establish innovative methods of teaching, entailing the acquisition and introduction of inclusive principles and methods.

Along with the small schools in the villages of Baranya County, which have a high proportion of Roma students, the case of the Forró primary school from the Encs micro-region also shows that having adequate teaching tools and an adequately prepared and committed staff can bring about success in segregated institutions frequented by a majority of Roma children. In contrast to the small schools of Baranya, almost all non-Roma parents in the village of Forró enroll their children at the Encs primary school instead of the local one. In the Forró School, Roma students are taught almost exclusively, and teachers have been doing all they can for decades to get their students to complete schooling successfully and carry on studying at a secondary school that can provide them with a general certificate/matriculation.

6 According to the calculations of Kertesi and Kézdi (2005), the proportion of Roma students among all primary school children is circa 15%.

In recent years, schools maintained by churches have been playing a stronger and stronger role in assisting segregation in education. The number of schools maintained by a church increased by almost a quarter in 2011–2012 from the previous year (Váradi n.d.). The reason behind the increasing activity of churches in maintaining institutions is partly out of financial necessity. Due to decreasing budgets, many municipalities can only maintain their schools through extraordinary efforts; at the same time, religious church maintenance is preferred by the state, as shown by the extra funds accorded to institutions run by churches (Váradi n.d.).⁷ Most of the church-maintained schools openly offer education to the non-Roma middle class.

The Protestant Church has maintained schools in Törökszentmiklós and Nagyecséd since the 1990s. Until the recent change of principals, Roma children used to attend the Törökszentmiklós primary school; however, since the change in leadership only non-Roma have been accepted. Through entry examinations, selection is performed on the basis of the children's abilities, which in practice means that Roma children will not, with very few exceptions, be able to enroll. Our experience has been that most of the Roma children who have been accepted "do not look like Roma," plus their siblings may have attended the same school. A few years ago another primary school in the city was taken over by the Roman Catholic Church. With the development of church-maintained schools, the fate of the primary school in neighboring Tiszapüspöki was also sealed.

Over the past twenty years, more and more non-Roma parents enrolled their children at one of the church-maintained primary schools in Törökszentmiklós, and with 80% Roma, the primary school in Tiszapüspöki can already be regarded as a ghetto school. The National Roma Minority Self-Government assumed the duties of maintaining the school as of autumn 2012, and the fact that the Tiszapüspöki School was "officially" declared a Roma school made the handful of non-Roma parents flee.

The Protestant Church at first only operated a secondary school in Nagyecséd, but it opened an additional primary school with a system of gradual entry⁸ in September 2012. The use of this church-maintained primary school by the Protestant Church can be explained as a means of segregation for the local middle class. The local primary school, maintained by the municipality, allowed segregation within its walls by establishing a "special music class" reserved for non-Roma children which resulted in, among other things, even the talented children from the families of nationally and internationally acclaimed Vlach Gypsy musician families being prevented from access. The mayor elected in 2002, along with the new principal, tried to challenge segregation and relax the "rules". Presently there are two or three talented Roma students in every "special music class". The founders of the local school maintained by the Protestant Church were probably scared of the possible "results" of the process of doing away with segregation—although it started slowly and gradually. One can see a similar strategy in the town of Encs, with the Roman Catholic Church as the protagonist in this case: the church-maintained school has become active in reproducing segregation, and everyone except Roma living in poverty and exclusion (the Church, the municipal government, the local middle class and the local elite, as well as the few

7 Churches that maintain schools also receive supplementary funds, in addition to the basic budgetary funding which is theoretically the equivalent of the municipal supplementary funds, thus churches have no need to rely upon their own resources to supplement the maintenance costs of schools. The amount of that side school subsidy grew by 21% in 2011 compared to the previous year, to HUF 230,000 per student (and remained the same in 2012), while the state budget also paid compensation to churches for unpaid funds they were thought to have qualified for earlier. http://www.hazaeshaladas.hu/ftp/hesh_kozoskassza_elemezes_kozoktatas_public.pdf

8 Hungarian: *felmenő rendszer* – a complex system of gradual integration, mostly starting in the first grade and the fifth grade.

upwardly mobile Roma families) has an interest in the maintenance and the full separation of segregated schools and side schools.

3.3 Opportunities for further studies

The majority of Roma students continue their studies in vocational schools. A few vocational classes exist in almost every micro-region, solely to serve the purpose of covering students with an administrative certification for having been enrolled somewhere. This results in “phantom” classes in such schools. These classes are based on the obligatory school age, and are supposed to accept every student rejected by other educational institutions. Trade and vocational schools (e.g. in Encs and Mátészalka) typically provide children with “traditional” trades for which there has long been no demand in the labor market of the micro-region. There is no way to learn basic professional practices, and businesses only rarely employ school students. Ninety percent of students in trade schools, with the most limited prospects, are Roma. Many arrive who are already older than the obligatory age and over half of the students drop out before the end of the first year.

We learned of one vocational school that offers marketable skills in Sásd; the school for waiters and cooks offers vocational secondary education for 79 students and a vocational school diploma for 108 students, with the latter including cooks, waiters and, more recently, pastry chefs. This school is trying to provide Roma and non-Roma children with professions that are (or at least appear to be) valuable on the job market. It attempts to provide skills to diligent, ambitious students and offer them some professional practice in Germany. According to the school’s data, nearly 70% of its graduates were able to find jobs, with many trying their luck abroad; the school’s teachers attempt to help them prepare for language tests with extra classes provided after regular school hours. Even in these schools, however, a high proportion of students never finish their studies. Drop-out rates are high in almost all vocational schools within the micro-regions: about one in five students, on average, will leave the institution, with a similarly high proportion of private students dropping out as well. The reasons for dropping out often include early pregnancy, the inability to finance the costs of commuting to school, or a notion that “the boy should already be working.” Almost all vocational schools complain that it is next to impossible to find places for Roma youth to practice their trades. For example, no one would hire a Roma youth for practice as a shop assistant, because that would “drive business away.” Altogether, we can draw the conclusion that trade schools are a dead-end street for Roma youth, and only a few isolated exceptions—solely to confirm the general rule—will end up in the primary labor market. It is not only those who fail to complete their studies that are destined to be unemployed, dependent on social transfers or occasional payments for illegal work, but it is the overwhelming majority of people who have acquired a trade or vocation who face this fate.

A dwindling number of Roma students arrive at secondary schools that offer diplomas/general certificates, but for those who do, completion is uncertain. It often happens that freshmen at the secondary school are reassigned to a vocational school due to learning disabilities and failures. Successful secondary studies show a great variance among the micro-regions. One primary reason is that there are no traditions to back up the schooling experiments of Roma youth pursuing further (secondary) studies in the micro-region of Mátészalka-Nagyecsed or Encs, or for the NGO initiatives behind them. From that point of view, the Sásd micro-region enjoys the most favorable situation; the Gandhi Secondary School of Pécs is primarily attractive to Roma youth because education there is free of charge. Many students apply for the Arany János Scholarship Program

for Talented Youth,⁹ and thanks to the NGOs operating in the city of Pécs, as well as supportive networks, many actually manage to complete their studies. Many Roma youth from Törökszentmiklós and its micro-region choose the secondary school in the nearby city of Szolnok, which also offers this program. It is important for Roma youth to be certain that they will study in an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion there.

Primary schools do not have tools at their disposal to follow the fates of their graduates, and secondary schools are not required to provide feedback; thus we have received no systematic information on the typical careers of Roma children that were enrolled in secondary schools. We heard of young people with degrees in the Sásd cluster who had difficulties finding jobs if they returned to their settlement, as well as talented youth who failed, dropped out of higher studies, and whose whereabouts are unknown. The principal of the Vásárosdombó School said she had many talented Roma students, but hardly any completed secondary school, and none could enter an institution of higher education.

In light of all this, one could ask what it is that an inclusive atmosphere at a primary school and the application of innovative methods can achieve. Perhaps a school principal would turn this question around and ask what results one could have without an inclusive school and without these methods? The answer is: nothing. School can arouse students' interest and can motivate them, the performance of students can improve, absenteeism and the repeating of grades can decrease—and integrated small schools certainly offers evidence of such changes. Schools cannot change the home environment of children or eliminate sources of exclusion: the unemployment of parents, poverty, and the inability to plan ahead for the future. A lack of financial security from their family, an uncertain future, a lack of a supportive environment, and a lack of help can break Roma children's school careers no matter how successfully they begin. As the principal of Vásárosdombó put it, *"You can only make certain that someone gets 'from a putri to a university degree'¹⁰ with financial and professional help lasting from preschool to college".*

This dilemma was also voiced in connection with EU developments. Important projects supported by the EU have been awarded through competitions between educational institutions in recent years, and have helped to improve educational infrastructure as well as the extension and improvement of public educational services, among them the application of inclusive teaching practices. All of these, in our experience, have had a direct influence upon Roma children, and by extension their families, with clear perceivable positive results (e.g. smoother transitions from preschool to primary school, a decrease in grade repetition, a reduction in school conflicts, and a general improvement of school grades). It is problematic, though, that at the completion of projects, certain services are suddenly discontinued (e.g. the school psychologist, mentors and extracurricular activities). Another problem is that services available throughout preschool and primary school are generally missing in secondary school. One cannot forecast the possible long-term effects of these projects later in the lives of these children. We can say, though, that in general, social inclusion, successful schooling, and the social mobility of Roma and non-Roma children living in poverty cannot be secured merely through projects; without mainstream policies to promote and sustain inclusion, such efforts fail to contribute to the prevention or alleviation of patterns of poverty and social exclusion.

9 The Arany János Program supports talented disadvantaged children who study in secondary schools that provide access to higher education.

10 The word *putri* in Hungarian is a shack, shanty or hut usually associated with Roma.

4. Roma employment—lack of opportunities

When we asked our Roma and non-Roma interviewees about the number of Roma of active age who officially have jobs in their neighborhood or settlement, they estimated it to be not higher than 5–10% anywhere. People were able to count by hand the number of Roma working in the settlement or commuting regularly to work from smaller settlements. This reflects the dramatic degree of Roma exclusion from the labor market.

With Hungary's shift towards a market economy, many branches of industry that used to offer jobs to large numbers of untrained Roma (e.g. agriculture, mining, heavy industry and construction) have either collapsed, or have continued to operate with only a fraction of their former employment capacities. Roma being pushed out of the primary job market is a process that has lasted over 20 years and has been reproduced over two generations; it has been the primary source of poverty and social exclusion, which at the same time has also been caused by other structural factors (Kertesi and Kézdi 2011). One of those factors is the lack of training of Roma youth, perpetuated by the school system, or training for roles without labor market value, which prevent Roma from entering the primary or legal job market. The peripheral location of the areas inhabited by Roma also makes it harder for both Roma and non-Roma in those locations to obtain jobs; getting to places with jobs is virtually impossible from the small village areas. There are hardly any employment opportunities in the villages or small settlements within the Encs and Sásd micro-regions; commuting, however, is impossible due to the extremely inconvenient public transportation schedules, which do not operate during typical working hours. Only automobile owners can commute from such villages—a “privilege” of the few. Most employers refuse to hire employees from distant settlements, while it is often not worth it for potential employees to accept jobs located far away due to the high costs of commuting and other associated costs (e.g. meals). From an employment perspective, Roma who live in settlements with better transportation links, or in central or larger locations, theoretically have better opportunities. We can say that official statistics generally show a lower rate of unemployment in these places, together with a higher rate of educational attainment, while in contrast, the smaller the settlement is, the higher the rate of unemployment and the higher the ratio of people with a low level of education. However, our experience suggests that there are no practical differences between the employment opportunities of Roma living in large settlements and those living in small villages. Narrow capacities of employment, or low demand and a (potentially) high supply of labor, as well as the large number of people seeking jobs, allows employers to select from Roma and non-Roma applicants. Employers normally choose non-Roma, even if the candidates have identical qualifications, professional knowledge, and experience.

The extraordinarily low Roma employment rate in the settlements means that only a few Roma families have members (typically male) with official jobs in the primary job market. The main sources of disposable income for the majority of Roma families in the four clusters—apart from welfare benefits—are public works and, primarily, insecure irregular employment through personal networks.

We must establish a difference between local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and multinationals regarding legal Roma employment. The latter are characterized by “color-blind” hiring policies; companies typically employing trained workers hire Roma and non-Roma alike, as long as they satisfy the selection criteria. Throughout our research in Mátészalka and Encs, we heard about a significant number of Roma workers employed at multinational companies

outside of our research area. Unfortunately, one multinational company, widely regarded as the largest employer in Baranya County, shut down, which had a grave effect on Roma living in the Sásd micro-region; the company used to transport Roma and non-Roma workers from several villages to its Pécs plant to work in three shifts. Some enterprises with local roots and Hungarian owners do employ Roma, though generally in low numbers, with the significant exception being the Sásd agricultural enterprise, the successor to the former agricultural co-operative. We were told one quarter of their workforce is Roma. Another typical fact about Roma workers in such jobs is that those employed have been working there for a long time; the basis for enduring employment is the satisfactory execution of work duties and trust. Since the hiring of new workers typically happens through social relationships and networks of trust—e.g. people who already work at the company recommend someone to be hired—the fact that only a relatively low number of Roma are represented among the employees undermines the prospects for additional Roma hiring.

It is our experience that the lowest rates of Roma employment are found in the service industry and in public institutions. The cause of the former may not be only due to the lack of professional training. We heard of cases where students at secondary schools, or those unemployed who were retrained with the help of the Employment Center, were not hired for professional practice at local shops, for example. Employers typically avoid employing Roma for jobs where they would be in direct contact with non-Roma colleagues. Public institutions will typically employ Roma as public workers, e.g. cleaners, kitchen help, or doormen. Roma have participated in the implementation of certain development projects, as members of management teams or as employees in the field locations of Sásd and Mátészalka. That is rarer than being hired as public employees though, and we have only heard of a few isolated cases of Roma preschool or school-teachers (in the research area around Sásd), or for other teaching roles (at Tiszabő in the cluster of Törökszentmiklós).

The most important factor for or against the employment of Roma employees is the attitude of the employer/entrepreneur towards Roma. With one exception, we did not encounter any directly exclusionary racist discourse about why potential employers would avoid hiring Roma people. The only exception was in Tiszabő, where employers openly stated that they would not hire Roma from the stigmatized ghetto village. Potential employers frequently say that the reason why they would not hire Roma employees is because Roma do not have the professional qualifications and know-how required at the given company. In contrast to such practices of indirect exclusion, the practices of direct exclusion are largely based on the public discourse about Roma, amplified by personal experiences living in local communities. In the majority of such cases, the arguments of the interviewees were based on generalizations from personal experience with individual Roma people, applied broadly to the entire Roma community.

The most typical form of Roma irregular employment is seasonal labor. This has traditionally meant practices at some smaller settlements along the lines of client-patron relationships (which have been fading away in both significance and frequency); we have heard of cases, mainly in the field locations around Sásd, of non-Roma families sometimes having a Roma “caretaker” who performs all minor jobs around the house and takes care of the gardening. Some employment opportunities as seasonal laborers at large fruit orchards or vegetable gardens are also offered to Roma in the villages of the Mátészalka-Nagyecsed micro-region. However, due to the economic crisis, indebtedness and poverty, non-Roma have also appeared in the day laborers’ job market. The clearly observable gradual exclusion of Roma from seasonal and accessory work can be partly attributed to the appearance of non-Roma in those fields, as well as to the technological

developments of formerly labor-intensive industries realized in recent years. There are examples of seasonal Roma commuting in Törökszentmiklós and Mátészalka in agriculture and for jobs in the food processing industry.

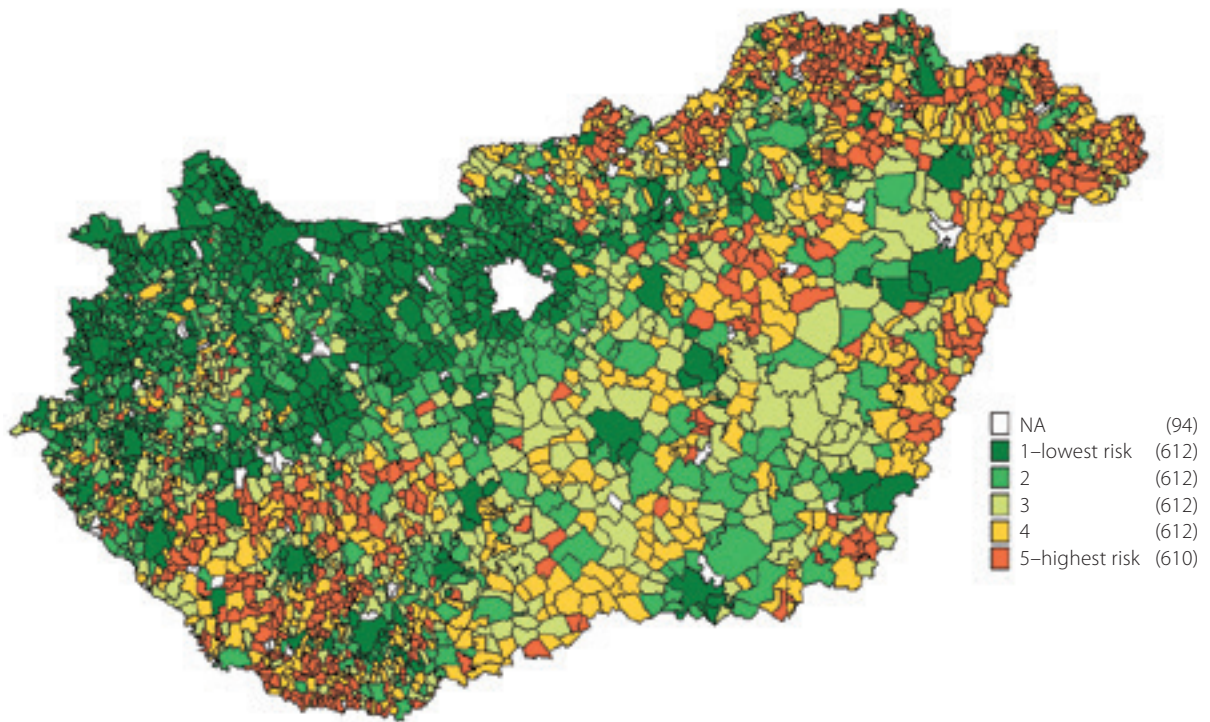
For decades, the construction industry used to be a secure livelihood, involving long-distance commuting for Roma men from the Mátészalka–Nagyecsed region. That sector can still be deemed significant, and that is where we can see Roma entrepreneurs as well. Since Roma entrepreneurs employing Roma employees are generally the last choice for implementation of construction projects and large infrastructural investments, and even then usually not as main contractors but as subcontractors, they are the most vulnerable. With the crisis also reaching the construction industry, the decreasing number of assignments has caused perceptible losses to such enterprises, which usually work with only a fraction of their former workforce. Today, construction work typically demands commuting as well, since all significant development projects are realized in more developed regions of Hungary. Forestry, which has traditionally offered some jobs and livelihood to Roma men in the micro-region of Sásd, is typically limited today to jobs performed in local or neighboring forests. Due to a lack of capital, Roma are usually unable to start their own forestry enterprise or sawmill, thus in the best case they work for an entrepreneur (sometimes on the black market), and in the worst cases, on forestry-related public works programs.

Public works offer a livelihood to the majority of Roma contending with short- and long-term unemployment; it has turned into a universal tool to handle poverty and permanent unemployment in recent years, as intended by the government (Csoba and Nagy 2012; Bass 2010). Participation of Roma in public works is influenced by several factors: the financial conditions allocated by the central budgetary organs, the number and ethnic composition of those in need in a given locality, the practices of the municipal government towards social and public works and, naturally, by the mayor's attitude towards Roma. We have heard of only a single case where the mayor did not involve Roma living in a segregated neighborhood in public works. The majority of those involved in ghetto villages—as well as those undergoing a process of ghettoization—are Roma in any case; therefore the selection of public workers does not happen according to an ethnic point of view. We have identified two typical hiring strategies by the municipal governments. One is when they try to rotate as many qualified people into public works as they can, which means short-term jobs or working hours that last only four to six hours per day. Another typical way is that—using their privileges of selection—they provide those unemployed with 8–12 months of public works of eight hours per day for those who “can be made to work” or “are able to work”. In other words, those who deserve it are typically hired within the so called Start agricultural program,¹¹ while others are offered brief jobs or less valuable work. Due to its selective nature, one characteristic of the public works system is “skimming,” which will—no matter which strategy is followed—result in many long-term unemployed Roma and non-Roma being invited only for 30 days of “voluntary” labor. Without those 30 days the workers would lose their qualification to access welfare (“employment substitute allowance”). It goes without saying that 30 days of “regular work” per year are not nearly enough to maintain basic work skills. Public works briefly provide the people and families involved with income somewhat higher than the employment substitute allowance, but it is still lower than the minimum wage, and typically will not transition people into the primary job market. The benevolence of the mayor and the work manager is

11 Through the Start agricultural program, public workers cultivate different vegetables on the land of local communities which are sold to the public kitchen, local poor or, in rare instances, on the free market. They work ten months per year, which means they have “permanent work”.

most important in apportioning public work opportunities and time off in such a way that Roma are able to seek alternative ways of generating income. Public work has become an alternative in many locations to seasonal and informal work; there are people who would prefer to perform public work than to seek day labor. That, however, increases the distance between unemployed Roma and non-Roma from the world of work organized on a market basis. Public works is a tool to temporarily alleviate Roma—and non-Roma—from poverty, but at the same time, it holds the people involved trapped in poverty and exclusion from where there are few paths leading out.

Map 3. Risk of deprivation by settlements, 2011



By Bálint Koós 2011.

5. Roma voices: Roma representation and social-political participation in public life and local development

While opportunities for Roma to participate in public life and politics are regulated by the framework provided by laws and resources, activities of Roma in public life are strongly defined by the exclusion of the majority of Roma and their communities from the labor market, society, and economic life.

Advocacy promoting the interests of Roma is usually left to the minority self-governments in Hungary, due to a lack of organization and weakness of the non-governmental sector, especially Roma NGOs. We have only come across a few active Roma organizations; according to our experiences, the activities of Roma NGOs have been severely compromised by the general dwindling of Hungarian funds from which NGOs can apply or compete. Only a few Roma organizations

have managed to stay afloat, by participating in several tenders and programs over the past few years, generally with the help of larger organizations (e.g. the Red Cross, the Open Society Foundations, and Autonomy Foundation).

The duties and opportunities of minority self-governments are regulated by the Act on Minorities (Act LXXVII 1993). The first minority self-governments were formed in 1994, and this new form of institution brought forth new opportunities for Hungarian minorities, including Roma, to assume political roles and articulate and represent minority interests. At the same time, the system it created could not fit into the almost 30 years of history of the Roma political sphere; rather its establishment was the result of meeting the requirements of EU institutions as well as the political ambitions championing the interests of Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary. As a result, the local Roma Minority Self-Governments (RMSGs) have fitted their activities to the expectations of their communities instead of trying to realize cultural autonomy, and have mainly undertaken welfare tasks. They are not institutions of identity politics, but rather function as local welfare lobbies, and as a result social questions often gain an ethnic flavor (Molnár 2004).

At the settlements we researched, most minority self-governments were unable to make sufficient use of the framework of the Act on Minorities and Nationalities. The law itself does not help these self-governments decide how to interpret the establishment of “cultural autonomy” for Roma people living in abject poverty, or the enforcement of equal opportunities, etc., and it does not extend the full rights of jointly made decisions to the hands of minority self-governments.

RMSGs do not have the legal competence or the financial assets to adequately address poverty in Roma communities. Due partly to limited legal possibilities, and partly to the poverty and exclusion afflicting most Roma communities, cooperation between municipal governments and RMSGs—if it exists at all—is typically limited to welfare issues; the President of the RMSG or its members participate in making decisions on extending extraordinary welfare assistance and/or assigning public works. That, however, creates a trap for RMSGs. For example, the task is left to the RMSG to assign who should carry out public works. They put it as follows: “*We have to already segregate ourselves,*” separating those who want work from those who do not. Since only a few people are employed, everyone accuses the RMSG of providing work only to their own relatives. At the same time, that means they have to take responsibility away from the municipal government in declaring who among the needy is deemed worthy and who is not, while adopting the practice of considering public works as one of the tools of regulating poor people. Participation in the division of dwindling and inadequate resources, from assistance, grants, and opportunities to organizing public works, will inevitably lead to conflict and tension in the poor Roma communities, which is why we found that some RMSGs refuse to participate in such decision making. That, though, is also a trap, because it reduces its legitimacy in the eyes of the Roma community, as well as in the perception of the majority society and the local municipal government.

Poverty, unemployment, and the lack of training also paralyze the operation of RMSGs, including the articulation and representation of Roma interests. Typically, most leaders and members of RMSGs themselves also struggle with existential problems. Some are unable to spend time on public affairs because the necessities of making a living force them to commute long distances, or even abroad. Others themselves are unemployed, poor, and in need of assistance or public work, and, as permanent clients of the local social assistance systems, are financially dependent on the municipal government and the mayor. Our research supports the conclusion that without having a minimal financial safety net, no significant activities can be expected in the field of public life, nor can autonomous activities of NGOs or minority organizations be shaped. Some RMSG

leaders therefore question the wisdom of the entire system: *"I think the whole thing with the Roma Self Government is irrelevant. We cannot protect our rights; I cannot even protect my own rights, not to mention those of others."*

Only closer, deeper research can answer the question of what factors contribute to the stability of RMSG leaders and representatives in individual settlements, e.g. satisfaction, passivity, neutrality, and/or divisions within the Roma community. The RMSG positions have been held by members of the same family for several electoral cycles in a few locations—since 1994 in some cases—and in some the RMSG operates with minimal or no activity compared to earlier times. We have also seen settlements where a new, younger generation, dissatisfied with the minority leadership of earlier times, has managed to take over the seats of RMSG. In one of these villages, while the municipal body of representatives did invite the newly recomposed Roma Minority Self-Government to its sessions, in compliance with the law, the RMSG representatives were seated in the last row at the far end of the hall—one way to make them feel their inferior status. One Roma representative who had long been successful in advocacy work, stopped participating in the sessions of the local body of representatives due to personal conflicts with the mayor, and because it seemed to him that it was increasingly harder to realize anything in the interest of the Roma community. The municipal government is trying to cooperate with the former RMSG president on issues involving Roma since the mayor has a solid relationship with him based on the loyalty of the former president.

This case shows that municipal governments play a crucial role in the operation of minority self-governments since they are not obliged by law to accept minority self-governments as autonomous political players. Municipal governments can arbitrarily select those techniques which help or hinder the advocacy of minority interests. However, we have heard of a few obvious and sharp conflicts similar to this case in our research. The leaders of most municipalities and minority self-governments emphasize that the relationships and cooperation between them are good. At the same time, municipal governments see minority self-governments as weightless—which to some extent is justified—since the law does not enable them to have a meaningful say in local decisions. Frequently, mayors argue that there are no separate Roma and non-Roma interests in the settlement, and that since there are no conflicts, it makes no sense to conduct separate Roma politics. The only practice common among the various municipalities is that they do not regard Roma representatives as equal political partners; local leaders relate to them, both officially and in person, in a paternalistic manner at best, and with an element of social exclusion at worst. The relationship between the municipal and minority self-governments is well exemplified by the everyday reference to the vernacular names given to the two bodies, which suggests both sub- and super-ordination: there is the "big" local government and the "small" local government.

It is our experience that the most successful minority self-governments are those whose representatives are, at the same time, also members of the local body of representatives. Villages with a majority Roma population belong to this group, where the mayor and some of the representatives of the settlement are Roma. Of course the mere fact that the leaders of a settlement are Roma does not say much about the quality and the efficiency of local politics, which can only be understood as a result of the economic, social, and spatial exclusion of the local Roma society. While in the one case the Roma community was able to produce an elite that provides an example for others and "keeps the village in order," relying upon a paternalistic style of leadership, in the other village that has sunk into a permanent ghetto existence, puts the inhabitants at the mercy of Roma leaders who monopolize the extremely limited local resources.

In other cases, Roma were elected to a body of representatives with a non-Roma majority. One of the most successful of the RMSGs in the Encs micro-region is that of Forró, and the reason interviewees gave was that they have had Roma representatives in the municipal government since 1994. The list of members of the RMSG is almost identical to that of the village representatives, which in practice means the municipal government cooperates on a daily basis with the RMSG, and a sort of division of labor has been formed between the two bodies. Such strong cooperation and paralleling of interests is not only exceptional in the micro-region, it is rare in any settlement in Hungary. There are still limits to representing the interests of Roma, even in this well-functioning model. With non-Roma children being taken to school in neighboring Encs for the past 20 years, a segregated school has gradually been formed, which—in the view of the Roma representatives—infringes upon the interests of Roma children going there; at the same time they understand there is nothing they can do to stop that from happening.

It is rare when members of the RMSG are endowed with decision-making rights. The different legal statuses of the municipal governments from those of RMSGs, and the extremely limited scope of decisions RMSGs can participate in, means efficient Roma representation can only be assured if Roma can participate (if possible, in proportion to their numbers) in the body of municipal representatives. Many villages did not elect Roma running for seats of representatives, and Roma failed to get elected in 2010 in some settlements where they had been working for several electoral cycles. The latter could partly be the result of the modification of the electoral laws, which sharply decreased both the number of electable municipal representatives and that of minority self-government representatives. Finding the causes of this phenomenon would require a deeper local investigation. Both Roma and non-Roma interviewees mentioned the lack of adequate and well-prepared Roma candidates who enjoyed the trust of both Roma and non-Roma voters. Some of the mayors thought it was important to emphasize that Roma themselves failed to vote for these unelected Roma candidates. Few people from Roma communities situated in economic, social, and spatial exclusion areas, which are often deeply divided with conflicts, are able to gather enough capital in terms of finance, culture, and above all, trust, to enable them to participate effectively in local public affairs.

Our experience shows that the participation of Roma is also limited with regards to decision-making related to local development. In recent years, three micro-regions (Encs, Sásd and Mátészalka-Nagyecsed) from our clusters were classified among those “most disadvantaged”, which means that significant development resources are targeting the alleviation of Roma and non-Roma poverty (e.g. for disadvantaged micro-regions, “Combat Child Poverty”, the Social Rejuvenation Operative Program, etc.). As a result of local planning and allocation of resources, the villages which had already been centers, along with the more active settlements having better lobbying capacities, were strengthened, which increased existing differences within the micro-regions. Other factors also contributed; for example, only small amounts of developmental resources were allocated to ghetto settlements with the deepest poverty in the Encs micro-region—they were all sidelined in the competition for resources, partly because they had no institutions or organizations to compete or participate for program resources. However, many projects were implemented in the micro-region of Sásd, and some in the two poorest villages, due to their earlier experience with projects and with the help of external organizations (Autonomy Foundation) that offered assistance. Within the micro-region of Nagyecsed and Mátészalka, project implementation concentrated on the small town of Nagyecsed, a sub-center of the official micro-region. On the one hand, the involvement included poor people from several settlements of their micro-region in projects, which was exemplary, and on the other hand, the

leadership of the settlement cooperated with the local Roma community leaders when planning and implementing projects.

The example of Nagyecsed is an exception to the general rule. Here the local Vlach Roma community is not only characterized by a better quality of life than Hungarian Roma living in the same settlement, but they also provide the settlement with many qualified young people (typically women) who work in the planning, implementation, and even in the management of projects to alleviate poverty. In other settlements, by contrast, Roma mainly appear as the target group of projects for the alleviation of poverty and, they generally do not participate in local planning (or only to a limited extent when the project planners interview and involve the leaders of the RMSG), and they have limited opportunities to represent Roma interests and needs. They rarely participate in the project implementation. This can be due to the job requirements for the management team and for people who can work in implementation (a certificate of higher education or secondary education, plus professional experience). Typically few people from the local Roma communities have such qualifications. Those who participate in the implementation of the aforementioned projects are mostly non-Roma people who are unemployed (teachers, social workers or development professionals). These projects have a significant employment capacity and can provide a livelihood for a few years to non-Roma inhabitants of some of the most disadvantaged areas who are threatened with unemployment and are sinking into poverty. Thus, projects have the ability to ease the tensions between Roma and non-Roma within the micro-regions. There are many examples where Roma employees were involved in the implementation of EU projects for the alleviation of poverty as assistants or mentors, which required and involved an informal mediating role between the professional management of the project and the local Roma. Although obtaining such a position may be helpful from a financial point of view, as well as a means of obtaining professional experience and building relationship capital, its fulfillment is not risk-free—it can end in failure if the expectations of management cannot be balanced with those of the various Roma groups. We have seen one such example case in the village of Kisvaszar, in the micro-region of Sásd.

In Kisvaszar, the head of the RMSG answered the invitation of the Autonomy Foundation (AF) and, within the Project Generation Facility supported by the Open Society Foundations and with help from the AF staff, succeeded to launch a project that was subsequently integrated into the Chance for Children Program within the micro-region. This is the only project in the framework of the Chance for Children Program that could rightly be called a “Roma project”, with the representatives of the local Roma community actively participating in its design and outcome. The head of the RMSG proposed that his wife become the assistant managing the Kisvaszar Community House. Her contract, however, was not renewed by the management when it expired, the reason being that she had been “unable to perform her work objectively enough and had been unable to separate the family backgrounds of the children involved in the program, and the existing conflicts and alliances among families”. A non-Roma woman who had moved to Kisvaszar two years prior succeeded her. This woman was selected out of all the applicants chiefly because she was not personally related to anyone in the village, and thus had no obligations towards anyone. The story of Kisvaszar exemplifies the reality that the professionals who implement projects—in this case, including one Roma social worker—do not have the tools to remedy the fault lines and conflicts of a local society on the road towards ghettoization.

6. Summary

Of those Hungarians suffering from persistent exclusion from the labor market, spatial segregation and deep poverty, Roma people are overrepresented: more than half of Roma households live in economic, social and spatial exclusion. Spatial and social exclusion of Roma communities is a result of complex processes: a lack of access to employment, low levels of education, residing in disadvantageous rural areas, and living in derelict housing conditions. All of these challenges reinforce and intersect each other.

This part of our research presents the various forms and causes of the marginalization of Roma, chiefly based upon our interviews with institutions and our observations during our fieldwork. We have focused on the linkage between the various forms and extent of institutional exclusion which appear in different parts of society (e.g. education, employment, political representation), including the segregated spatial arrangements that reflect boundaries between Roma and non-Roma. The selected clusters represent Hungary's typical rural areas with significant residential segregation: two variations of hilly areas with small villages and two configurations of North Great Plain settlement patterns with larger towns and villages. All of them are in peripheral and disadvantaged regions both in spatial, economic and social terms.

The economic crisis following the regime change resulted in serious social and territorial polarization in Hungary. Owing to the new conditions brought about by the change of regime, Hungary's economy almost completely collapsed. The economic boom, which commenced in the middle of the 1990s, took place with significant regional differences: in the north-eastern and eastern parts of the country few new investments were carried out, therefore few new job opportunities emerged. Indeed, job opportunities almost entirely disappeared from those parts of the country where formerly, in the Socialist era, centers of heavy industry and agriculture provided work for many people. Accordingly all of the selected micro-regions situated in these disadvantaged regions are similar in one respect: Roma families have been almost completely squeezed out from the primary job market.

Those who we spoke to were able to list all Roma with regular jobs in every settlement. That can partly be explained by the economic structure of the micro-regions; those forms of work that traditionally used to absorb Roma and non-Roma unskilled employees before the system change (large agricultural companies and factories) are hardly present, if at all, in the micro-regions. Almost every aspect of the economy is dominated by small companies with non-Roma ownership. Most of these companies do not employ Roma, with many citing the general lack of training and professional experience of Roma, while also voicing prejudiced opinions reflecting the prevalent discourse about Roma.

Foreign companies with "color-blind" employment policies typically do not operate in such micro-regions, and when such firms are found within a reasonable distance, their needs for trained workers indirectly result in further exclusion of Roma. The same can be observed in relation to the jobs offered in public services and the service sector. Roma are typically employed only for seasonal jobs, traditionally in agriculture and the construction industry, but the opportunities in those industries have also declined in recent years. With the disappearance of occasional work, the roles played by public works became more prominent, usually increasing the paternalistic relationship of dependence on the local authority.

The forms of social and spatial exclusion are determined by the social histories and patterns of ethnic co-existence established locally in the settlements/micro-regions, the positions of these micro-regions, and the characteristics of their settlement structures. There are significant differences in social history: while in the Sásd and Nagyecsed micro-regions several ethnic communities (Hungarians, Germans, Beash Roma, Vlach Roma and Hungarian Roma) have cohabited for a long time, ethnic mixing is limited to Roma living alongside Hungarians in the two other micro regions. Various patterns of coexistence and cooperation have only been formed between Roma and non-Roma in Sásd; in other words, among the micro-regions where we have carried out fieldwork, it is in Sásd where local society has the highest degree of tolerance and acceptance of differences. Here the economic and possible spatial exclusion of Roma has not resulted in a deterioration of relations between Roma and non-Roma, and neither can one record the formation of ethnically segmented institutions. The elementary school features an inclusive pedagogical program.

The geographical distribution of Roma families as well as their position within the settlement and their relationships with the majority society correlate with the size of the settlement and the number and ratio of Roma among the population. Although the communities targeted by our fieldwork had a considerable number of Roma families, this having been a criteria for sample selection, in the larger settlements of the Great Plain region, and in small cities functioning as centers of a region or a small village, there tended to be *more* Roma in absolute figures. However, they amounted to a lower ratio among the entire population. In settlements and small cities of larger populations Roma groups of several hundred were hardly visible or noticeable throughout the daily life of the settlement given that the increasingly segregated use of space and institutions reduced chance encounters, and undermined the relationships between Roma and non-Roma. However, in small communities daily encounters with Roma are inevitable in public areas and institutions. That means that in small communities Roma and non-Roma families end up acquiring the daily practices of coexistence and cooperation that, in larger communities, are possible to avoid.

One may even say that where the local majority society is still stable enough, and has the appropriate resources to maintain the spatial, social, and institutional segregation of Roma families, they will do so in most cases even specifying where, within the settlement, the Roma families may live. Whether Roma families live in one location or in several parts of the settlement reflects the status of segregation, separation, physical, mental, and symbolic boundaries of Roma and non-Roma, and different groups of Roma.

The challenges facing Roma families are determined by locality, and have been largely contingent upon the relationship with the local elite. All of this is reflected in the spatial arrangements of Roma habitation within the settlements. At the same time, segregated neighborhoods display a great degree of variation from settlement to settlement, and sometimes even within the same settlement.

Social distance between Roma and non-Roma is projected by either sharp or somewhat blurred physical or mental boundaries dividing Roma streets from the rest of settlement, which also determine the opportunities for social contacts and relations. Another factor that usually reflects the various assimilation attempts of the 1970s and 1980s, and today's levels of differentiation within local Roma society, along with its layered forms, is how many Roma families live in segregated neighborhoods versus how many live scattered throughout a given settlement. One

result of the territorial rearrangement processes of the 1970s and 1980s has been the process of ghettoization in villages, a special pattern of segregation. At the same time, we must differentiate between two kinds of Roma-only localities, although both share similar statistical characteristics: one type of ghetto village—generally a criminalized settlement—is where people live in extreme poverty, struggle with a total lack of social organization and a lack of connection to the institutions of the majority society; the other is a socially and ethnically homogenous village where everyday life is orderly and people have connections to the institutions of the majority society and the informal labor market.

Decentralized municipal governments do not always imply genuine local democracy: localities are frequently ruled by a small number of elites who divide the resources while holding all the keys to economic opportunity. The rest of the local society is more or less at their mercy. During our fieldwork we could not find any Roma NGOs that would have been able to independently enter and win a competition for grants; none could function independently from local relationships. Most local Roma representatives do not have livelihoods independent from the local elite, and they are sometimes themselves clients of local social assistance policies. As a result, Roma representatives will necessarily support the ideas of local elites in the hope of accessing additional resources. At the same time support means a commitment and a bargain, the basis of which is that they are supposed to accept the compromises offered by the local elite.

Local Roma Minority Self-Governments are not institutions of identity politics; rather they fulfill the functions of local social “lobbies”; cooperation between municipal and minority governments, and participation in local decision-making, are mostly limited to allocating social assistance funds and organizing public works. This frequently results in minority representatives being lured into a trap-like situation. Meager resources can almost never be divided without conflict. People in almost all the settlements unequivocally voiced the opinion that the only way to really represent Roma interests is if a Roma person is elected as a representative of the municipal government. We have found such positions in many of the settlements, and the only way for local Roma representatives to adequately fulfill their functions is to find allies among the body of representatives. At the same time, Roma society itself also has its own layers in every settlement. Being a municipal or a minority representative by itself is a rank, as a result of which such positions—as with those in the local non-Roma society—have been preserved by certain families.

We can highlight two areas where government measures have tried to influence the situation of Roma within the settlements over the past decade, and where there have been some attempts to alleviate the above-described strong local determinism. One of the most important development policies is a package of complex programs targeting the most disadvantaged territorial units. Among our micro-regions, the fact that three have been designated “most disadvantaged” (Encs, Sásd and Mátészalka-Nagyecsed) resulted in significant differences in their favor in contrast to Törökszentmiklós—which has no such status—due to its more favorable economic and social situation. A significant amount of resources have been at the disposal of communities in the most disadvantaged (LHH) micro-regions—although they have been altogether insufficient and sometimes spent unwisely. As a result, institutions in these micro-regions enjoy a far better position than before, while the development programs themselves offer some employment opportunities—primarily to the unemployed non-Roma—thus alleviating tension between Roma and non-Roma within the micro-region.

State education policies committed to significant measures of desegregation and targeted equal opportunities between 2002 and 2008. At the same time, in the primary schools of the

settlements, the proportion of Roma children was not simply higher than the national average, it was also higher than the proportion of Roma compared to the total population: the estimated rate of Roma students at more than half of the schools exceeded 60%, especially in the villages. We could observe that, almost exclusively, Roma and/or poor children study at village schools and lack the resources to commute to city schools, while the schools of cities or local centers are trying—even at the cost of losing possible development funds—to retain segregation.

The local elite and middle class always find ways to keep their children away from Roma and/or poor children, and one of the most widespread methods to achieve this is the establishment of schools maintained by churches. All of these processes were amplified by the central government's endeavor following 2010 to discontinue the desegregation and integration-oriented education policy which, in numerous instances, superseded even local integration efforts. In sum, we can draw the conclusion that government interventions have only been partially successful, due precisely to the local networks of interests they come up against. Local governments have fashioned most macro-level measures established by the government—sometimes targeting integration, but more recently exclusion—to suit the interests and the attitudes of the non-Roma local elite.

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FACES AND CAUSES OF ROMA MARGINALIZATION

Experiences from Romania

Enikő Vincze

The “**Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities**” inquiry explored the economic, political, demographic, and social forces at municipal and community level which shape practices and consequences of social exclusion and potential pathways to inclusion. **Phase 2** of this research focused on a representative sample of municipalities (20–30 per country) in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia to explore basic local social services and infrastructure provisions, conditions of political participation of the Roma, and local interventions targeting Roma inclusion. This research phase relied on structured field research collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This short country report is based on the **Final Country Report on the Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Romania**, edited in June 2013 by Enikő Vincze, with contributions from Cătălin Dîrțu, Adrian-Nicolae Furtună, Margareta Herțanu, Iulia-Elena Hossu, Elena Mihalache, Rafaela Maria Muraru, Florina Pop, Mihaela Preda, and Daniel Tudora. The Short Country report is also co-authored by this group in the sense that these colleagues collected and processed the field data. However, overall interpretation and presentation of the data was done by Enikő Vincze (the coordinator of the Romanian research team), therefore, this report is single-authored. The text refers to “us/we” or “I” according to fieldwork knowledge or interpretation. The Romanian research team also included Ramona Făcăleț, Andrei Mihail Tudor and Elena Trifan (as a volunteer) at the level of localities, and Nicolae Arsene, Violeta Dumitru, Victor Făcăleț, Marcela Șerban and Alina Tuța at the county level.

1. Introduction

Phase 2 of the research 'Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Settings' identified a series of intersecting factors in Romanian localities that (re)produce the ethno-spatial segregation or separation of Roma. These sometimes are interwoven with economic deprivation or extreme poverty. By analyzing data collected in 25 settlements (covering five of the eight Romanian development regions) our aim was to offer insights into the ways advanced marginality created economically deprived and excluded (Romani) communities at local level (Wacquant 2008).¹

While focusing on localities, one has to also note that these area-based constellations are representative of the broader stage of Romania's post-1990 political economy. Although also characteristic of regimes prior to 1990, Roma marginalization is viewed here as part of a complex transformative process that began with the collapse of socialist industries and agriculture, which saw the birth of a market economy and which now is shaped by the global neoliberal model. This restructuring of the state and society has had a profound impact on virtually everything, including the creation of structural injustices—particularly affecting Roma—related to labor, housing, schooling and political representation. This was done by extending 'free' market principles to all spheres (i.e. sustained by legislation supporting the private sector in general and multinational companies in particular, or the privatization of public goods, which thereby reduced citizen access to socio-economic rights and weakened the welfare state). Without fulfilling its promises regarding democratization and economic competitiveness, the regime change in Romania failed to elaborate a new and adequate social contract based on solidarity and justice. Instead of improving living standards for all—out of the former socialist shortage economy and authoritarian political order, and under the impact of the current global economy—it created a system that produces instances of severe social exclusion. In the case of marginalized Roma, this phenomenon overlaps with ethno-territorial ghettoization.

Our research in Romania revealed the diversity of Roma marginalization and exclusion (Fraser 2007).² Its forms are situated on a continuum from the economically deprived (at the most, adversely incorporated) (Murray 2001; Bracking 2003)³ to the excluded marginal (impoverished, neglected and cut out of society with regards to developmental investments and human rights). In addition, during our field research we encountered better-off Romani communities, often territorially separated from the rest of society as a result of their historical evolution and voluntarily decisions. We also met ethnic Roma living and working in integrated urban or rural spaces. Even though they were not members of a spatially marked community, they symbolically

- 1 This approach is inspired by Wacquant's (2008) definition of advanced marginality being a new form of social exclusion in neoliberal regimes, characterized by accumulation of economic penury, social deprivation, ethno-racial divisions, and public violence in the same distressed urban area. This type of expulsion does not stem from economic crises or underdevelopment; it is rather the resultant of economic restructuring and its unequal economic effects on the lowest faction of workers and subordinated ethnic categories.
- 2 In making a distinction between marginalized and excluded, I am following the approach of Nancy Fraser (2007). According to her, there is a difference between those who are marginalized or subordinated, but can still participate with others in social interaction (although not as peers), and between those who are excluded (i.e. are not even in the game).
- 3 According to some critics of the social exclusion paradigm (for example Murray 2001; Bracking 2003), when investigating chronic poverty the notion of "differential" or adverse incorporation into the state, market or civil society is more appropriate than the idea of "social exclusion". In this context, I am using the term in order to suggest the difference between those poor who are participating in society, in the market or in the public agenda however, their poverty perpetuates inter-generationally, and between those classes of poor that are not even present or visible on these terrains.

assumed a belonging with a Romani imagined community or at least self-identified as Roma. These instances are important to consider in the analysis of the process of Roma marginalization, because the actors involved—consciously or otherwise—played a role in this, and in some instances they were racialized (i.e. conceived as the ‘racial other’) by the majority society together with their socially excluded ethnic fellows.

The process of Roma marginalization is prevalent at the crossroads of structural conditions characterizing the different regions, counties, neighborhoods and urban and rural settlements, as well as of the institutionalized power relations and mentalities affecting (non)belonging at local and trans-local level. Our qualitative analysis does not capture a representative sample of Romania, but it describes in contextual detail how and why marginality is constituted, and it alerts policy-makers how to handle this as a mass phenomenon. While looking for data collection and evaluation tools on Roma exclusion and on the implementation of public policies for Roma inclusion, policy-makers should necessarily focus on these instances of advanced marginality that cannot be eliminated through a traditional target-group or vulnerable group approach (Kabeer 2000, 27).⁴

Among the structural conditions producing marginality in our contextual research we focused on: the economic underdevelopment of immediate and surrounding areas, including the acute lack of job opportunities due to economic restructuring; precarious housing circumstances belonging to territorially isolated zones with extremely low access to quality public services and goods; and the lack of political will and/or technical competency to elaborate or implement evidence-based, inclusive and cohesive development policies. Regarding institutionalized power relations and mentalities, we could highlight: the historically embedded inter-personal and inter-group relationships sustained through several life domains (e.g. school, labor, administration, etc.) between people identified on the basis of their social status and ethnic belonging, as well as cross-generational cultural conceptions about cohabitation that matter at particular levels (e.g. social status and ethnicity).

2. Romanian geographic sample and data accessibility

In the construction of the Romanian geographic sample we sought a compromise that, on the one hand, satisfied the principles proposed by the research coordinators (i.e. that localities should be selected from the 2011 UNDP survey sample, that each of them should include one small city and four villages, and that they should act as a cluster) and, on the other hand, that it responded to the realities of Romanian territorial administration. Given that the biggest territorial administrative unit in Romania at local level is the county (*județ*), we selected our clusters so that localities belonged to the same county. Despite the fact that regions in Romania do not act as administrative units, they function as so-called developmental areas and reproduce the disparities between the historical regions of the country—this is why we opted for localities/clusters/counties belonging to different developmental regions. As a result, we conducted the research using the following sample:

4 This conviction is underlined by concepts of social exclusion according to which exclusion accounts for both economic and socio-cultural processes of impoverishment, it addresses groups who suffer from both economic disadvantage and forms of symbolic devaluation that are reproduced in everyday social practice, and it “adds concerns with social inequality to longstanding concerns with poverty” (Kabeer 2000, 27).

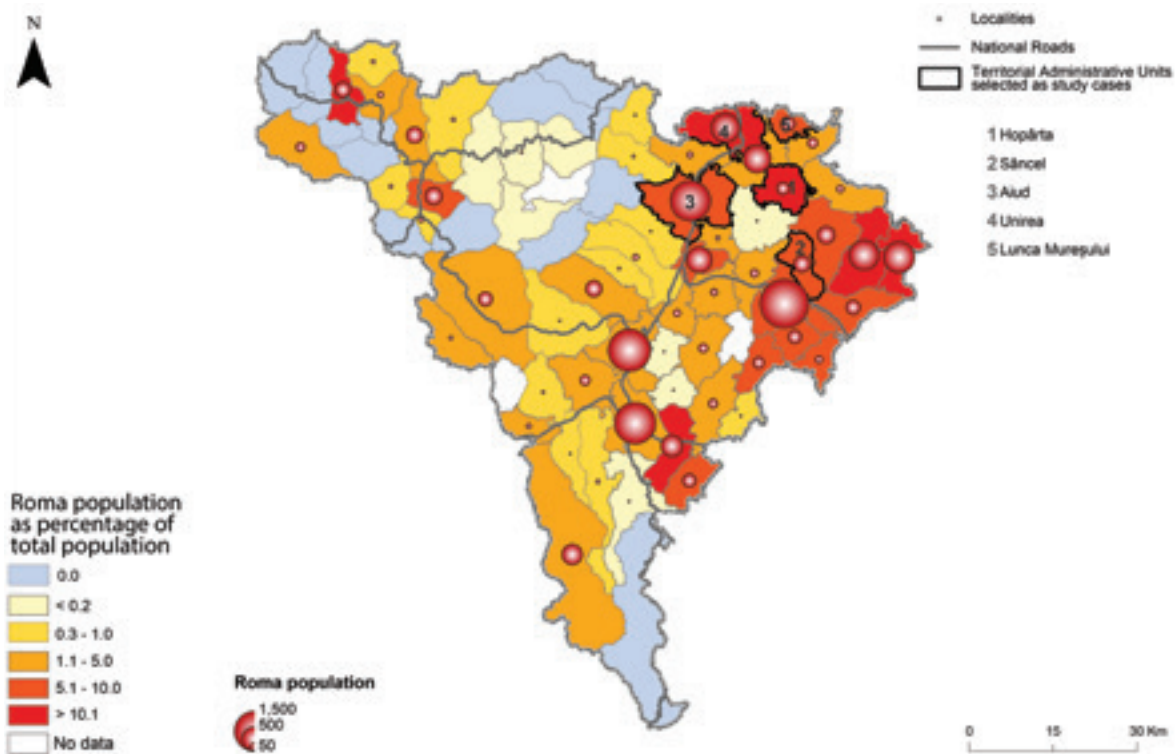
Table 1. The Romanian sample

Cluster	County (historical region)	Locality	UNDP 2011 sample	Distance to the cluster's urban setting in km	Percentage of ethnic Roma	Risk of poverty in the Developmental Region
1. Iași cluster	Iași (Moldova)	Târgu Frumos	Yes	—	9.59%	50% (North-East, highest in Romania)
		Mironeasa	Yes	76	8.24%	
		Lungani	No	15	33.85%	
		Stolniceni-Prăjescu	No	32	7.21%	
		Ciohorăni	No	50	24.54%	
2. Arad cluster	Arad (Banat)	Curtici	Yes	—	11.81%	32% (West)
		Covășinț	Yes	52	25.33%	
		Șiria	Yes	45	12.15%	
		Pilu	Yes	48	12.78%	
		Macea	No	6	8.81%	
3. Dolj cluster	Dolj (Oltenița)	Calafat	Yes	—	4.62%	42% (South-West Oltenia)
		Bârca	Yes	62	24.44%	
		Cetate	Yes	29	19.55%	
		Negoi	Yes	42	43.32%	
		Sadova	Yes	100	23.02%	
4. Alba cluster	Alba (Transylvania)	Aiud	Yes	—	6.45%	28% (Center, second lowest in Romania)
		Lunca Mureșului	Yes	25	11.91%	
		Unirea	No	16	17.93%	
		Hopârta	No	15	17.86%	
		Sâncel	No	42	9.39%	
5. Călărași cluster	Călărași (county with the second highest % of Roma in Romania, 8.1%)	Oltenița	No	—	8.79%	41% (South Muntenia)
		Frumușani	Yes	40	22.02%	
		Spanțov	yes	17	32.75%	
		Chirnogi	Yes	7	21.40%	
		Curcani	No	15	36.23%	

This is not a representative sample in the statistical sense of the term. But it included localities whereby using qualitative and quantitative fieldwork methods⁵ our research team could identify processes and forms, and even patterns of (Roma) marginalization and exclusion representative of the current Romanian context. The localities of the sample were grouped into clusters according to the counties they belonged to—they did not act as clusters in the sense that the small cities could have functioned as centers of attraction or development poles for the composing communes (including, in turn, several villages). Data on this sample is also reflected in our maps presented below,⁶ which display the spatial distribution of the ethnic Roma population in the 5 counties and 25 localities as mirrored by the 2011 Census.

Map 1. Mapping Roma in Alba county and cluster

Spatial distribution of Roma population in Alba County

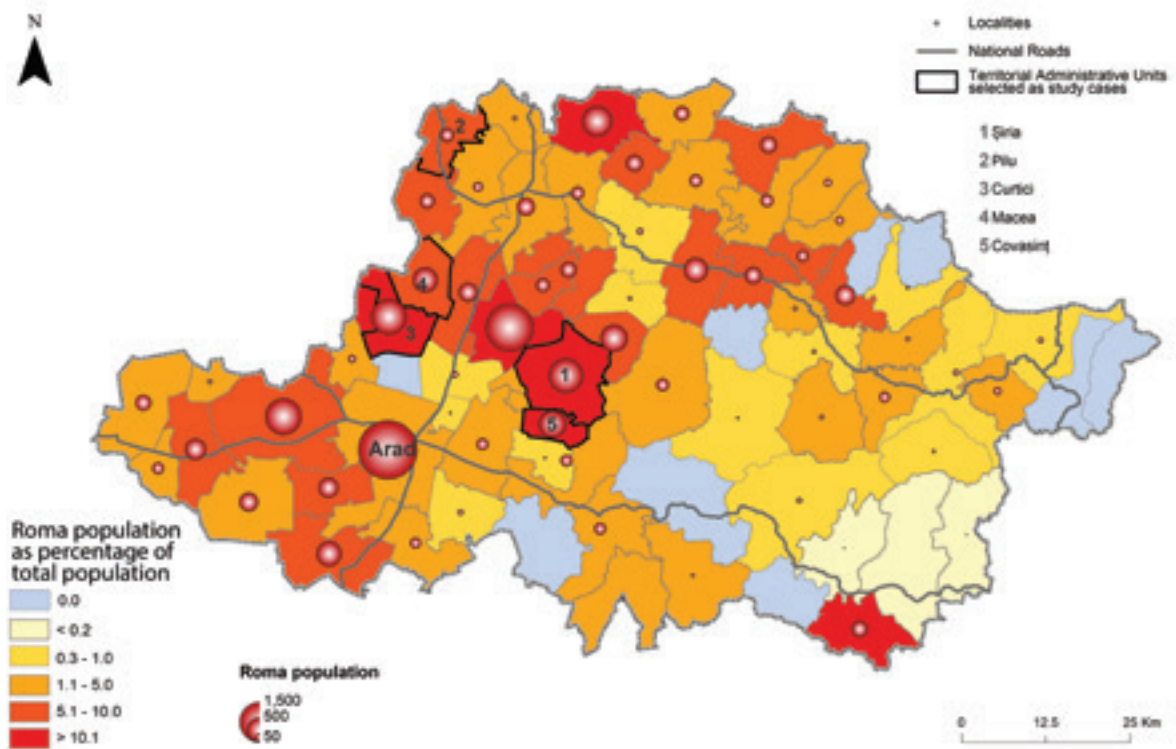


5 In the light of its main objectives, “all elements, routines and tools applied in Phase 2 were designed to serve the dual goal of revealing new results and establishing new procedures of enquiries so that members of the Roma communities can utilize them without high-level training in social science research” (Szalai 2013). The applied methodology started with the so-called socio tours (discussions with various representative actors within the local society, and their maps about the socio-ethnic divisions of their localities). It continued with formal and informal talks with representatives of the City Hall and local council (legislative and executive leaders, as well as public servants, including Roma employees such as Roma experts or health mediators), of local schools and employers, and also with members of Roma communities. Through these discussions (recorded or not), we requested from our interviewees a multitude of information that we supposed they might possess (statistical data collected by them or by others, quantitative evaluations regarding people’s material and housing conditions, their participation in school education and in the labor market, as well as perceptions and interpretations of the experienced realities in what regards interethnic relations, and forms of Roma participation and representation in the local social, economic, cultural, and political/administrative life of the locality).

6 Map courtesy of Daniel Tudora.

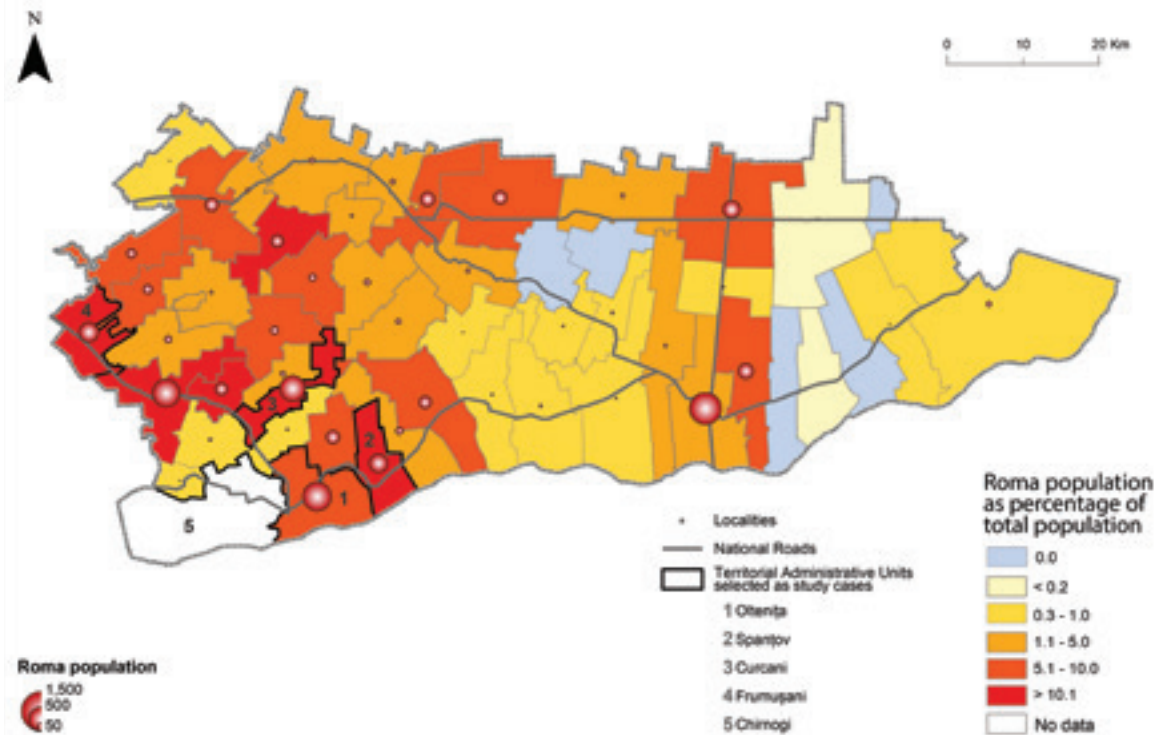
Map 2. Mapping Roma in Arad county and cluster

Spatial distribution of Roma population in Arad County



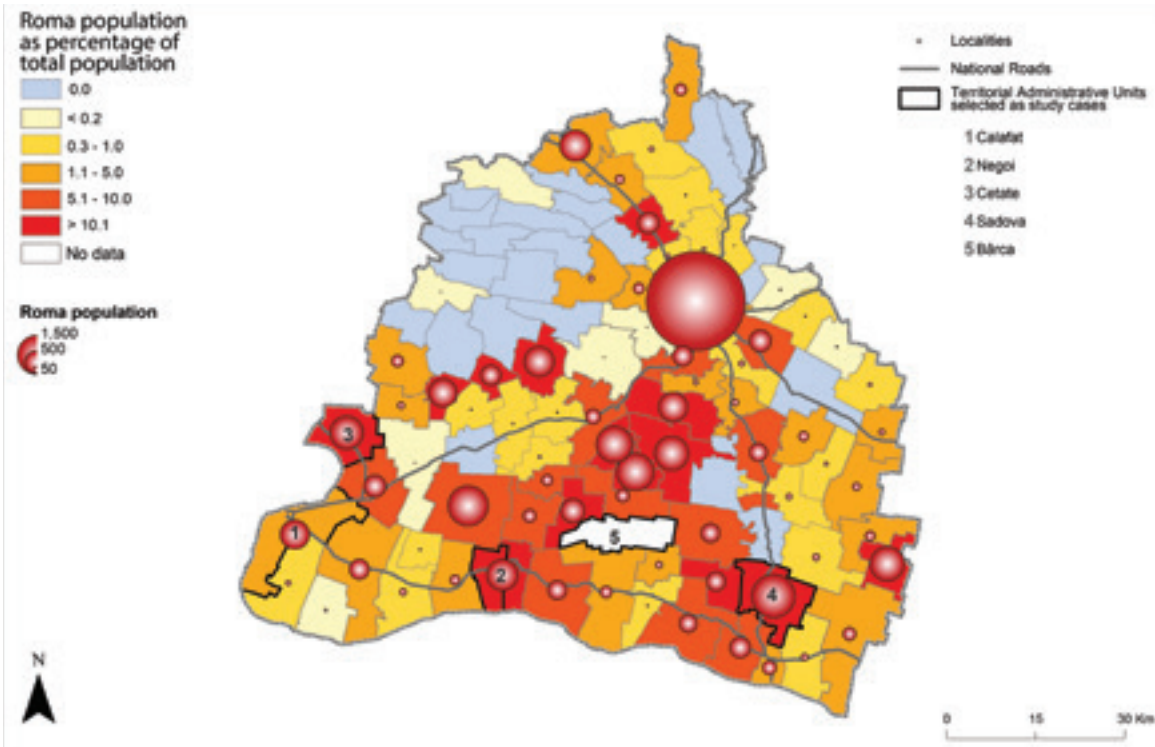
Map 3. Mapping Roma in Călărași county and cluster

Spatial distribution of Roma population in Călărași County



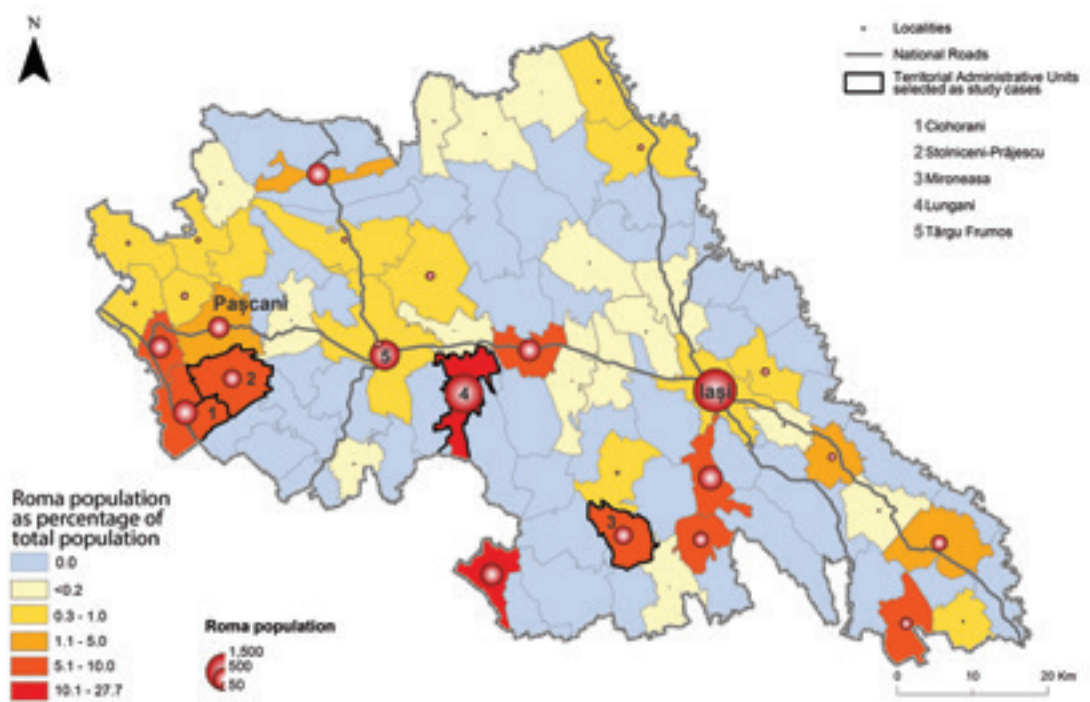
Map 4. Mapping Roma in Dolj county and cluster

Spatial distribution of Roma population in Dolj County



Map 5. Mapping Roma in Iași county and cluster

Spatial distribution of Roma population in Iași County



A lack of (up-to-date) statistical data characterizes all of the localities in our clusters. There is no ethnically disaggregated data or data on different areas within localities that could reveal their internal socio-territorial disparities. Authorities claim that ethnic data collection would be discriminatory and that they treat everyone in the same manner regardless of their ethnicity. However, they often provide informal estimates about the socio-spatial distribution of Roma across the localities, even going so far as to affirm that Roma residential segregation is a *"natural state of affairs"*. Moreover, when it comes to characterizing people's socio-economic status, authorities have suggested that it is mostly ethnic Roma who *"undeservingly benefit from social welfare"*, and *"are a burden on society"*.

The association of Roma with the „socially assisted“ (a term with negative connotations in a system that pretends to be meritocratic) is a means of blaming the poor because they are poor and it is a manifestation of racializing poverty. By racialization of poverty we mean here the practices of coupling ‘the Roma’ perceived as the ‘racial other’ with ‘the poor’, and of explaining ‘Roma poverty’ as a ‘natural result’ of the cultural traits of an ‘inferior race’ trapped in pre-modern (meaning ‘non-civilized’) forms of existence. This trend is even stronger in cases where a distinction is made among the poor themselves, between the poor who *"deserve"* and the poor who *"do not deserve"* social protection (respectively Romanians on the one hand and Roma on the other). Or put differently, between the poor that deserve to live in poverty (like Roma who *"do not like to work"*) and the poor who became poor through no fault of their own (the non-Roma who *"are victims of economic restructuring or of the financial crisis"*).

Altogether, institutions avoid disseminating (or even collecting) information that could harm their public image. This is especially true around topics for which in the past they were accused of promoting or obfuscating Roma segregation or discrimination. Collecting data at local level regarding budgets and development programs was decidedly challenging. Finding employers who would speak with us was even more difficult. The data that do exist, usually by dint of national or local research initiatives, are seldom known by decision-makers or are not properly used in policy-making processes. This is true for several reasons, including: a) trying to hide negative realities to maintain Romania's 'European image'; b) a lack of political will to recognize them as a starting point for structural development programs; and c) indifference regarding impoverished (Roma) people. Therefore, we might conclude that there is a lack of trust in the social utility of such research. As a result, there is a need to conduct participatory and inclusive action research with all stakeholders involved at all phases of the investigation in order to then elaborate meaningful development programs.

Even if formal or informal Roma leaders provide information to public authorities on their community needs (though by doing so they are often suspected by their fellows of only serving their personal interests), this information is unlikely to be considered of high priority on the local public agenda. But in some cases, neglecting the needs of particular Roma groups stems from how the so-called Roma representative or Roma leader determines to either represent only his/her own group, or all the Roma groups⁷ in that local context.

Our research team was comprised of specialists with various field-work experience, access to local information, knowledge of Roma communities and a shared commitment to understanding and eliminating Roma marginalization. Each of our local teams working in the clusters included

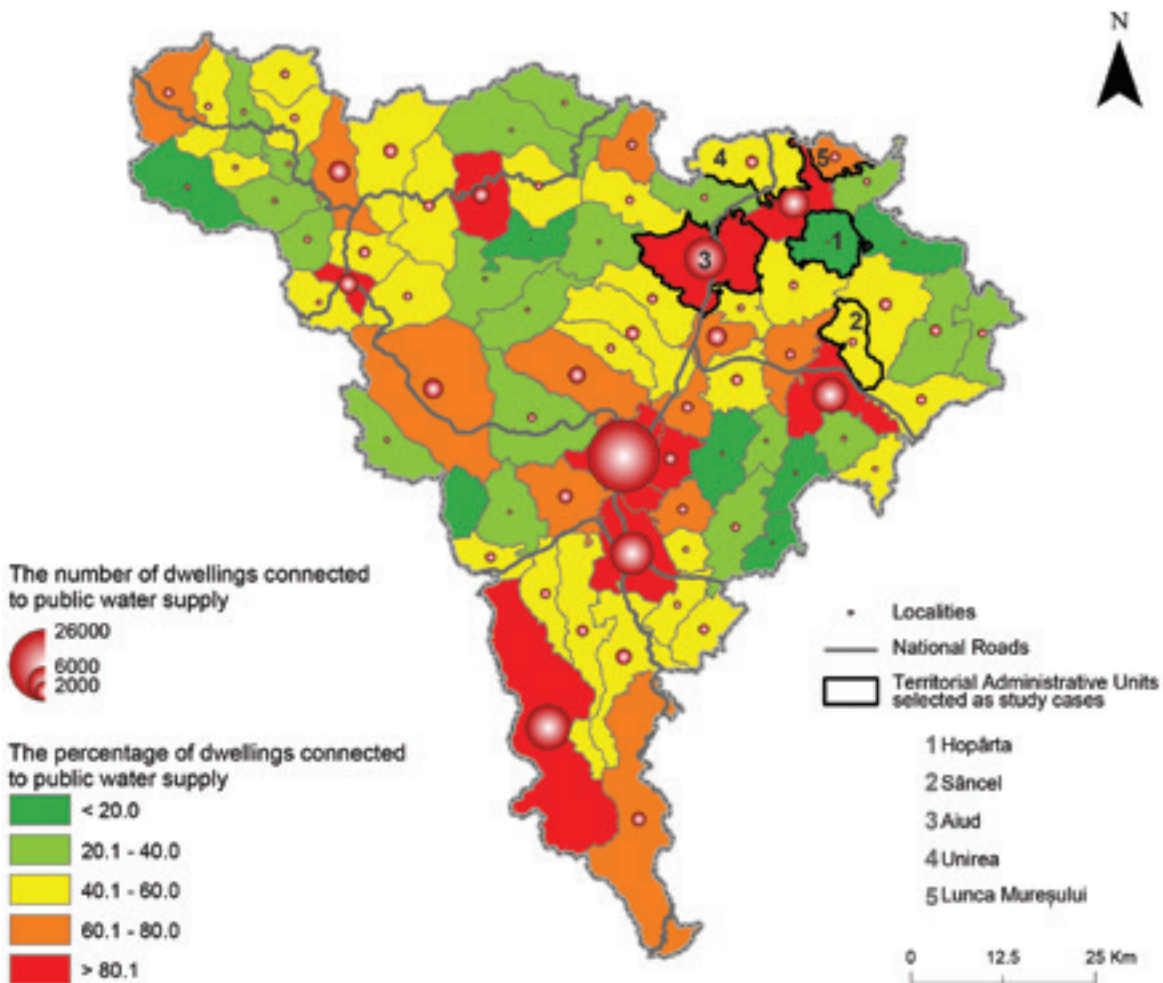
7 The distinction within Roma communities between *"traditional"* versus *"assimilated"* takes many possible forms in local contexts, such as *"spoitori"* versus *"rudari"*, or *"cărămidari"* vs. *"cărămizari"*, or *"băieși"* vs. *"geambași"*, or *"căldărari"* vs. *"caștalăi"*.

a member who assumed his/her Roma identity. In this way, we assured the ethnically mixed character of the groups and we offered those who ordinarily would not have had the chance to participate in an academic or research program to be involved in this initiative (as a form of empowerment). Additionally, due to the nature of Romania’s public administration (and that the localities in our clusters are most connected to county level institutions and organizations), we decided to include on each team a member to collect data at the county level. We tended to collaborate with individuals that previously held some formal Roma positions within the relevant institutional structures.

Unfortunately, the results of the 2011 Romanian Census were not made public in advance of our Final Report (May-June 2013), so the only current statistical source for ethnically disaggregated data was not accessible to us—with the exception of the percentage of ethnic Roma population in the 25 localities (that we used to build up the maps displayed above). We collected official statistics from old and new data sets from the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Health, the National Institute of Statistics, and the Commission for Combating Poverty and Promoting Inclusion that facilitated the mapping of some characteristics of localities (for example the creation of the maps from below on the access to public water supply,⁸ but as well on other accessibilities, such as spatial access to schools, or to ambulance services).

Map 6. Access to public water supply in Alba county and cluster

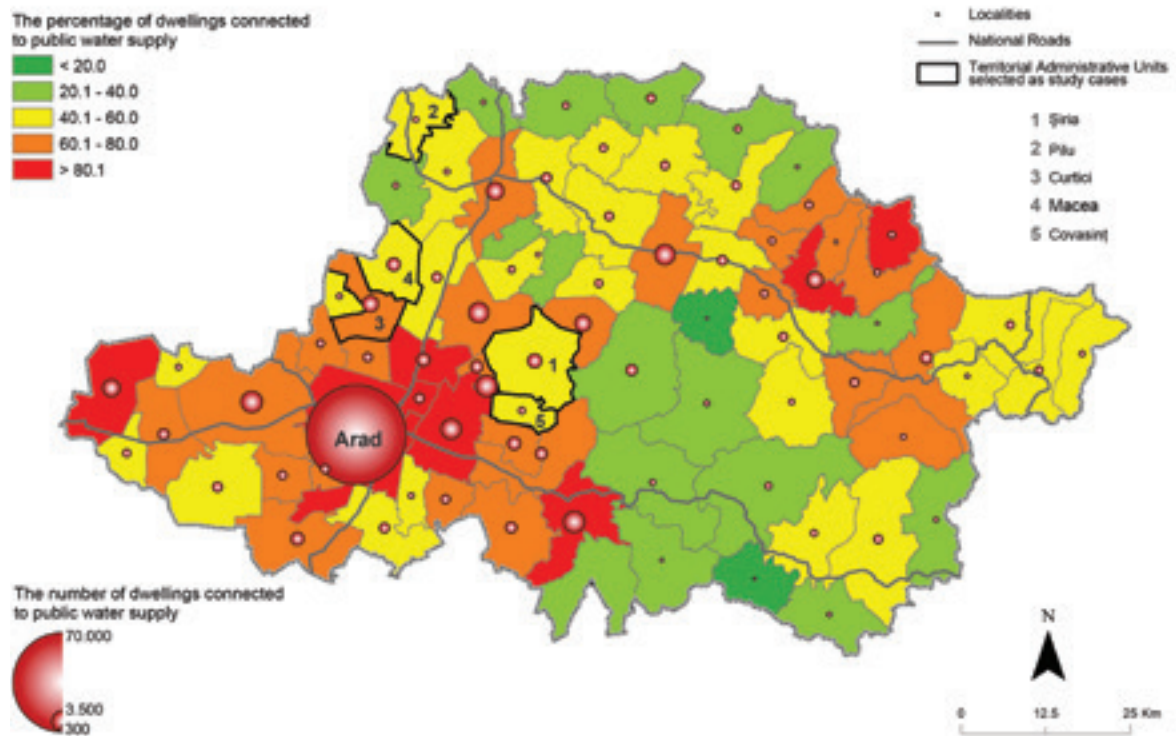
The percentage of dwellings connected to public water supply



8 Map courtesy of Daniel Tudora.

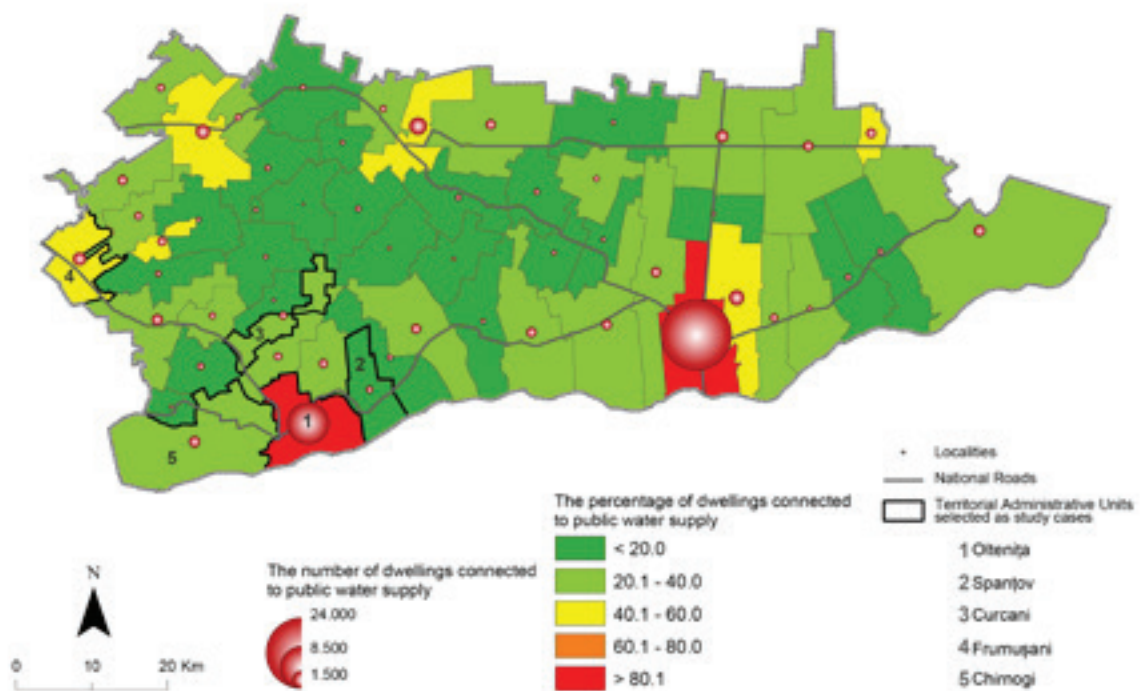
Map 7. Access to public water supply in Arad county and cluster

The percentage of dwellings connected to public water supply



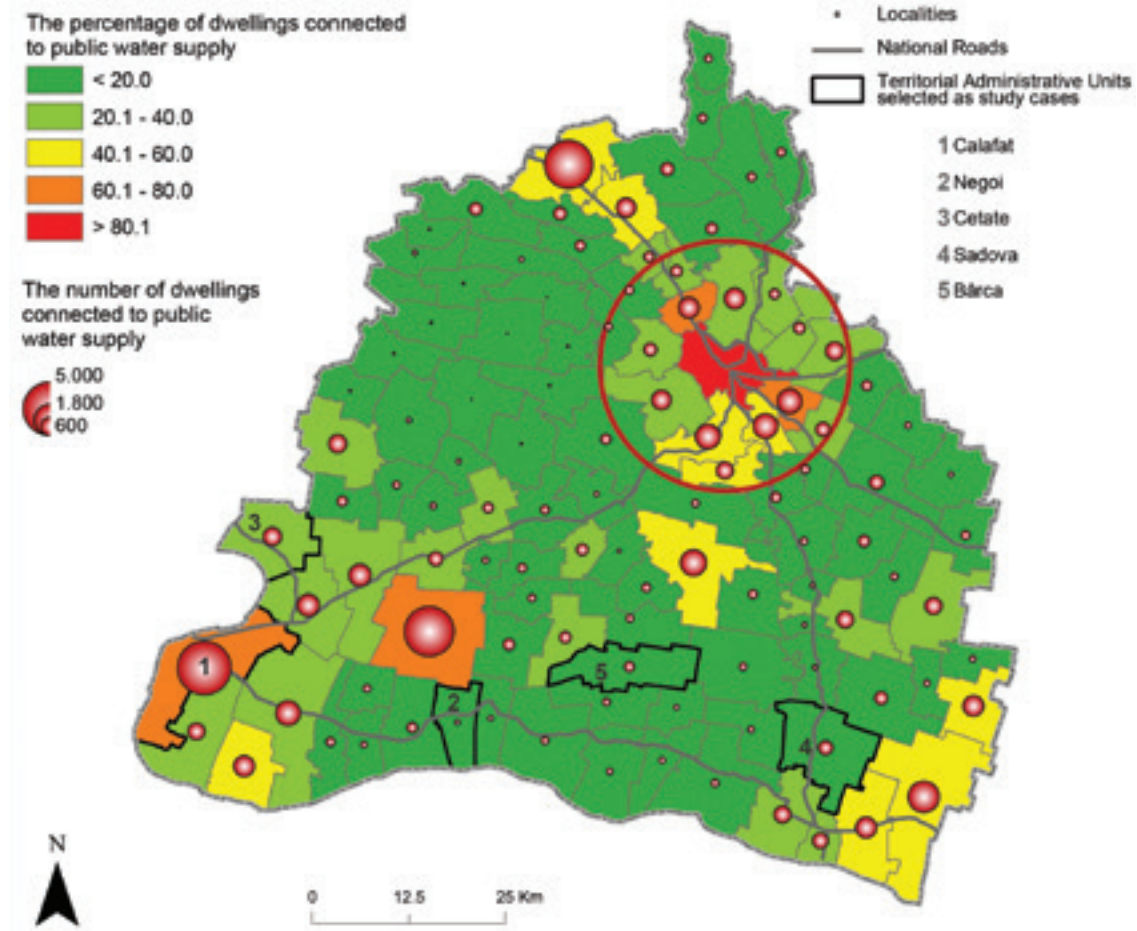
Map 8. Access to public water supply in Călăraşi county and cluster

The percentage of dwellings connected to public water supply



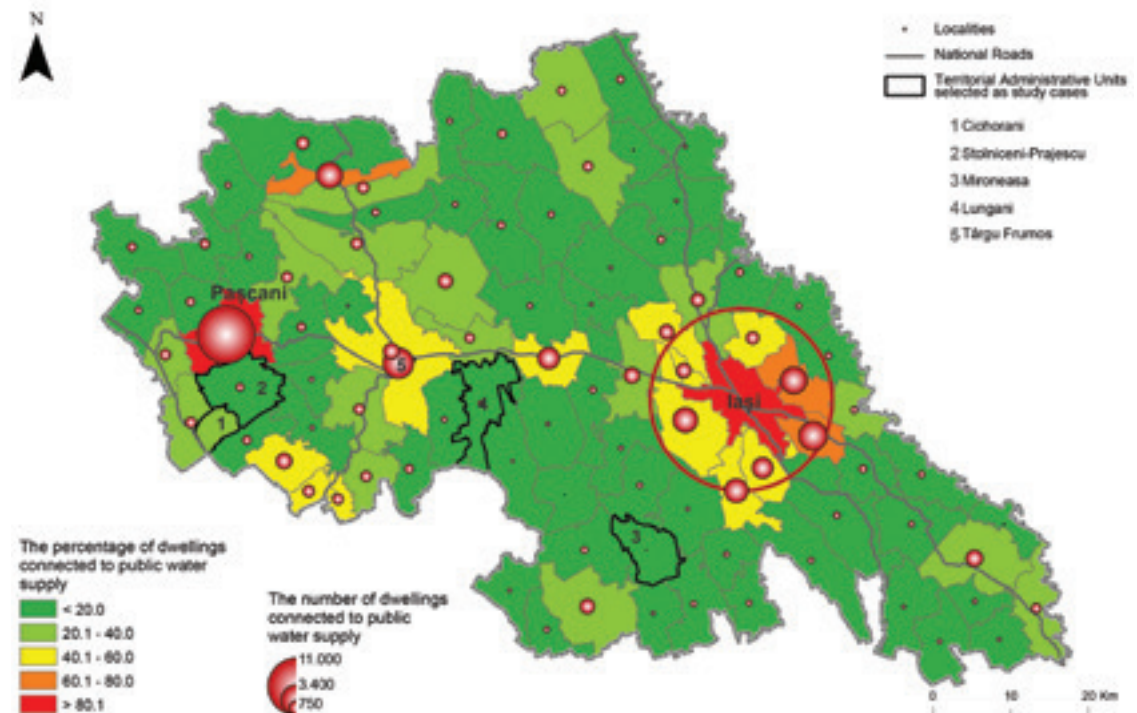
Map 9. Access to public water supply in Dolj county and cluster

The percentage of dwellings connected to public water supply



Map 10. Access to public water supply in Iași county and cluster

The percentage of dwellings connected to public water supply



Romanian data collected across the 25 localities were processed through the analytical frame jointly elaborated by the principal investigator of the whole research and the country team leaders. In addition, its interpretation was informed by the critical investigation of some of the aspects of neoliberal capitalism affecting Romania, too (such as uneven development, accumulation and dispossession, Harvey 2006; advanced marginality, Wacquant 2008; ethno-spatial exclusion and ghettoization,⁹ Vincze and Raț 2013).

2.1 Reduced employment opportunities across localities

The (lack of) availability of formal jobs in our settlements is reflected by the low number of employers with over five employees, as table from below reflects.

Table 2. Number of companies over five employees in the clusters

Cluster	Total in the small cities of the cluster	Total from the rural areas of the cluster	Total number of companies over five employees
Alba	112	15	127
Arad	24	29	53
Călărași	135	10	145
Dolj	51	10	61
Iași	36	0	36

Source: *The List of Firms from Romania, Borg Design, 2011*

Across the five counties, the median unemployment rate in 2011 was 9%, which was close to the national average. The maximum unemployment rate was reached in the Negoii commune in the Dolj cluster (35%), and the lowest rate was found in the city of Curtici in the Arad cluster (2%). The diagrams from below display relevant data in the case of these clusters.

9 This perspective is articulated in and by the research “*Spatialization and racialization of social exclusion. The social and cultural formation of ‘Gypsy ghettos’ in Romania in a European context*” (www.sparex-ro.eu), supported by a grant from the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS—UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2011-3-0354.

Diagram 1. Unemployment rate in Arad cluster

Observation. Localities of Arad cluster are marked with red bullets, and are compared to the other clusters from left column, to other localities from Arad county in the middle column, and to other localities from other clusters in the right column.

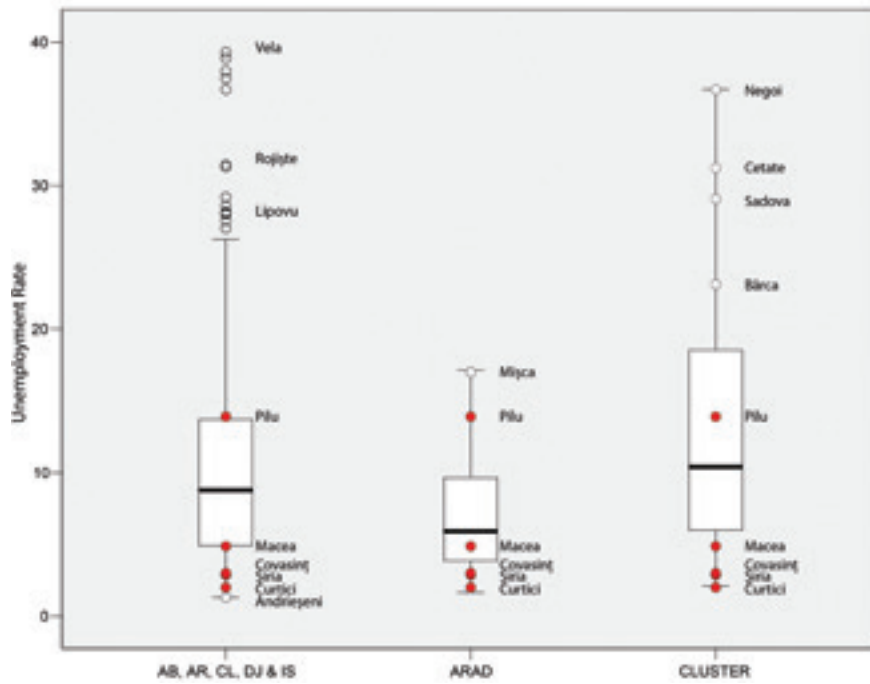
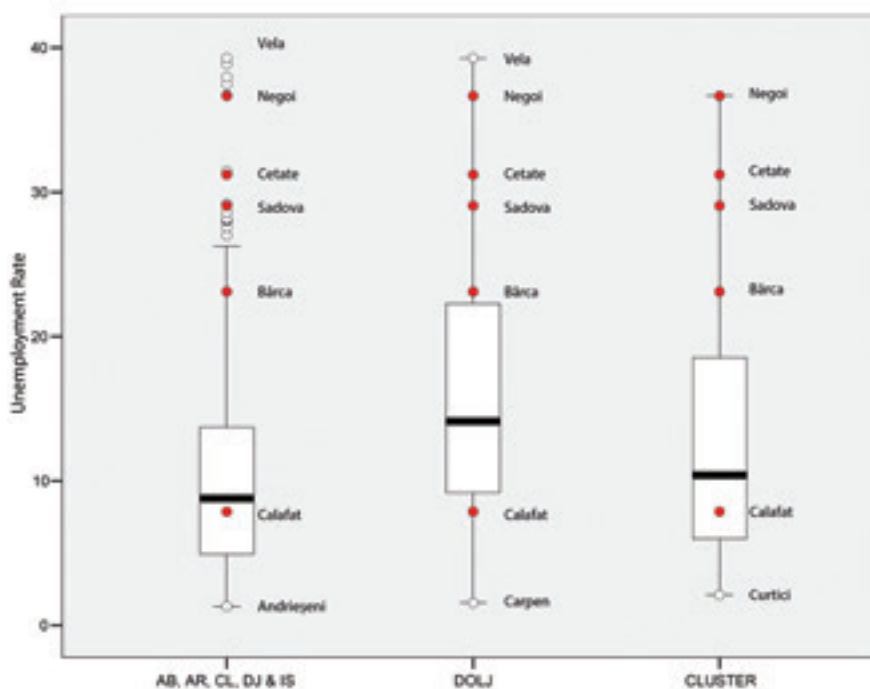


Diagram 2. Unemployment rate in Dolj cluster

Observation. Localities of Dolj cluster (marked with red bullets) are compared to the other clusters (left column), to other localities from Dolj county (middle column), and to other localities from other clusters (right column).



Data on localities provided by the National Institute of Statistics show that Arad county is leading the list regarding the employment percentage of the active aged population (35%), and this percentage is lowest in Călărași county. Arad county shows the highest rates of employment among the researched localities; however, the relevant percentage from the city of Oltenița in Călărași (30%) is quite close to that observed in the city of Curtici (31%) which is the second best place among the cluster's small cities from this point of view. Arad county seems to offer a relatively high potential for employment in its rural areas, too—each of the communes shows a percentage of employees out of the active aged population that hovers around 15%. Lunca Mureșului and Sâncel (Alba), Spanțov (Călărași), Bârca and Sadova (Dolj), and Ciohorăni, Lungani and Stolniceni-Prăjescu (Iași) show the lowest potential for absorbing a labor force in the local market (below 5%, or even 4% in the case of Sadova).

The nature and pervasiveness of the problems that local communities encounter (i.e. impoverishment from systemic unemployment and/or underpaid jobs, limited capacities of local administration to generate satisfactory and inclusive local budgets, and common shortcomings of the Romanian social protection system) are beyond the control of local administration or local non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, at the local level we observed no direct connection between the evidence-based diagnosis of problems on the one hand and development programs and local budgets that might respond to those problems on the other. In the majority of cases—although somewhat less at county and municipal levels in Dolj—our team had difficulty accessing and assessing local budgets and development programs.

Personnel at City Hall tend to be well aware of the state and condition of local infrastructure (roads, public water supply, sewerage, buildings, etc.) towards which it directs most local investment. Furthermore, infrastructure projects usually generate the largest financial and political capital for local authorities. Occasionally, those investments reach or target the Roma communities living on the peripheries of the locality. But there are also communes where local development programs run by public authorities or civil society organizations are chronically absent. In many of our sample localities, election results were influenced by Roma voters who were mobilized by local churches or Roma leaders, and in some cases through political bribes or promises. Infrastructure programs are the most frequent electoral promises made to the Roma electorate, but few of them ever materialize.

Given the dearth of jobs and developmental programs, individuals are left to the responsibility of their families, and families themselves are resigned to survival strategies (regardless of their ethnic background). Labor migration (mostly seasonal and generally abroad) is at the core of such strategies. Faced with economic shortages (both as households and as whole localities deprived of economic production), people resort to various informal income-generating activities, often taking advantage of weak niches in the local market (from collecting scrap iron, to day-laboring for better-off families, to trading used cars or smuggled cigarettes). These economic micro-strategies are not limited to Roma, even if they are sometimes perceived as such.

2.2 Territorial disparities within settlements

The differences between the localities in our clusters result from various factors, including the fact that their spatial distribution includes placement in counties and regions with different levels of economic (under)development (which itself reflects the uneven spatial distribution of resources across territorial divisions throughout Romania). Nevertheless, we could observe

that—with the exception of the cities of Curtici (Arad) and Calafat (Dolj), and the commune of Frumușani (Călărași) near Bucharest—the locally identified multiple “Roma segments” belonged to economically relatively disadvantaged larger territories, while showing different degrees of poverty and exclusion.

Named as distinct neighborhoods within the localities of the Iași cluster *Nucărie* and *Pieptănari* (Tg. Frumos), *Brustureț* and *Frunziș* (Mironeasa), or *Pe Muchie* (Ciohorăni), or representing whole villages such as *Crucea* and *Zmeu* (belonging to the Lungani commune) or in the case of the village of *Cozmești* (from the Stolniceni-Prăjescu commune), our team identified several Roma communities living in marginal areas, separated from the non-Roma population. These communities are the poorest and suffer from the worst infrastructure (aside from the schools), and have weak representation at, and insufficient participation with, the local administration. This cluster belongs to a developmental region measuring the highest indicator of poverty risk in Romania.

In the commune of Covăsînt located in the Arad cluster people make a distinction between the “poor” uptown Gypsies (“țigani de sus”) and the “better off” downtown Gypsies, (“țigani de jos”). The component village of Macea commune, *Sânmartin*, is mostly populated by poor Roma. In the economically better-off city of Curtici, the area called *Livezilor* features a poor Roma community suffering from spatial and school segregation. Roma from Pilu and Șiria are mostly assimilated, and have a living standard similar to that of the mainstream population (which is generally poor). This cluster from the West Development Region belongs to the group of four Romanian regions that have a lower risk (i.e. 30% or less) of poverty (Bucharest-Ilfov, Center, West, North-West) compared to the other four regions which have poverty risk levels of 40% or higher (South-Muntenia, South-West Oltenia, South-East and North-East).

In Dolj cluster, city of Calafat has much better economic potential than nearby rural locations, but that potential has gone unrealized for the past 25 years since it does not function as a labor force point of attraction. Its Roma communities are located in two separate areas: in the district of *Spoitori* live the better-off Roma, while in “*Rudărie*” reside the poorer Roma. In Cetate commune, Roma are divided into two territorial communities called “*Banat*” and “*Vale*”. Commune Negoi features two groups practicing the same craft, brick-making, but one of them kept, while the other lost their cultural traditions. As a result, the two groups do not intermarry. In Bârca commune, we met Roma families on almost every street in the village, but Roma lived concentrated in two areas, called “Gypsyhood” (“*Țigănia*”) and “*Drăgălina*”. Sadova commune has an area called *Ghețea* where Roma live and a village called *Sadovei Peak* [*Piscul Sadovei*] which hosts the poorer Roma community. This cluster belongs to a developmental region with the third highest percentage of poverty risk in Romania.

In each of the selected locations within Alba county we could identify at least one residentially segregated compact Roma community. These are: the village of *Silivaș* in Hopârta commune hosts two different Romani groups; the villages of Sâncel commune, *Luncii* and *Iclod*; and the Roma village *Unirea 2* or *Vinț*, composing Unirea commune, or the *Lăutari* poor community situated in the commune itself. City of Aiud displays the phenomenon of forced evictions (*Poligon* community) and of the administrative unification with the formerly separated units (village of *Feleud*, or *Aiudul de Sus*), due to which segregated areas inhabited by mainly ethnic Roma were created. Lunca Mureșului commune hosts three Roma communities in *Dealul Țiganilor*, *Drumul Țării* and *Gostat*. Our fieldwork identified impoverished and severely excluded Roma communities in this cluster; however, the latter belongs to a developmental region that features the second lowest percentage of poverty risk in Romania, after the capital.

In city of Oltenița located in Călărași cluster live some 4,000 Roma, organized in two segregated communities: *Spoitori* and *Rudărie*, the latter being the poorer one, while *Spoitori* displays a stronger sense of belonging and a higher self-esteem based on their better-off material condition and traditions. In Curcani commune, Roma constitute more than 50% of the total population, and are organized in two separate communities. The *Zavragii* community is the wealthier of the two, and is where the Roma mayor of the settlement comes from. Chirnogi commune has three Roma communities: *Rudărie*, *Țigănie* and *Teveu*. *Teveu* is segregated at its outskirts, while *Țigănie* benefits from development investments. The poorest locality in the cluster, Spanțov commune, has two Roma communities: *Clinciu* and *Stancea*. Frumușani commune hosts three Roma communities: *Țigănie Frumușani*, *Țigănie Sătuc* and *Țigănie Pasărea*, the latter being integrated. The biggest one, *Țigănie Frumușani*, counts more than 2,000 inhabitants. Altogether, Frumușani commune enjoys some privileges due to its proximity to the country capital.

2.3 Typology of ‘Roma segment’—formation across the geographic clusters

We identified 11 patterns of processes that resulted in the formation of ‘Roma segments’, or spatial divisions that are perceived at local level as being inhabited by ethnic Roma. These occur in different combinations across and within the cluster locations. They represent the spectrum of marginalization from (adverse) incorporation characterized by poverty, to severe exclusion where people are overtly discriminated against. Roma separation resulted from:

1. Historical divisions that intersect with current unequal territorial development policies that increase the disadvantages of Roma segments in isolated neighborhoods of a city or in the poor villages within a larger commune (e.g. Iași, Dolj, Arad, Alba).
2. Poor Roma groups sharing territories with impoverished Romanians in a disadvantaged commune (Arad).
3. Restricting assimilated and impoverished Roma to the underdeveloped margins of a city or to a less developed village of a commune by means of housing and school policies (Arad, Dolj, Iași, Călărași, Alba).
4. Forcibly evicting impoverished Roma groups from centrally placed urban areas and relocating them to the margins of localities, usually in polluted and isolated areas (with or without providing them alternative—sub-standard—housing), or from the communal center to a less developed village (Alba).
5. Unifying neighboring villages (inhabited by different Roma groups with different financial capabilities) with a city and, by doing so, transforming them into underdeveloped urban outskirts (Alba).
6. Splitting the same Roma “nation” (“*neam*”) into two or more groups of residential areas separated by village borders (Dolj, Alba).
7. The ghettoization of particular urban residential areas (usually substandard blocks of flats), inhabited by the poorest Roma and non-Roma, perceived at local level as “Gypsyhoods” (“*țigănie*”), characterized by the lack of any sense of belonging (besides that of living in poverty) and human dignity (Călărași).

8. Historically formed Roma segments that have been reinforced by the voluntary separation of better-off traditional Roma groups which benefit from infrastructural development as a result of being more centrally located (Arad, Dolj, Călărași).
9. Better-off Roma groups living in informal settlements on the outskirts of their locality, but placed in the proximity of important urban centers and thus benefit from sources of income and social mobility (Călărași).
10. Better-off traditional Roma living in segments shared with majority Romanians, who communicate with the outside world and facilitate social mobility (Călărași).
11. Roma groups belonging to the same “nation” (“*neam*”) classified into two or more different groups, are placed differently on the local socio-geographic map of the locality on the basis of their financial capabilities: the poorer sub-group being the more stigmatized and inferiorized (Dolj, Călărași).

In each of the above-mentioned cases, material deprivation (class-based inequality) and cultural stigmatization (ethnic-identity based misrecognition) are juxtaposed to different degrees, and ethnic-based inferiorization ‘justifies’ the differential and unfair treatment of Roma. These factors contribute to the structural reasons leading to the economic marginalization of Roma. Together these factors produce and maintain different forms of socio-spatial separation. Moreover, such forms are also created and/or reinforced by unequal territorial development policies. The latter are linked to the general deregulation policies practiced at national level as a result of which some territories are totally neglected by authorities, while they do not present interest either to any of the local political actors looking for their direct economic profit. At local level, the attention of policy-makers towards the territories that should be developed and those that should not benefit from infrastructural or human resource-related investments might also be shaped by racist conceptions. These ‘justify’ the neglect of the residential areas inhabited by “*undeserving Roma*” who supposedly “*like living in poverty*” (without water, electricity etc.) or in “*dangerous areas*” (such as landfills, polluted environments, water treatment plants, or areas with high rates of criminality). It is not possible to organize the settlements of the clusters, or even the clusters themselves, into a hierarchy according to the degree of exclusion their Roma population faces or even according to the type of ‘Roma segment’ formation. One location might offer better educational programs, while another might offer some employment prospects, Roma political representation, or infrastructural investments (as described in the next two chapters). But altogether each of them produce a continuum of marginalization, and at least one instance of Roma exclusion manifested in ethno-spatial segregation, while displaying a whole range of processes leading to their formation.

However, one may observe other types of trends in these clusters and settlements which might be classified or ranked according to their degree of ethno-spatial segregation and economic deprivation. Our research has shown that irrespective of location, traditional Roma groups with high degrees of ethno-spatial segregation (or separation in cases where they are not enforced by external factors), are materially better-off than the poorest strata of the settlement. Wherever placed, Roma communities living in relatively integrated areas (that display low degrees of segregation) tend to be economically less deprived, unless they are settled in a location that is altogether impoverished. Finally, Roma communities subjected to high levels of poverty are most likely segregated ethno-spatially if they are situated in a more favorable larger environment; but they might be more integrated if they belong to an impoverished settlement.

3. Marginalization at the crossroads of schooling, housing and labor

As already observed, marginality is an intersectional phenomenon. On the one hand, this means that in the case of Roma, it is both class-based and ethnic-identity based. The class-based economic deprivation of Roma, resulting from their subordinated and exploited positions on the labor market, might be partially caused by discriminatory and exclusionary practices that ethnically inferiorize or portray Roma as 'racial others'. This form of cultural misrepresentation characterizes Roma people as not wanting to work, or whose natural environment is the landfill, or who might be underpaid because their job prospects are minimal, or who might be offered insecure working conditions because they are used to it. These are the underlying economic injustices to which Roma are subjected to.

On the other hand, the intersectionality of Roma marginality also refers to the multiple domains of life where it is (re)produced, such as labor, housing, schooling and political participation. In cases where severe socio-territorial exclusion overlaps with ethno-spatial segregation, housing exclusion, school segregation, precariousness of labor and a lack of political participation are strongly interconnected, mutually reinforcing and are transmitted inter-generationally. Put differently, those who are not excluded in a way that is territorially fixed have a different perspective on acts of discrimination experienced at school (e.g. repetition of a grade), or in the labor market (e.g. loss of a job), than those who have more resources from which to get by. Eventually, I conclude that forms of discrimination and segregation occurring in each domain play a role in this chain, but one may observe that in some cases this is more strongly linked to structural forces than others.

3.1 Marginalization and segregation in schooling

Marginalization within education (e.g. poor infrastructure; rampant discrimination; segregation; low quality of educational services; inferiorizing power relations between teachers, parents and students of different ethnic backgrounds; etc.) is a phenomenon that needs to be eliminated. But its structural elimination strongly depends on the many factors (e.g. economic, housing, health) at play within the larger socio-economic and policy context. Due to the educational policies of the past 20 years (shaped partially under pressure from non-governmental organizations), and to EU-funded programs (e.g. Phare) implemented across the country, we encountered a visible discrepancy between the state of the material infrastructure of schools (which was quite acceptable) and the general poverty characterizing the everyday life of the communities. Below we present how the major problems of school enrollment and participation continue to challenge families, schools and decision-makers regarding educational policies.

In Iași cluster, as elsewhere, we observed that school dropout rates were high, albeit often hidden. Children enrolled in schools, appeared as if they would attend, but in reality often they did not go to class. Both absenteeism and abandonment were high. Within traditional Roma communities, girls often abandon school around the age of ten due to cultural norms regarding womanhood, including a "cult of virginity", "protection" of girls, and early marriages. Within impoverished communities, the cause of school abandonment is related to the inability of families to cover the costs of school attendance. For example, commuting has now become a problem even

at the level of primary education, because many village schools have been merged with schools in the communal centers and transport is not always provided by the County School Inspectorate. Additionally, it is not uncommon for families to use their eldest children to help with household or agricultural work, or to care for the younger children at home. Sustained school participation is hampered by seasonal migration as well. Schools are taking some measures to reduce abandonment rates. They are having more success in instances where the locality or school has hired a mediator, such as in Lungani commune or in Tg. Frumos at the Ion Creangă School. A Phare project focused on the access of disadvantaged children to school resulted in the renovation of schools and educational infrastructure alongside teacher training for schools enrolling Roma children. As a result, for example, Ion Creangă school from Tg. Frumos ended up enrolling many Roma children which generated undesired consequences. In 2004, after the launch of the first ministerial order regarding the elimination of school segregation as a form of discrimination, the European Roma Rights Center initiated a large campaign against the form of school segregation known at this school. Under pressure, Ion Creangă School suspended its segregated class. In 2008, the Bucharest-based organization Romani Criss released a report together with UNICEF stating that among the 134 schools monitored across several counties, Ion Creangă School and the school in the village of Zmeu from Lungani featured segregated learning (Surdu 2008). The report stated that—according to the definition of segregated schools used by Romanian regulations (more than 50% of the student body is of Roma origin)—the former is a case of both school and class segregation, and the latter is a case of school segregation. As a result, Ion Creangă School changed its policies. Its website now states: *“the mission of our school is to assure education for all, the understanding and acceptance of ethnic, cultural, religious and individual diversity in an open, tolerant and friendly environment ... for this we aim at transforming our school into a community development center through which we might offer proper educational assistance to the students and their families”*. Mironeasa is an isolated commune both socially and geographically. The roads to and from the commune are nearly impassable (even road indicators are missing) and these conditions foster Roma school segregation. Stolniceni-Prăjescu, on the other hand, is a commune with an aging population: the school principal happily hosts Roma children saying that *“nowadays Roma are the only ones making children”*.

In the Arad cluster we encountered only one case of school segregation, which stemmed from the residential segregation of Roma communities. School no. 2 in the city of Curtici enrolls mainly children from the nearby community but also pupils from elsewhere including those who were expelled from other schools due to disciplinary problems. After eight grades, the graduating students in this school do not continue their studies, even though the Romanian educational system increased the years of compulsory education to ten. Children from traditional Roma families who use Romani language at home suffer language difficulties at school where the language of instruction is Romanian. Students in this school do not have access to remedial educational programs: there is no after-school program and they are not admitted to the day-care center downtown. In the Arad cluster schools, the enrollment of Romani children seems to be crucial if they wish to keep them operational—as since 2010 the Ministry of Education has ordered the merger of schools with less than 250–270 pupils. There are no special schools in Arad cluster. However, we observed a tendency to place multiple disadvantaged children in separate groups that benefit from the assistance of a substitute teacher. Asked about the post-school careers of their graduates, teachers and principals could not offer any information. We assume that at this point Roma graduates are disadvantaged, given that when it comes to finding employment, the social capital of the job seeker (i.e. his/her social networks and perceived trustworthiness and stature in the eyes of employers) matters even more than their educational capital (Vincze et al.

2011). This is even truer in smaller localities where informal relationships shape the position and destinies of community members.

In the schools of Dolj cluster, the percentage of Roma at risk of failing a grade is high, and school abandonment is frequent, according to the estimates of community members. Rarely do students continue their studies beyond the 8th grade. The highest percentage of Roma students is found at the level of primary education; however, school abandonment often starts by the 5th or 6th grade. Poverty, traditional culture, migration patterns and a lack of effective role models contribute to this reality. One other cause for school abandonment is the dissolution of schools situated in isolated villages. Many parents have decided to keep their children at home instead of sending them to a school located at a greater distance from the commune center.

The statistical data received from the schools within the Alba cluster show a high percentage of Roma attending and graduating school. It is interesting to observe that even though teachers talk about school absenteeism and abandonment in the case of Roma children, this is not reflected in the data they provide. In Lunca Mureșului commune, where teachers declared that their graduates continue on to high school 95% of the time, community members considered this to be patently false. The discrepancy might be due to the tendency to keep (Roma) children enrolled even if they do not attend school in order to ensure sufficient numbers to keep the school running. While in some schools Roma participation was addressed in a non-discriminatory manner, there were locations where teachers racialized the difference between Roma and non-Roma school participation and performance, saying that *"this is something genetic... and there are many mentally ill among them who cannot concentrate, their intellectual capacity is not like ours,"* or that *"we should leave them to repeat the grades; generally they do not learn."* In the city of Aiud, the majority of Roma children are enrolled in one of the local schools called *"școala țiganilor"*, or *"Gypsy school"*. Teachers explain this by stating that Roma live in a compact community in the vicinity of the school, and that *"this is their natural environment where they feel better"*. They also note that *"it is better for them here because they would not manage in other schools, where there are 30–40 children in a classroom, and where teachers might not pay enough attention to them."* Likewise, they consider this school to have lower expectations of students *"because everybody knows that they are Roma, or they are from a poor family"*. Most importantly, they complain that the children are bad and that it is not possible to control them. The Roma school mediator is generally pleased with this situation (that Roma children are all in the same school) and appreciates the effort made by the teachers. Parents choose this school due to its proximity to their homes, but they believe that their *"children's teachers are not as good as they are in the city center."* However there is no special school in Aiud, even if in one of its schools teachers created a *"special Roma class"* called *"clasa de rom"*. Officially, this class does not exist anymore, but during this academic year, against the will of the parents, a separate class was formed for the 1st grade Roma children. Two of the better evaluated high schools declared that they do not accept Roma anymore and are pleased that they *"got rid of Roma."* Representatives of public authorities explain school segregation in two ways: parents prefer enrolling their children in the school closest to home; authorities lack funds to assure public transport needed for any potential school desegregation plans.

In the rural localities of Călărași cluster, the majority of children graduate primary education. The costs of secondary education are higher and access is narrowing, considering that the high schools are based in Oltenița, Giurgiu or Bucharest. In Oltenița, most of the pupils graduate secondary education, but few can cover the costs associated with tertiary education, which might imply studying in Bucharest or other university centers. Few Roma graduated from higher education anywhere we investigated. In Spanțov and Curcani, we identified only four high school

graduates and/or students. In Frumușani, respondents spotlighted cases of severe discrimination in school. Other complaints were related to weak educational process and under skilled teachers. In Frumușani, Curcani and Spanțov, a European Social Fund project offering after school programs has been implemented by the Roma Education Fund and the Center for Education and Social Development. To avoid school segregation, the local authorities in Frumușani harnessed public transportation resources to bring children to schools outside of their residential vicinities. In recent years official school dropout rates tapered off. But school attendance is questionable in each locality. In the Spoitori community, there are numerous cases of school abandonment. Segregationist policies are inclined to be implemented in Oltenița and specifically in the Spoitori community at School no. 6 located in the vicinity of the community. The school director suggested that cultural differences between Roma and non-Roma children were the cause of this state of affairs, noting *"it is better for Roma children to be segregated"*. There are no special schools in the Călărași cluster. Classes for pupils with visual disabilities were organized in Oltenița, but no Roma attended. Pupils with special education requirements have been integrated into the mainstream educational environment, including Roma. Altogether, in this cluster we observed that Roma parents are inclined to enroll their children in the schools nearest to their community. But the schools abutting the Roma community are also the weakest, and are attended mainly by Roma pupils. Local authorities monitor the schools in order to prevent the formation of Roma-only schools. In many of the surveyed schools within the Roma-concentrated communities, 70–90% of the pupils are Roma. In Oltenița's vocational high school, 20% of the students were Roma. The high school continues to provide instruction on such topics as naval mechanics and textiles even though the shipyard and the wool factories have been closed down and such skills are no longer demanded by the local labor market.

3.2 Juxtapositions of residential segregation and economic/labor deprivation

Neither spatiality nor poverty are the ultimate explanatory factors of the formation of advanced marginality, or of instances when (Roma) people, dispossessed of adequate homes, citizenship and basic services, are forced to experience the cumulative deprivations of an excluded life. It is true that encapsulated spaces and precarious living conditions produce exclusion, and vice versa. But ultimately, it is the intersection of the systemic processes of neoliberalization and racialization that create, by economic, cultural and political means, "Gypsy ghettos" as spatialized and racialized forms of social exclusion whose inhabitants are subjected to multiple and disempowering forms of injustice (Vincze 2013).

By conducting this research at local level, we could notice that people's conditions—marked by their high degree of ethno-spatial separation—could be both characterized by severe economic deprivation (mostly in cases of forced segregation), or by better-off material circumstances (when this separation is proudly assumed). The occurrence of one or the other depends on many factors (briefly described below), the local constellation of which might explain the position of Roma persons and communities in the societal order or on the map of the locality.

The economic (under)development of the broader local context within the settlements and their surroundings, characterized by a lack of available jobs in the formal or informal labor market, circumscribes the limits within which individuals are enabled to make a living. This also includes the opportunities to migrate, domestically or abroad, to locations offering more promising prospects. These opportunities are shaped by people's material resources and social capital (in

addition to legal and transport considerations). If we compare our five clusters from this point of view, we might place them on a continuum ranging from situations in which decent jobs are available in the formal labor market (including small enterprises and the social economy) and where living conditions above the poverty line are feasible, through examples where contracted jobs of any kind (even if insecure, part-time and underpaid) exist, to cases where the informal economy is the entire economy (i.e. petty commerce within the locality or across country borders such as scrap iron collection, seasonal day laboring in agriculture, waste collection etc.).

The cities within our clusters hold the most potential as far as formal labor markets are concerned. However, this potential often goes unrealized for Roma due to limited educational attainment over the past two decades, which itself stems largely from school abandonment brought about by the limited material opportunities of Roma families. As such, they may not possess the necessary qualifications to be employed. Moreover, they might be refused employment due to the pervasive negative stereotyping of “Gypsies”. Employers often opt for forms of informal employment or part-time employment schemes with low salaries for their employees. Furthermore, as scrap iron collection and the selective collection of waste becomes more and more profitable for companies, people making a living out of this activity are increasingly excluded from these niches, too. In the settlements within the Iași, Călărași and Arad clusters, situated near Romania’s international borders with Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Hungary, there is an abundance of petty (and mostly illegal) cross-border commerce, another insecure income generating activity available for those excluded from other sources of income.

The (lack of) combination of ethno-spatial separation with high levels of economic deprivation is also determined by inter-generational practices between Roma and non-Roma or patron-client relationships related to employment. Memories passed down from the 1950s demonstrate that people connect their current position in society to their position as recalled from the past. This is especially so in rural areas, where all Roma groups had well-defined functions in the local economy in decades past. Many were brick makers, construction workers, comb manufacturers, day laborers, fruit pickers, etc. On the basis of this cooperative past, Roma are still invited by their non-Roma neighbors to provide help in the domestic spheres or with seasonal labor. But, as more and more people suffer from impoverishment and restrict their economic activity to subsistence agriculture, they need less and less involvement of this kind. In rare cases, better-off Roma returning from abroad hire non-Roma neighbors to construct their homes, called by locals “Gypsy palaces” (“*palate țigănești*”).

The internal divisions and competition between local Roma groups also partially explain why some Roma are poorer and others are better-off under the same context. But to understand these Roma-Roma cleavages, one needs to observe this within a larger context and notice how such instances are abused by non-Roma who happily use this distinction in order to exclude the poorest of the poor. To some extent, the perseveration of group solidarity around traditional values generates more capacity to cope with current economic shortages because it may provide self-esteem and it may activate the self-organizing potential (even if this is about creating authoritarian internal systems, marked by internal injustices and exploitation). This might contribute to the explanation as to why traditional Roma groups might be better-off than those Roma groups whose internal bonds are only based on shared poverty. In part, these groups are also differentiated according to their inherited occupations and to the extent that they might persevere with their traditions, or transform old skills into new capacities adapted to the current labor market. Moreover, the ability of some Roma groups to sustain themselves economically and to act independently even during times of crises is also rooted in the degree to which,

during socialist times, they kept their economic autonomy in the context of an overarching state-owned economy. Those Roma, who today claim to be assimilated or integrated, underwent an unfinished process of proletarianization during socialist times, which was long enough to develop a strong dependency on the economic activities and welfare benefits that collapsed after 1990. This is particularly so if they were socialized as workers in mono-industrial settlements or in agricultural cooperatives, and were not possessing properties during the pre-socialist period. Many Roma did not enjoy the benefits of property retrocession after 1990 and they entered into market competition from a highly disadvantaged position which has only increased since then.

4. Deficiencies of Roma representation and participation in public administration

Our full-length final report reflects on multiple forms of Roma participation and representation in local public life, but here we focus only on Roma roles in public administration, i.e. elected local councilors and designated Roma experts. In principle, they could be decisive actors helping to steer local decision-making and/or mediating between majority society and the Roma population. In this sense, they might have the potential to represent the needs and interests of Roma communities and mitigate marginalization trends. But in reality their impact is hindered by many factors.

First, it is worth mentioning that these positions reflect how Roma are politically organized, as well as how the Romanian governmental structures respond to the national Roma inclusion strategies. Across our clusters, in places where Roma have elected representatives in their local council, they are predominantly members of non-Roma political parties. At the time of writing our analysis, there were two national Roma “political parties”—one was established in the early 1990s and the other after 2010, both as civil society organizations. The former also has the right to enter national elections, while the latter is only permitted to engage in local elections as it has not been formally recognized by the relevant authorities in 2012 as a so-called “non-governmental organization with public utility”. The oldest Roma organization participating in elections, the Roma Party (*Partida Romilor*), engages mainly in politics related to informal local networks and attempts to influence local interests from these shadow positions. The Democratic Alliance of Roma from Romania explicitly assumed a platform of ethnic mobilization as a tool for Roma empowerment, but this has not yet been successful enough in engaging in the existing structures and mechanisms of political deal making. As such, these political structures and this type of Roma representation have not resulted (yet) in the elaboration and implementation of evidence-based development programs to benefit and empower marginalized and excluded Roma communities.

Second, persons designated as Roma experts occupy positions with no decision-making power. At most, they might informally influence the mayor and the local councilors, depending on the power constellation of the locality, on their background and networks, and on their economic and social capital. They can be successful if their degree of embeddedness in the local community is sufficient and they have the ability to assure the participation of their (marginalized) community in defining problems, priorities, solutions and advocating for them on the public agenda of the municipality.

Our empirical observations showed that in Iași cluster, despite the relatively high number of Roma with voting rights, the degree of misunderstanding and conflict within Roma families and between informal leaders eventually resulted in splits and fights between the “nations” (“*neamuri*”) locally sometimes (pejoratively) called “*clans*”. The result has been no unified leadership acting on the behalf of the whole community. People’s trust in political parties or civic organizations that appear at local level with promises has decreased over the years as those promises have gone largely unfulfilled. This is true for the whole population regardless of ethnicity. And everybody knows that politicians are manipulating people for votes, but this continues to occur at every election. Public authorities sometimes communicate with the Roma community by convening them at the commune’s cultural center. This happens rarely, and when it does happen, it unfolds in a humiliating manner. For example, public officials use such occasions to accuse members of the community of stealing in the village.

In Curtici, within the Arad cluster, there are no elected Roma councilors on the local council, but in 2012 the mayor hired an ethnic Roma as a referee. Between 2002 and 2007, the city had a Roma leader representative, the personal councilor of the then mayor, and during that period Roma communities benefited from infrastructure development including the paving of roads, access to public water supplies, public illumination, the extension of the sewage system, and the refurbishment of the school. Members of Roma communities are rarely, if ever, consulted regarding decision-making processes. From time to time, they used to be informed about matters related to the guaranteed minimal income or the renewal of identity cards, issues that representatives in City Hall considered major problems for local Roma. In the rural areas of Arad cluster, local authorities observed that each Roma individual approaches the City Hall with his/her individual problems. The Roma community does not come forward with collective requests.

Given the size of the Roma population in the Dolj cluster, one would expect it to have formal representation in the local administration. In reality, however, that is not the case. In the city of Calafat, there are no Roma elected councilors or Roma experts in the administration. The driver of the mayor acts informally as the representative of local Roma communities. There are school and health mediators, of which the latter is of Roma background and together with the driver is respected and accepted by both Roma communities in the town (*Cositorari/spoitori* and *Rudari*), as well as by public authorities. The driver is a member of the Roma Party, and a founder of the non-governmental organization “*Calafat Romi*”. He cooperates with the County Office for Roma from Craiova. With the exception of the Calafat and Bârca communes, Roma in rural areas have elected local councilors, but their existence does not automatically mean that they act on behalf of marginalized Roma communities. Often the informal Roma experts, as a result of their strong informal relationships with the local mainstream leaders, have a bigger influence on decision-making on behalf of Roma than a would-be local councilor would have. The effectiveness of Roma representation ultimately depends on the personal relations and involvement of the individuals occupying one position or another.

Aiud is the only locality in the Alba cluster where there is a Roma representative on the local council. Being well known in the community because of the NGO he is involved with, he decided to join the National Liberal Party, which is the same as the Mayor’s, and thus he managed to be elected as a local councilor. Members of the Roma community fear that, because he was promoted and in turn has supported the mayor during the local election process, he might be less likely to challenge the mayor on Roma issues, if needed. In the same locality, there was previously a Roma expert at City Hall, but he was recently accused of corruption and arrested. Members of the Roma community explained that this happened when the Roma expert was in charge of dis-

tributing land parcels to local Roma on behalf of City Hall. In the communes of Hopârta, Sâncel and Lunca Mureşului, there is no Roma representation at City Hall or related to schools. The informal leader of the Roma community in Lunca Mureşului explained that he has tried for years to get elected to the local council, but never received sufficient support from the mayors. He noted that if he is alerted to a case of Roma abuse in the village, he always contacts the Prefecture in Alba Iulia as opposed to the local City Hall in Lunca Mureşului, or the Roma Party.

Oltenița and Spanţov communes from the Călăraşi cluster do not have a local Roma expert to oversee and monitor the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion, nor do they envisage appointing one. In Oltenița, the responsibilities of the Roma expert are performed by a social worker, who happens to be Roma; in Spanţov, nobody was designated to perform this job. As far as local Roma experts are concerned, their position at the mayoralty is not secure enough to put the sensitive topic of Roma on the public agenda or to be critical about the lack of local policy measures serving Roma. As with any other public servant, their positions have been threatened by the recent austerity measures (significant layoffs and salary cuts), which endangered their jobs. The influence of elected local councilors is based on their personal relationship with the mayor, as in the Frumuşani case. In all five localities, there is at least one local Roma councilor: in Curcani there are four, in Oltenița there are two; and in Frumuşani, Chirnogi and Spanţov there is one. Curcani's mayor is also Roma. These councilors are, by and large, subsumed to their respective mayors. In four out of the five localities, the local councilors are not interested in Roma communities, nor are they skilled enough to elaborate effective proposals to address local council meetings. The only local Roma councilor empowered with such skills represents Frumuşani. He is a Roma activist with more than 15 years of experience dealing with Roma inclusion. The mayoralty actions towards Roma communities were made precisely due to these personal relationships acquired during the elections, when they mobilized to attract the Roma votes.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Intersectional and multiple Roma marginalization

Roma marginalization is both social class and statute, and ethnic-identity based. It is both spatialized and racialized. It is a type of social marginalization and economic deprivation that is manifested in territorial (residential) segregation/isolation, which is reproduced and exacerbated—among others—by the spatial exclusion itself. And it results in the creation of marginalized spaces that are defined/stigmatized locally as “Gypsy neighborhoods” (“ţigăanii”). The inter-linkages functioning in this process and the possible outcomes are illustrated by the matrix below. The vertical axis portrays the ethno-spatial segregation and the horizontal axis represents economic deprivation. Local examples depicted from our investigation are given for each pattern:

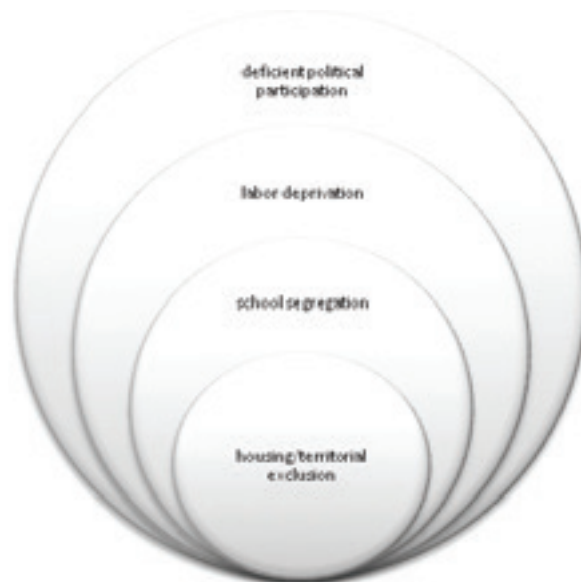
Matrix 1. Patterns of the juxtaposition of ethno-spatial segregation and economic deprivation



When we talk about marginalized Roma communities in local areas we refer to groups of people or (extended) families sharing a space demarcated from the rest of the municipality by local signs and practices. They are characterized by various types and degrees of deprivations and reduced opportunities. These areas are generally referred to as “Roma neighborhoods” or “Gypsyhoods” by the people living in the rest of the community. In the 25 scrutinized settlements, we observed poor Roma communities that were by-and-large accepted by their broader—but also economically deprived—neighbors, so that their social marginalization was not necessarily connected to ethno-spatial segregation. We also encountered poor communities in better-off surroundings who were connected to the social life of the locality on specific domains (e.g. schooling), but otherwise disconnected (e.g. by labor and housing). In these instances, social marginalization and ethno-spatial segregation partially overlapped. We also encountered poor communities that were severely excluded into segregated peripheries.

The amplification of exclusion is also a result of the juxtaposition of several areas where people experience marginalization and/or segregation due to their social status and/or ethnic background. Housing/territorial exclusion, school segregation, labor deprivation and deficient political participation might intersect in diverse ways creating different degrees of nonparticipation in the local society. The size of the circles composing the below diagram does not reflect the hierarchy of the importance of the factors generating exclusion. In fact, these factors do not act hierarchically, but intersectionally, one through the other(s), mutually reproducing each other while their interaction generates and maintains, or even deepens, advanced marginality. The placement of the circles into the diagram suggests that these processes affect all the domains and institutions through which marginalized individuals and groups live their lives. They internalize the negative features imposed from outside through housing exclusion, school segregation, precarious labor and deficient political participation. From their home and its immediate environment shared with significant others, through the schools and jobs that are accessible to them, to the inadequate or missing forms of political participation and decision-making, and back.

Diagram 3. Intersectional factors producing social exclusion



Aside from the already mentioned structural factors, the place/position that these economically deprived (Roma) communities occupied on the socio-geographic map of their settlements was largely dependent on the ways in which their members participated in the formal and informal economic and political life of the locality. Their position was also shaped by the internal stratification of the local Roma society: while constructing a hierarchy, different groups of different social statuses and economic wealth identified with each other also in ethnic terms differentiating among Roma groups with different occupations, traditions and connectedness to the broader environment. These demarcations nurtured from within were frequently taken advantage of by the majority society in order to justify the differentiated treatment of the so-called “deserving” and “undeserving” Roma. This has led to the perpetuation of a severely excluded category of people who do not benefit from any developmental investments or human considerations—either from majority society or their better-off ethnic fellows.

5.2 The role of interethnic relations in reproducing marginalization

Relations between Roma and non-Roma function as ethnic relations where there is a consensus among people on both sides that ethnicity matters in the way in which they perceive/classify themselves and each other, or that ethnicity is and should be used as a classificatory system for creating differences and similarities, or the sense of (non)belonging to the local society. In the Romanian ethno-political context (as in many other countries), ethnicity is defined by shared language, history and culture. But Roma groups are not necessarily recognized or identified locally by the use of Romani language, or by respecting a joint set of cultural norms, or by cultivating a sense of shared past, even if some elites try to construct a “Roma nation” or a Roma political identity by nurturing Romani and Romanipen or common historical origins. Instead, in the face-to-face relations or in political discourses, Roma tend to be identified by so-called “physiological” and “social” features; and this is an act of racialization: they are “recognized” by skin color, and are stigmatized as people with anti-social practices. There is public consensus around the supposition that the former is deeply rooted in some sort of biological and/or cultural “*Gypsy essence/blood*” and that eventually all Roma are the same regardless of the “nation” (“*neam*”) to which they belong. Therefore, as already demonstrated in this paper, Roma are rarely considered as an “ethnic other”, but instead are inferiorized as “another race” that is radically different from “us” (“civilized” ethnic Romanians, Hungarians or Germans). This is a racialization of ethnicity or of “othering”. Despite this, as we often noticed in rural communities shaped by memories of long cohabitation and face-to-face informal relationships, and mostly in the local contexts characterized by generalized poverty—in the course of everyday life Roma and non-Roma relate to each other as individual fellows or as members of the families from the neighborhood or as former classmates or as co-workers. As happens in other cases of ethnic identification, (Roma) identification is situational and relational, with the difference being that in the case of the latter this intersects, in accordance with the local context of social and power relations, with tendencies of racialization.

At the level of our clusters, we observed that Roma were discursively defined through supposedly shared “racial” characteristics (e.g. dark skin), as well as specific attitudes and behaviors regarding schooling, work, social benefits and poverty. But their place and perception locally also depended on their percentage of the local population (if they mattered or not as voters), and it was also shaped by their relative wellbeing and ability to exert themselves in the political economy of the larger community.

Nonetheless, when non-Roma spoke about the broader Roma community, they tended to offer racialized arguments, such as: “*Roma have many children*”; “*they are a large community, so they are important voters*” or “*they are important to assure the existence of schools*”; “*Roma do not like to work and that is why they deserve to live in poverty*”, or “*Roma undertake illegal activities to get rich*”; or “*we have to clean our cities and villages of Roma who are embarrassing and dirty*”, or “*we may use the cheap labor force of Roma because they are ready to do anything*”.

5.3 Translocal processes advancing marginality

As a result of this research, we learned that—in the particular context of local economies and administration, which showed important differences across but also within the clusters—what mattered most in placing ‘Roma segments’ and ‘Roma communities’ on the socio-geographic map of the localities was, on the one hand, the way in which Roma and non-Roma could find

their complementary niches in the local markets, and, on the other hand, the internal cohesion of Roma groups that could provide individuals with a sense of dignity, belonging and solidarity. “Assimilated Roma” (“*romi asimilați*”) who lost their community ties due to ways in which their integration was sought during socialist times, and who after 1990 slowly lost their social function in the local communities due to economic restructuring, are having more difficulty coping with the current challenges of marginalization.

On the basis of our analysis, we might conclude that those Roma groups could impose their interests on their respective local societies and could acquire a higher degree of acceptance from the mainstream population, who managed to act as a cohesive group possessing a sense of dignity. Different groups of “traditional Roma”, raised in the spirit of independence from the majority but also in the spirit of providing services to them while nurturing a sense of internal tradition, or different groups of Roma adhering to neo-protestant churches while creating new ties within and across the boundaries between them and the majority, were capable of finding more internal sources and external solidarities than the “groups” that are bonding only through their shared experiences of impoverishment. At the time of our investigation, we found very few instances in the local contexts (for example in the case of Frumușani and partly in Aiud) where dignifying unions were built around other kinds of community values or actions, such as social activism for rights, or cultural manifestations for recognition, or local action groups for participation. This does not mean that such self-organizing would not have the potential to transform minority people’s self-perception and the way they are perceived by the mainstream society; rather, it means that these very local contexts were not resourceful from this point of view. But it also denotes that, generally speaking, and not only in the case of Roma, under times of widespread insecurity “religious faith” and “cultural traditions” prevail as meaningful offers that people ‘chose’ to identify with.

Social inclusion policies (especially when understood as social protection and social assistance measures) on their own, without being completed by dignifying recognition and representation in politics, fail to place Roma individuals/ families/ groups into positions from which they might be empowered to negotiate their rules of cohabitation. Unfortunately, in the local contexts studied, social inclusion policies, if any, were understood by decision-makers in a way that reproduced the association of Roma with social problems (poverty). No wonder this perpetuated the belief that the social system in which Roma live is acceptable, and it is only Roma who need to change, since “they are the problem”. Our contextual inquiry in Romania appeals to these stakeholders to engage in inclusion policies that address the structural causes of exclusion and, accordingly, that focus on the majority population and on how institutions (including authorities) function. In addition, by identifying the causes of marginalization and what it means in the case of different Roma groups, we call to the attention of decision-makers at national and local level the need to conceive of inclusive and rights-based development policies that carefully respond to the heterogeneity of (local) communities shaped by both the (power) relationships between the ethnic majority and minority, and those between different Roma groups.

When addressing local processes of marginalization and exclusion, one should also consider how trans-local mechanisms are shaping the local contexts even if their effect might be hardly neutralized by local interventions. As post-socialist Romania aligned to the current global trends of neoliberalism, inclusion and exclusion (of Roma) reflect a new societal order, which has also manifested in spatial (urban) arrangements. This order privileges the winners of the privatization and marketization of public goods, and it is inclusive of people, places, and societal areas that might be better included into the profit-oriented political economy of capitalism (as a labor

force, as geographical zones worthy of investment, as domains which deserve development). But it is exclusive towards those who were rendered “surplus”, “redundant” or “needless” from the point of view of those in power and of the capital, or who became so vulnerable that their labor rights could be exploited due to their socio-spatial position, wedged in between the borders of legality and human dignity.

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FACES AND CAUSES OF ROMA MARGINALIZATION

Experiences from Serbia

Slobodan Cvejić

The “**Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities**” inquiry explored the economic, political, demographic, and social forces at municipal and community level which shape practices and consequences of social exclusion and potential pathways to inclusion. **Phase 2** of this research focused on a representative sample of municipalities (20–30 per country) in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia to explore basic local social services and infrastructure provisions, conditions of political participation of the Roma, and local interventions targeting Roma inclusion. This research phase relied on structured field research collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This short country report is based on the **Final Country Report on the Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Serbia**, edited in June 2013 by Slobodan Cvejić, with contributions from Irena Petrović, Dunja Poleti, Marjan Muratović and Nenad Vladislavljev who assisted in data collection and processing. The following individuals conducted field research: Dejan Živković, Dejan Raimović, Goran Jumerović, Goran Lakatuš and Milica Pavel, under the leadership of Marjan Muratović and Nenad Vladislavljev.

ABBREVIATIONS

DILS	Delivery of Improved Public Services
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
LAP	Local Action Plan
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NAP	National Action Plan
NES	National Employment Service
SEN	Special Education Needs
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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1. Introduction

Numerous studies have shown that Roma are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable ethnic group in Serbia (Cvejić, Babović, and Pudar 2011), the Western Balkans (OSCE 2013; FRA and UNDP 2012) and throughout Europe (Müller and Jovanović 2010).

On the other hand, some comparative studies have also shown that there has been some improvement made in the decrease of Roma poverty and the increase of wellbeing (UNICEF 2010), which points to the fact that it is possible to influence and ameliorate some of the causes of Roma exclusion. This also means that there is variation among Roma in the level of social inclusion and economic wellbeing.

In this report we review and analyze different appearances and causes of Roma marginalization in Serbia. We are interested in explaining how and why Roma experience social exclusion and why this tends to be related to their spatial segregation. We pay particular attention to collective forms of marginalization and to processes that put whole communities on the margins of social life. Also, the collective aspects and conditions influence to a large extent the potentials and limitations of what individual members of the community may or may not do to help improve their own situation.

We assume that Roma marginalization is the product of complex and gradual processes of deprivation affecting different aspects of social life, starting from early childhood. As such, we aim to identify where these deprivations intersect in physical and social space and how they often take the form of a cultural model and thus become reproduced inter-generationally and labeled pejoratively by the majority population—in settlements that have a high concentration of Roma. We analyze four areas important for Roma inclusion: education, employment, political and cultural participation/representation and involvement in local development planning and activities.

For the above purpose we have conducted our research in four clusters of settlements that have a high share of Roma population. Clusters are formed of four settlements each, two urban and two rural.

2. Research design: sample, methodology and research team

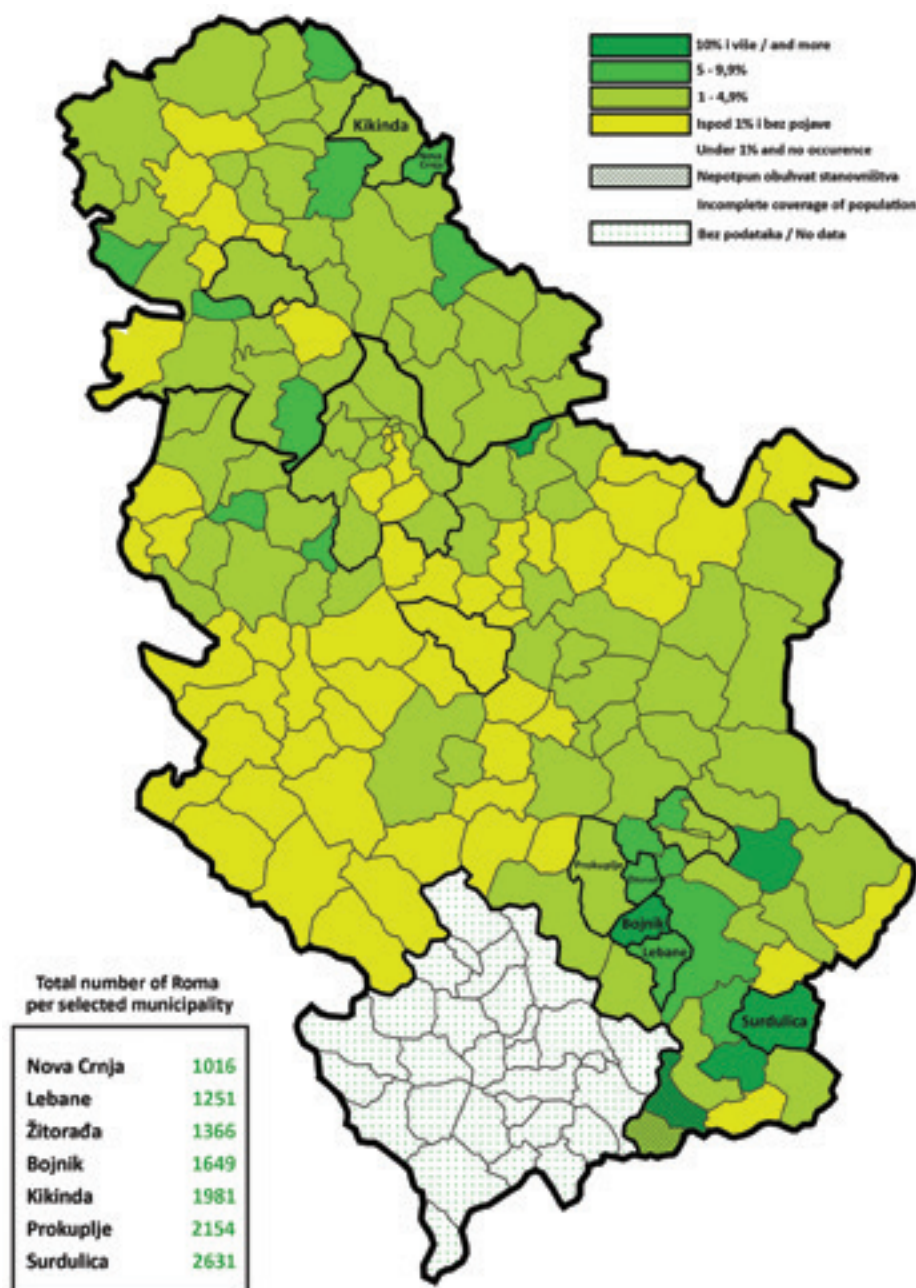
2.1 The sample

In Serbia, unlike in Romania and Hungary, the number of local administrations is small (150 municipalities, 23 cities and Belgrade: 174 in total). Conversely, the variation in population sizes of municipalities is large: from 11,000 to over 220,000 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2012). As such, we limited our geographic selection to four clusters that formed more or less organic units. All four clusters cover territories where Roma population density is moderate to high (5%–15% of the total population, according to official statistics). Three of the clusters are positioned in the least developed and poorest southern region of Serbia; two of them neighbor each other territorially. One cluster is located in Vojvodina, the northern region of the country. Although Vojvodina is a relatively richer part of Serbia, its eastern region of Banat is almost as

poor as the South. Nevertheless, our sample structure ensured variation in several important aspects, such as:

- Roma (sub)cultures,
- traditions and practices of inter-ethnic relations,
- institutional settings, and,
- levels of economic development.

Map 1. Roma population density in Serbia, 2011 census data



Map by Jelena Ilić.

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2012). *Ethnicity. Data by Municipalities and Cities.*

The final sample structure was as follows:

CLUSTER 1

Prokuplje is composed of a mid-size city of Prokuplje (27,333 inhabitants) as a center, a smaller, neighboring rural municipality Žitoradja (around 3,000) and the villages of Žitni Potok and Rečica (around 500–600 each). This cluster has moderate density of Roma population. In this cluster we identified seven Roma segments with approximately 900 Roma families, almost entirely settled at the borders of settlements. The exception was Čerkez Mahala which is closer to the center of Prokuplje.

CLUSTER 2

Lebane is composed of the small municipality of Lebane (9,272 inhabitants), the even smaller rural municipality of Bojnik (around 3,000), and the villages of Pertate (around 1,500) and Stubla (around 1,000). This cluster has the highest density of Roma population in Serbia (over 15% by official statistics). Here we identified 13 Roma segments with approximately 450 families, again settled at the borders of settlements, with exception of the villages of Pertate and Stubla where Roma segments are in the middle of the settlement.

CLUSTER 3

Surdulica is composed of the small municipality of Surdulica (11,400 inhabitants) and three villages, Jelašnica (around 1,000), Binovce (around 500) and Prekodolce (around 1,500) (the later belonging administratively to the neighboring municipality of Vladičin Han). Binovce is the only settlement in the sample that was not included in the UNDP survey (2011). This cluster also has a high density of Roma. Here we identified six Roma segments with approximately 920 Roma families, settled at the borders of settlements, with the exception of Prekodolce where Roma comprise 90% of the population.

CLUSTER 4

Kikinda is composed of the mid-size municipality of Kikinda (37,700 inhabitants), the small rural municipality Nova Crnja (around 2,000) and the villages of Bašaid (around 3,500) and Aleksandrovo (around 2,500). This cluster has a moderate population density of Roma. We identified seven Roma segments with approximately 270 Roma families. Segments in Kikinda and Bašaid are positioned at the borders of settlements, but in Nova Crnja and Aleksandrovo a small number of Roma families (25 and 20, respectively) live mixed with the majority population (Serbs and Hungarians in Nova Crnja and Serbs in Aleksandrovo).

Table 1. Ethnic composition of Roma/poor segments per settlement

Settlement Title	Roma/Poor Segment Title	Total Families	Roma Families
CLUSTER 1			
Prokuplje	Carina	452	276
	Džungla	43	43
	Čerkez Mahala	576	358
Žitni Potok	Rid	115	115
Žitorađa	Gornja Mahala	110	40
	Donja Mahala	87	35
Rečica	Rečica	160	30
CLUSTER 2			
Lebane	Kod Groblja	20	20
	Jablanička i Solidarnost	100	100
	Šarce	150	40
	Šilovačko	16	16
Pertate	Novo Naselje	16	16
	Stara Mahala	15	15
Bojnik	Crkvički Put	150	50
	Oransko	60	60
	Konjovački Put	30	30
	Pustorečka	40	40
	Kod Mosta	20	20
Stubla	Nova Stubla	12	12
	Stubla	30	30
CLUSTER 3			
Surdulica	Novo Naselje	130	130
	Gornja i Donja Mahala	285	285
	Piskavica	55	40
Jelašnica	Jelašnica	120	80
Binovce	Binovce	60	50
Prekodolce	Prekodolce	300	270
CLUSTER 4			
Kikinda	Mali Bedem	70	70
	Veliki Bedem	200	15
	Stara Klanica	19	19
	Strelišće	120	20
Bašaid	Zlatna Greda	170	100
	Picoder		
Nova Crnja	Nova Crnja	600	20
Aleksandrovo	Aleksandrovo	800	25

Source: Assessment of local Roma collaborators.

2.2 Methodology

Data collection in Serbia started with ‘socio-tours’ to the selected settlements. Before the field work, we organized a training session in Belgrade, where the whole team met and discussed the proposed methodology and tasks. We also undertook desk and geographical research, reviewed available census data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the target municipalities (ethnic composition, age, GDP, social transfers, educational institutions, number of pupils, etc.) and other relevant data (statistics on employers, unemployment rates, health care institutions, the political composition of local assemblies, etc.), provided in Annex 1 to this document. Our team leaders also connected with Roma informants (NGO activists, educational assistants, local Roma coordinators or simply respected members of the local community) who we would collaborate with throughout the project in the various localities.

The first round of visits to Roma settlements was intended to establish deeper contact with Roma informants, undertake a visual assessment of infrastructure and housing conditions, and collect basic information for socio-mapping. This round of visits was also considered an extended form of training and team building since the whole team was participating in data collection (national team leader, cluster team leader, desk researcher and field researcher). In subsequent rounds of visits more detailed data was collected on Roma-poor segments as well as on local Roma participation, schools and employers.

Generally, the whole process of data collection went well. However, there were a few minor problems related to the methodology:

1. *Official statistics.* Statistical data from the 2011 census are available only to the level of cities and municipalities, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, urbanity or some other characteristic. For the purpose of our sample composition we occasionally had to rely on estimates based on the 2002 census, when data was presented down to the level of settlements. Also, it should be stressed that while ethnic data is presented as “official” in Serbia, when undertaking a census citizens do not have to claim their ethnicity. Roma, in fact, tend to avoid declaring their ethnicity, sometimes even opting to declare themselves as ethnic Serbian or some other ethnicity. As such, official statistics more than likely underestimate the Roma population by 2–3 times.¹ The 2002 census suggested that the official number of Roma in Serbia was around 108,000; in 2011 it was around 147,000.

1 Ethnic data are being collected in Serbia for different purposes: the census, the unemployment registry at the National Employment Service (NES), the application for measures of support in secondary and tertiary education, etc. However, these data are based on self-declaration and many Roma tend not to declare their ethnic origin or they declare Serbian ethnic origin. In addition, little ‘ethnic’ data has been published so the information usually stays within the respective institutions. For example, NES holds separate data on ethnicity and prioritizes Roma in active measures of employment, but there is no regular public reporting on Roma participation in these measures. Also, if a student claims the right to affirmative action in university enrollment, he/she needs official confirmation by the Roma National Council, but there is no accurate data on the total number of Roma students. On the other hand, over the last few decades there has been a lot of research on Roma conducted in Serbia, covering different aspects of their living: health, housing, education, employment and welfare. This body of research ranges from particularized ethnographic studies to large scale surveys (e.g. MICS). Therefore, most of the generalizations about the Roma population in Serbia are based on incomplete official statistics or research with limited representativeness (due to the reluctance of Roma to self-declare their ethnicity and due to frequent migration). Although the outreach and accuracy of data about Roma in Serbia has increased and presents a much better evidence base for policy making today than ten or more years ago, there is still a lot of space for subjective interpretations which affects strategies and measures of Roma inclusion and jeopardizes the basic human rights of the most poor and excluded Roma (e.g. those who live in informal urban settlements).

2. *Reliability of information provided by local informants.* Both field researchers and local Roma informants had problems calculating rates of unemployment, financial assistance beneficiaries, school attendees, and other critical indicators in the absence of accurate data lists. It was easier for them to give descriptive assessments like “a lot”, “a little” and similar.

2.3 Roma participation in the research

The added value of the methodology was the establishment of a Roma research team in which researchers and especially team leaders were not merely collecting data, but also building their own and their community’s capacity to assess problems of Roma inclusion in an informed and knowledgeable way. Cooperation between team members was strong in all organizational aspects. Some degree of mistrust was noticed only at the level of local administration when accepting a Roma researcher, and this was only in the Kikinda cluster where Roma are generally least included in the local community and least accepted by the local administration. On the other hand, non-Roma researchers were warmly accepted in Roma communities and by Roma informants, which was made easier by Roma researchers being part of the team and ‘holding the door open’. Common training sessions showed that Roma from Vojvodina and Roma from Southern Serbia easily cooperated and exchanged experiences, which was again made easier by the two team leaders having known each other for years. But even without that, our researchers knew about each other’s traditions and local community challenges, which showed that Roma in Serbia can build a single ethnic community.

The fact that our team leaders and field researchers were Roma ensured a good response from our Roma informants and the local Roma community. On several occasions information was cross-checked with local people who assembled for this purpose, often in open spaces, Roma associations’ facilities or in private houses.

3. Roma segregation: space and community

3.1 Roma settlements in Serbia—major trends

Data on the time of the establishment of Roma settlements in Serbia lead to the conclusion that Roma in Serbia abandoned a nomadic way of life early in their history (Jakšić and Bašić 2005). At least 47% of major Roma settlements in Serbia were constructed by the beginning of the twentieth century. Out of the total of 593 Roma settlements in Serbia in 2005, 11% were constructed between 1901 and 1945. By 1972 another 22% were built, and another 14% of settlements were built between then and 1991. Finally, in the period 1991-2000 the remaining 5% of Roma settlements were built.

There are 593 Roma settlements in Serbia. Of these, 314, have less than 200 Roma inhabitants. There are 179 settlements with between 200 and 500 Roma, and 62 settlements with between 500 and 999 Roma. There are 22 larger Roma settlements with up to 2,000 inhabitants, and 13 settlements have up to 5,000 Roma. Only four settlements in Serbia have more than 5,000 Roma inhabitants. Some 70% of the total Roma population in Serbia lives in these settlements.

Out of 593 Roma settlements, 285 are in cities, and the others are suburban or rural. Roma settlements are evenly dispersed in rural and urban environments, but the settlements in urban environments are more densely populated and the population is more numerous.

Twenty-eight percent of Roma settlements in Serbia were built according to a formal plan.² Thirty-five percent were built illegally, and 35% spread illegally from an originally planned core settlement. Living in a *mahala*³, be it rural, urban, or suburban, is the traditional Roma way of living—in Serbia and elsewhere. The *mahala* is often interpreted as the symbol of Roma spatial segregation. According to Jakšić and Bašić (2005), although a majority of the interviewed Roma families already live in urban, suburban or rural *mahalas*, the *mahala* can hardly be called their preferred option in terms of residence. The results of this study show that the attachment of Roma families to the *mahala* has weakened as almost half of Roma families living in *mahalas* would now gladly move to a mixed community. An advantage of living in a *mahala* is the feeling of safety and solidarity, and the integration of the family in the local community. The main shortcomings are isolation, deprivation, and various forms of exclusion.

Based on the data presented above one can conclude that over time Roma have settled in small communities on the borders of (usually larger) settlements. Most of these Roma segments are small in their number of inhabitants and distinct from the majority of the local community in spatial, infrastructural, social and economic terms. The fact that those Roma segments in larger urban surroundings that were previously located at the outskirts of the city but have since become absorbed into the current urban tissue remain impoverished and deprived of quality infrastructure confirms that neglect of Roma residential segments and Roma communities living there has been a habit that characterized all political options and local development modalities to date. This spatial segregation makes the marginalization of Roma visual and exacerbates all other types of exclusion. It is not surprising, therefore, that so many Roma who acquire resources (human, social, economic) sufficient for independent living tend to move to those parts of the settlement where the majority population lives.

3.2 Roma segments in the settlements included in our research

The concentration of Roma is moderate in Žitoradja and Prokuplje. In Žitoradja it is 8.3%, in Prokuplje municipality it is 4.8%–5.6% in the city and 3.6% in rural areas.

This cluster is unique in that it hosts the only settlement of internally displaced Roma from Kosovo in our sample (the border with Kosovo is just 50 km away). These IDPs ended up in a slum behind an old Roma settlement in Prokuplje (Džungla/Jungle, neighboring Carina), but also squatted in many empty houses in other Roma segments of the city. This is important because Roma IDPs in Serbia are considered the most disadvantaged group, suffering from extreme poverty and deep exclusion. They speak Albanian, not Serbian, and even their Roma dialect is not readily understandable to some Roma in Serbia. However, the Roma neighborhoods offer them some

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- 2 Urban planning in Serbia is regulated by national laws, but implemented by local administrations and based on a local General Urban Plan. Local urban regulation is financed mainly from local budgets with occasional supplements from national programs and special-purpose budgets. As a consequence, the regulation of Roma settlements is usually last on the list of priorities and often depends on programs of international organizations or special national programs (e.g. social housing).
 - 3 Mahala is a concept transferred from the period of Ottoman administration. It denominates a local neighborhood (a block) usually dominated by a single ethnic group. Today in Serbia it is almost exclusively used for Roma segments of settlements.

familiarity and safety. On the other hand, the fact that the local administration in Prokuplje, in a time of severe economic crisis, plans to invest in basic urbanization and regulation of the Jungle settlement suggests that the problem of Roma segregation is at least becoming more visible, which might also result in better inclusion in the future.

The settlements in this cluster orbit Prokuplje which is the main administrative and economic center. There is a strong and visible difference in the quality of life between the urban and rural settlements. Nevertheless, it is always the Roma segments in the settlements that are the poorest. The difference between Roma and non-Roma segments is less visible in rural areas where the degree of poverty is much higher and afflicts a large number of households. It is more visible in Prokuplje, where two segments, Džungla and Mala Guba have inferior housing and living conditions compared to Čerkez Mahala and Carina. Generally speaking, the inhabitants of all the Roma segments in this cluster live in small, individual houses of poor quality with basic infrastructure and relatively easy access to transport, groceries and social services. However, some Roma are more deprived and at risk of exclusion than others. Villages always suffer more: in Žitni Potok only 10% of houses have piped water and others use a single pipe in the street. It is distinct for being the only Roma segment in the sample where Roma feel insecure about their housing. Almost all Roma houses are built illegally on their own land (in villages) or on community land (in cities) and are under the process of legalization. In Žitni Potok there is a threat that the Public Enterprise Srbijašume (Woods of Serbia), which is in charge of the public land where the village is built, will clear away Roma houses in order to build an economic facility. The village also suffers from electricity shortages. Marginalization of Roma is based on a complex cycle of poverty and deprivation, and segregation is visible.

Bojnik, in the Lebane Cluster, has the highest concentration of Roma in Serbia, 14.9%. In Lebane it is 5.7%, with a high disparity between rural and urban settlements (3.7% and 8.4%, respectively). In Lebane and generally in Bojnik, Roma communities live in segregated areas, neighboring with local communities. In Pertate they live mixed with majority population, in Stubla one settlement is in the center of the village. In Lebane a new segment (Grobljansko) was financed by public investments after a flood wiped out homes in the early 1980s and it merged with an already-existing segment of poor non-Roma. However, it was built on the edge of the city and is as unsuited for habitation as are the others. Although territorially segregated, Roma seem to be more accepted by the local majority community than, for example, in Kikinda. However, even here Roma are the poorest part of community. Lebane was the only city in the Serbian sample in which a poor, non-Roma neighborhood was marked as segregated and living next to Roma (next to Grobljansko, mentioned above). In broad terms, the Lebane Cluster is organic in administrative, social and economic terms, but community ties are weak and social relations particularized. The same vicious circle of unemployment, low education and poverty keeps Roma at the margins of the local community, but stereotypes are not as strong as in the bigger cities.

In the Surdulica cluster the concentration of Roma is high; there are 2,631 Roma registered in the Municipality of Surdulica according to the latest census (2011), totaling 13% of the population—far higher than the national average (2%). Together with municipalities of Bojnik (included in our research), Bela Palanka and Vranjska Banja it has the highest concentration of Roma in Serbia. The share of Roma in the urban settlement of Surdulica is 11%, and in rural settlements 15% on average. Roma settlements are exclusively residential zones, with almost no economic activity. Often there is not even a grocery store, so inhabitants have to travel to the city to meet their basic needs. This is easier for Roma from Surdulica than for those from villages, especially Binovce

and Jelašnica which are respectively 7 and 13 km away from Surdulica and have no public transport connections. By contrast, the Roma from Surdulica can walk the 2-3 km distance into town to access services and jobs. Prekodolce Roma have better infrastructure in the village and good public transport, which makes Vladičin Han easily accessible. However, Roma from the other two villages have difficulties accessing all social services other than pre-school and primary school education which is obligatory. The degree of poverty in the villages of Jelašnica and Binovce is striking, both among the Roma and non-Roma populations. Both villages are being depopulated and the non-Roma population is old and dwindling. This cluster is organic in the sense of its absolute central position in the city of Surdulica and the ways in which other settlements depend upon it. However, employment and social activity is limited, and the peripheral position of villages is deteriorating the living standards of all citizens, especially Roma.

In the Kikinda cluster the concentration of Roma is moderate, but much higher in Nova Crnja/Aleksandrovo (10%) than in Kikinda/Bašaid (3%). There were 1,981 Roma registered in the Municipality of Kikinda in the last census (2011), with a low disparity between rural and urban settlements. In Kikinda and Bašaid, Roma communities live in segregated areas, neighboring with the local community. In Nova Crnja and Aleksandrovo they are less numerous and live mixed with the majority population. In both locations Roma form the poorest part of community. In the city of Kikinda they can benefit from more opportunities for occasional informal work (e.g. waste collection and petty trade) and close proximity to social services. In rural areas they do not own land or engage in farming; rather, they tend to commute to the city to search for sources of income. Interestingly, Roma in the Kikinda cluster rarely engage in agriculture whereas Roma from the southern clusters tend to migrate to Banat (Kikinda is the largest city in North Banat) specifically for seasonal field work. Since this migration was not noticed by our local Roma informants in the Kikinda cluster, it is likely that Roma from southern clusters stay at large farms somewhat distant from the villages. The villages in Banat are generally poor, but in Bašaid the state of Roma housing and infrastructure spoke of the extreme poverty suffered in this region. In general, we can say that this cluster is not organic in administrative or economic terms. The marginalization of Roma is consistent throughout the settlements in the cluster, but is more obvious in Kikinda and Bašaid due to their territorial segregation. The housing and infrastructure conditions in the Mali Bedem and Klanica settlements are worse than other Roma settlements in Kikinda. Such segregation provokes certain levels of tension between Roma from this particular settlement and outsiders, whether Roma or not. There were a few instances of verbal conflicts with representatives of the local administration and researchers who visited the settlement, as well as with local Roma coordinator.

The quality of one's residence, and the ability to be mobile in a neighborhood, district or region is vital for the social mobility and social inclusion of Roma. Generally speaking, Roma segments in our sample are symbols of poverty and deprivation and we could not identify more than two among the 33 Roma segments that provided solid infrastructure, quality housing and reasonable standards of living, this way meeting the standards of the majority population. The remainder of Roma citizens are enclosed in the circle of their immediate neighbors and meet wider community almost exclusively through social service providers (education, health, social care, employment service, etc.). In these institutions, with the exception of schools, they often face treatment that is usually not expressed as open discrimination, but that undoubtedly replicates their marginalized status. The school is a weak bond because once they finish primary school most of them leave education and return to this semi-permissive model of inclusion. Even when departing the segments Roma usually do not end up in an inclusive environment. Trying to escape social isolation

and generate some income, Roma usually migrate to economically more vital regions in Serbia where they spend several months doing underpaid seasonal works, in often humiliating living conditions and having no social coverage and health insurance.

Roma residential segments are themselves obstacles to Roma social mobility and living in them perpetuates collective marginalization. On the other hand, there is intense pressure on Roma individuals or small groups who are deprived of all major resources and who try to live alone in majority communities. As such, Roma segments at least present some safety net for them in terms of identity support, income generation opportunities and basic personal safety (e.g. Jungle fusing with Carina in Prokuplje). Trans-generationally, Roma residential segments might take incremental steps to foster Roma mobility. However, even if this assumption is true, the process would be painfully slow and of limited scope, since the segregation and exclusion of Roma from these segments remains exceedingly high.

Nevertheless, Roma segments across the Serbian sample are not completely uniform. First, we should distinguish between urban and rural segments. Since the proximity of social institutions and the informal labor market are so important for the everyday survival of Roma families, those living in cities tend to fare better. It is not the size of the settlement that matters, but the social safety net and income opportunities it offers. To be sure, it is not the mere presence of such institutions that help sustain Roma families, but their accessibility. This is why even in such a small sample the cities vary in their degree of (un)favorability for inclusion. Prokuplje is bigger than Surdulica, Lebane and Bojnik, but so is Kikinda, yet the level of Roma inclusion is far better in Prokuplje than in Kikinda where the same institutional network seems less accessible to Roma. In this comparison the share of Roma matters (their percentage of the population is twice as large in the Prokuplje cluster than in the Kikinda cluster). This share is twice as high in Bojnik than in Prokuplje, but there poverty is so high, and institutional, economic, human and other resources so low, that opportunities rarely appear.

In truth, it is the combination of institutional development, resource availability and Roma civic and political activity that makes institutions more accessible and local communities more inclusive for Roma. Differences exist between rural Roma segments, too. Some of them, like Prekodolce in the Surdulica cluster, sometimes fare better than certain urban segments, such as Grobljansko in Lebane, or Mali Bedem in Kikinda. This is due to several particularities of Prekodolce, e.g. its proximity to two smaller cities that offer some possibilities for (largely informal) work and a long history of cohabitation with Roma, a significant inflow of remittances, and an active local NGO. On the other hand, the village of Binovce is not only quite distant from the nearest city (7 km), but is almost completely cut off from it due to a lack of public transportation. The result has been the village's relegation to a ghetto. Here distance is not only physical: there are other small and distant villages with ageing populations in Surdulica county, but such a degree of isolation is rare. In Binovce, working as an educational assistant or health coordinator are the ultimate opportunities for the Roma community, but these scarce institutional offerings should be supported by more civic and/or political engagement in order to increase the visibility of the Binovce Roma and direct some public funds towards the development of the village.

4. Gears of poverty: education and (un)employment

4.1 Roma education in Serbia—major trends

Roma in Serbia face many administrative barriers to education related to school enrollment, segregation and school performance. Some outstanding problems with regards to primary and secondary education include:

- **Limited effectiveness of legislative measures.** In 2003, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and the National Council of the Roma National Minority, enacted affirmative action measures to ensure the secondary and tertiary enrollment of Roma students applying to the National Council. The legal basis for affirmative action is included in the *Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (Art. 4)* and in the *Framework Convention on Protection of National Minorities (Art. 4)*. The new education policies are intended to adjust Serbian legislation in order to prevent the perpetual unwarranted categorization of Roma children and to start an effective re-categorization of those students who are currently misplaced in special education programs. Inclusive education projects are a priority. These changes resulted in a reduced number of children in special schools and in the downsizing of the special school network that disproportionately affects Roma students (OSCE 2013). However, thus far such legislation has had only a modest effect on practice. Because school governance is centralized, local administrations find little incentive to implement them sufficiently to help Roma.
- **Barriers to enrollment in the compulsory Preparatory Preschool Program and Primary School Education.** To date, enrollment in preparatory preschool education has been contingent on producing a residence permit that shows which neighborhood school is appropriate for any given child. For Roma, many of their settlements are not officially registered and, therefore, Roma children cannot obtain the requisite residence permits. Consequently, neighborhood schools (or any other schools) have not been obliged to enroll Roma students if they do not have proof of a residence permit, undercutting the prospects for Roma enrollment. As for primary school enrollment, the above mentioned possibility to enroll a child in a school “out of area” still divides schools between “elite” and “for poor”, leaving Roma segregated in low-quality schools.
- **Age restrictions on primary education enrollment.** Based on the new *Law on foundations of the education system and upbringing*, all children between six-and-a-half and seven-and-a-half years of age, before the beginning of the school year, are to be enrolled in the first grade of primary school. Children older than seven-and-a-half are eligible for late enrollment and may be admitted to the corresponding grade on the basis of a knowledge test organized by an ad-hoc committee set up by the school. These committees are responsible for determining the appropriate grade placement for any incoming child. Only individuals aged 16 and older are eligible for enrollment in adult education programs. Unfortunately, many Roma children who are out of school fall in the age gap between seven-and-a-half and 16 years. Because the ad-hoc committees are neither functional nor interested in enrolling extra students who may deplete resources without generating revenue, many of these children are completely excluded.

- **Primary education enrollment is also conditional upon passing a medical examination.** Because Roma are often unemployed and unregistered, they face tremendous difficulties accessing health care. Therefore, the compulsory medical examination creates yet another administrative barrier to education. In the last few years these exams have been organized during the obligatory pre-school year which has simplified the process for Roma families.
- **Extremely high dropout rates in primary education and barriers to re-entering the mainstream education system.** While the enrollment rates among Roma children for the first grade is between 82% and 90%, some 50% of Roma students drop out of school by the end of fourth grade. Thus, the proportion of Roma students who do not complete primary education is estimated at 65% (UNICEF 2010). Furthermore, without a legal means for dropout students to re-enter the education system, most students who leave school never return. Depending on the level of education completed prior to dropping out, some students will have the chance to finish primary education through an adult education program or obtain vocational training from the National Employment Services Program. At the moment neither option provides students with any meaningful education certificate.
- **Discrimination and lack of human rights for Roma education.** From the perspective of Roma children, school management and staff (including teachers) rarely exhibit welcoming attitudes towards them. Roma parents are often excluded from school board involvement. Serbian teachers seldom succeed in motivating Roma children in the school environment. Such attitudes contribute to the poor performance of Roma children, especially regarding examinations. However, this is yet another field in which substantial progress has been made by introducing Teaching Assistants to the classroom. Now there is an opportunity to better support Roma and other children who experience learning difficulties through individualized learning programs.

In sum, Roma in Serbia face a long set of education barriers, from enrollment issues to access to quality education. Consequently, their participation in education is one of the lowest in South Eastern Europe. Even though the low participation of Roma children in education is the primary problem, for those who are enrolled, segregation is a growing concern, especially within primary schools. Segregation has been reduced through the downsizing of special schools, but is still prevalent in schools for adult education since they serve mainly Roma. In order to prevent further segregation this issue should be addressed from the time that students enter the education system.

4.2 Roma and education—Serbian sample

This section summarizes our findings related to Roma exclusion in the education sphere, where we were able to identify certain trends as well as cluster specificities. First, we identified high enrollment rates of Roma children for obligatory education. The reported primary education dropout rate was less than suggested by the most recent research (e.g. MICS4) and segregation was not visible. Transfers to secondary education are a significant problem. The distance to schools and the costs related to secondary education are only part of the explanation, especially for poor rural families. The Delivery of Improved Local Services project (DILS) measures, which were later institutionalized through the provision of Roma education assistants, as well as a wide

awareness-raising campaign, contributed to producing these improvements in Roma participation in primary education. At secondary level there have been no such tools or advancements. Attempts at introducing a more robust affirmative action plan have been tried but few Roma families are aware of this, and even those that are find the application process difficult to complete. Roma children are almost completely absent from high schools.⁴ In sum, Roma exclusion from education happens gradually, with very few students ever reaching or completing high school, not to mention university.

The share of Roma is unequal in elementary schools in the Prokuplje cluster, regardless the schools' quality in teaching or equipment, as assessed by the school staff. The same is true for secondary schools in the Prokuplje cluster. In contradiction to official statistics on Serbian Roma in general, Roma in Prokuplje tend to continue on to secondary education at fairly high rates. In general high school they comprise less than 1%, and in medical vocational school they make up over 25%. Roma inclusion policies in Serbia pay special attention to increasing the number of Roma among teachers and medical doctors. Much promotion of these professions has been made among young Roma in order to streamline access to education and health services and thus improve two important pillars of human development at the same time.

In the Lebane cluster, the fact that the Roma population is much younger than the Serbian one does not translate into a larger percentage of Roma pupils in the local classrooms. Roma comprise 15% of the population and this corresponds to the share of Roma pupils in the schools. This share is unequal in elementary schools, regardless of their quality in teaching or equipment, but the variation is lower than in the Prokuplje cluster. Lebane too sees a higher percentage of Roma pupils continue on to secondary education compared to the Serbian average. Nine to ten percent of Roma here attend one of the two technical schools. None attend general secondary education.

In the case of the Surdulica cluster, the fact that the Roma population is much younger than the Serbian population makes the share of Roma students much higher than the general population. Roma are unequally distributed in elementary schools, but here this partly corresponds to the quality of the schools. Namely, the concentration of Roma is much higher in two distant rural schools. On the other hand, Roma are least concentrated in one of the only two schools that scored 'among the good ones' in student performance and 'good' on the physical condition of the school in our research (the others are mediocre for both indicators). Fewer Roma in this cluster attend secondary schools (e.g. 4%) as compared to the Prokuplje and Lebane clusters. None attend general secondary school, 10 attend a technical school and 29 go to agricultural school. It is probable, though, that some Roma children go to other cities for secondary education (e.g. Vranje and Niš).

In the Kikinda cluster, Roma are unequally distributed in elementary schools, regardless of the schools' quality in teaching or equipment. There is a school in the center of Kikinda that enrolls 30% of its pupils from outside its catchment area. The school's performance is outstanding, its infrastructure is good and it is well equipped with supplies, but this is not the school with the lowest share of Roma (here they make 7%). However, almost half of the Roma attending this school do so under the Special Education Needs (SEN) program. In accordance with official

4 There is no official statistical data on the proportion of Roma students in secondary schools. The estimates presented here are based on school administration reports and assessments by the Roma National Council.

statistics on Serbian Roma in general, in Kikinda Roma pupils rarely continue on to secondary education. Of the 2,375 pupils in Kikinda only 11 are Roma, and none of them attend general high school.

The practice of putting Roma children in special schools and classes is fading out. The dropout rate was lower than expected in comparison to official statistics. Often dropouts are caused by the migration of Roma families to EU countries, or to other regions of Serbia for seasonal work. There is a stark difference between urban and rural schools. Rural schools are more often of lower quality, although they usually provide a better pupil/teacher ratio.

Looking at infrastructure quality and student performance in the Prokuplje cluster schools, we do not find segregation of Roma other than general (non-ethnic) disparities between urban and rural schools. There are no “special” classes in the schools; children with SEN are dispersed throughout regular classes and are supported through individualized learning programs. There is, however, a separate special school with 34 children, all of them Roma. Children with SEN are unevenly distributed across the schools; however, there is no rule, either in dispersion of children with SEN, or in dispersion of Roma among them. Such decisions are made depending on the assessment of teaching assistants and their personalized approach to individual teaching programs. Roma are more concentrated in schools with favorable pupil/teacher ratios, but this indicator could be misleading. While in rural schools there are 3–5 pupils per teacher, in Prokuplje there is one school with 9 pupils per teacher and 3 schools with 10–15 pupils per teacher (the same is true with the music school). In the “special school” 8 teachers serve 36 Roma pupils. In other words, the favorable pupil/teacher ratio is being achieved through higher Roma attendance of lower quality rural schools and the special school. If this advantage is not used for teachers paying more attention to Roma children who lag behind, then it turns out to be a disadvantage of segregation along ethnic lines.

Grade repetition is not frequent among pupils in Serbian elementary schools. However, when it happens it is almost exclusively Roma who end up repeating grades. Schools of all sizes suffer dropouts. But Roma comprise between 80% and 100% of the dropouts across all schools. Generally, Roma children drop out of school more frequently in instances where their concentration is lower and where the pupil/teacher ratio is less favorable. This is another indication that Roma pupils are not being properly included in urban schools dominated by non-Roma students.

The Lebane cluster’s two village schools are mediocre, while the other 3 are among the better ones. The physical condition of the schools is again worse in the villages. The few children with SEN are evenly distributed across the schools. In total there are 10 children with SEN (in Stubla there are none), and only one of them is Roma. Roma attend all schools, with a more or less even concentration, and there are more Roma teachers in this cluster with a higher concentration of Roma than in the Prokuplje cluster. Grade repetition is not frequent among elementary school pupils. There are no over aged pupils or students learning at home. There are no dropouts from the rural schools (the one in Stubla only has 4 grades) and in others it is around 1%. Thirty to eighty percent of all dropouts are Roma.

There are no “special” classes in the schools in the Surdulica cluster; children with special educational needs are dispersed throughout regular classes and supported through individualized learning programs. Children with SEN are unevenly distributed across the schools. However, only 5 of these 30 children are not Roma, and in the city of Surdulica only one of three children with SEN is Roma, which is comparatively low in the clusters we have observed. It is hard to establish

an explanation for this, except for the fact that there is one urban school in which there is better performance, less Roma and less children with SEN. Here we arrive at a paradox: it is this school that has the largest number of Roma teachers (4), while in the two rural schools where there are high concentrations of Roma and no children with SEN, there is no Roma teacher. There are more peculiarities with regards to education in this cluster in comparison to the former two clusters. First, the grade repetition rate is higher, and, as usual, Roma make up between 70% and 100% of those repeating grades. Second, there are more over-aged pupils, two-thirds of them being Roma. Finally, dropouts exist in all of the schools and vary in size. What does not vary is the share of Roma dropouts—it is between 80% and 100% across all schools.

Concerning the quality of the primary schools in the Kikinda cluster, it is hard to establish a hierarchy. Moreover, Roma attend schools that perform better overall and others that perform worse. Some of these schools are in better physical condition and are well equipped and others fare worse in these respects. In addition to the existence of a “special school”, there are also two small special classes in two rural primary schools. However, there is no rule, either in distribution of children with SEN, or the dispersion of Roma among them. Such determinations depend on the assessment of teaching assistants and their approach to individual teaching programs. Grade repetition is not frequent among pupils in elementary schools, but is somewhat higher than in the other three clusters. Interestingly, grade repeats in this cluster tend to be of majority population pupils, not Roma. The dropout rate is low in this cluster and not all of these cases are Roma. The major problems begin to occur during the transition to secondary education. A large number of Roma do not continue education, and of those that do, some drop out.

We did not encounter evidence of racism or open discrimination of Roma in the schools. Nevertheless, two noteworthy matters attracted our attention. One was an ‘elite’ elementary school in Surdulica which is high performing and well equipped but less accessible to Roma children than other schools. The other case is the school in village of Bašaid (Kikinda municipality) that performs worse than other schools, has a high concentration of Roma, a special class dominated by Roma children and occasional cases of verbal ethnic conflicts.

To conclude, if the Roma segments are spread around settlements, Roma children are spread around to several elementary schools. This means that segregation is not very strong and especially not visible, with the exception of the special school in Prokuplje, which can be seen as a leftover from the previous educational system. However, there is always a lower incidence of Roma enrolling in the more ‘prestigious’ schools in the bigger cities. Also, the pupil/teacher ratio is not a determinant per se with regards to achieving better outcomes in education; more important is the individualized approach being offered to Roma pupils. Better scoring schools with a small share of Roma are inclusive for them if there are more Roma teachers. Rural schools with high a percentage of Roma might achieve good results if teaching assistants are active. This suggests that Roma children in general very much need effective support to stay afloat in the mainstream education system. So far this support is limited and with a short life span, since many Roma children leave school after the 4th grade. Thus we can conclude that education segregation becomes increasingly intensified after the middle of elementary school, resulting in extremely low participation in university education. This process particularly affects the poorer and rural Roma families. The situation in this regard is similar to that of spatial segregation: in Prokuplje, where the gears of Roma inclusion merge in more productive ways, the educational achievements of Roma are more pronounced; in Kikinda where the negative labeling of Roma by the majority community is the highest and institutional support more discriminative, Roma education also suffers.

4.3 Roma employment in Serbia—major trends

Together with education, employment is the most frequently mentioned source of Roma social exclusion. The major problems are inactivity and unemployment. These problems affect Roma women far more than men. The National Strategy for Improvement of the Position of Roma states that the low rate of economic activity affecting the majority of Roma is a consequence of economic culture, socioeconomic underdevelopment, marked political barriers in employment and a specific set of demographic factors. The Roma population is markedly young, with an above-average share of people below the age of 15. The share of those over 15 in the total Roma population is 58.3%. Low economic activity, a young age structure, and a large share of the population reliant on government support are the key contributing factors sustaining and deepening the divide between Roma and the majority population (e.g. 60% of Roma receive government support compared to 37% of the majority population).

The majority of Roma are outside the employment system, they are not (legally) economically active and they are often registered as unemployed. When they are employed, they tend to perform the most difficult and dangerous jobs at the lowest wages, normally informally. For instance, one of the most exploited groups of workers are the collectors of recyclable waste. Recently there have been efforts to recognize and formalize this form of economic activity.

The majority of Roma households have limited sources of income, such as seasonal agriculture and construction, grey sector activities, collection of recyclables, remittances from abroad and social benefits from the government. Two basic factors contributing to the unfavorable position of Roma in the labor market and confining the majority of Roma to low-paid and temporary occupations are: 1) low levels of education and vocational training, and 2) discrimination by potential employers. The result is that Roma are generally oriented towards affirmative action employment offerings from the National Employment Service. However, due to the global economic crisis and austerity measures, the share of the national budget for employment measures was reduced from 0.3% in 2011 to 0.15% in 2012. Second, many Roma are not familiar with the procedures for applying for employment support. On the other hand, there are cases of non-Roma declaring Roma ethnicity in order to gain such support (self-declaration is a standard part of the procedure at NES). Third, Roma rarely compete for 'first job' or 'self-employment' support. Most of them take part in public works. A feasibility study showed that this was the least efficient of all active employment measures since less than 5% of people engaged this way ended up with a permanent job (Arandarenko and Krstić, 2008). Roma work for a few months (6 at most) and then go on unemployment support again. This is related to the fourth problem: when starting on a public works project, or other formal jobs, the unemployed lose their right to financial welfare assistance. It takes a month or more after that to regain those unemployment benefits, which makes Roma reluctant to accept this form of employment.

4.4 Employment of Roma in the Serbian sample

Our research was only able to cover a sample size of Roma, employers and businesses in the segments we studied, but our findings have been so consistently unfavorable that no sample extension would change our basic conclusion. Our findings were also consistent with other research inquiries on this issue. In short, the share of formally employed Roma in Serbia is extremely low. Even when they are employed, it is usually confined to informal, short-term, unskilled, and physi-

cally grueling labor, often accompanied by health risks. Roma women fare even worse than men; besides employment they tend to be responsible for most of the house work.

There were no racist incidents reported in the Serbian sample. However, if one scratches the surface it is easy to find the tell-tale signs of discrimination. Once Roma enter a firm, it is likely they will be treated as any other employee, cooperate and socialize with other employees, join the trade union, and enjoy full labor rights. Most discrimination happens during the application process, which is usually 'justified' behind the argument that Roma do not have the requisite qualifications. An explanation from a German employer countervails this: *"The qualification is not that important. If they are diligent and have work discipline, they will learn these basic operations."* There are even signs that some employers are willing to hire Roma employees, but the Roma themselves do not show enough interest. If true, this points to a form of self-discrimination. They assume the widespread stereotypes of Roma as not being educated, skilled or diligent enough to get or keep a job. If there is no initiative from the National Employment Service or the public to announce vacancies, Roma do not find ways to ascertain decent employment. Often Roma visit the Center for Social Work to learn about public works opportunities, but even then many decide not to give up financial welfare assistance for a limited number of salary payments that are not considerably higher, in any case, than welfare assistance. This is especially so given that it is highly unlikely they will be able to keep the job for very long. Private employers recruit employees through their networks and via recommendations. As such, those Roma not living in segregated segments tend to be better networked, closer to employment-related information, and get more jobs.

With such a low incidence of employment, any particular concentration brings visible variation to the phenomenon. A single firm that employs a larger number of Roma paints the picture of Roma employment in that cluster. The Surdulica cluster offers a picture of Roma employment that is in accordance with the dominant stereotypes. Here there is a public utility company that employs 29 Roma men from the city in unskilled positions. Rural Roma, Roma women, and Roma from the poorest segments of the settlement are disadvantaged in this regard. In other cities the role of a public utility company alters the picture for Roma employment. In the poorest segment, Bojnik, there are no Roma among 24 persons employed in the public utility company and in neighboring Lebane there are only three. Under pressure of high unemployment non-Roma are pushing out Roma even from the least qualified, hardest and dirtiest jobs. In Prokuplje and Kikinda, the privatization of the public utility sector has brought about changes to Roma employment. In Kikinda a private waste collection company attracted more Roma (10) than a public utility company (3), although both employ slightly more than 100 people, while in Prokuplje there are only five Roma with full time jobs among the 67 employees at a recently privatized utility company. A single large firm in Prokuplje has significantly impacted Roma employment. In Prokuplje most Roma now work in manufacturing; they are mostly women who undertake unskilled labor. Ninety percent of them come from the Roma segments of the Prokuplje urban area.

There is no sign that Roma employment will improve much from the picture presented above. Local development plans and employment strategies foresee the further privatization of the public utility sector in other cities, too. This leaves Roma issues to the National Employment Service's active measures of employment which are too demanding for most Roma in administrative and educational terms and usually turn into public works which fail to provide formal full-time employment. Exceptionally striking are the complaints from our local Roma informants that even getting selected for two months of low paid public works is sometimes based on the

political affiliation of the applicant, not to mention appointments in public administration and public enterprises. For this reason, instances where foreign companies employ Roma, especially women, under regular employment conditions, present a sound employment model for Roma households as well as a cultural model that could set a new trend in Roma employment. Foreign companies tend to protect the values of equality, social responsibility and human development. Much more attention and support should be paid to Roma self-employment, especially in waste collection. Existing measures of support to self-employment are insufficient and often fail to offer real options for micro-financing. The initiatives in the field of social entrepreneurship and the Waste Collectors Trade Union should be extended greater financial, educational and management support in order to achieve sustainability and spread these experiences wider.

Absence from the labor market is one element in a downward spiral of Roma exclusion. A lack of basic education is just one of the factors contributing to Roma exclusion. Some of the employers in our sample noted they do not require formal education for many positions, just skills and diligence. But young Roma who grow up in ethnically segregated parts of settlements see people around them who combine informal work and social transfers as a survival strategy and learn that model of behavior and adopt values that are not favorable for entering the formal labor market. Finally, even if they do not want to accept such a model of economic behavior, which is a growing trend with increases in education attainment for new generations, they have to face progressive laws not being implemented thoroughly, informal networks being a primary channel of employment, public works being politically manipulated, and active labor market measures being poorly financed. A single firm in our sample offers proof that different practices are possible and that Roma could very well enter the workforce through normal channels and sustain such jobs over time.⁵ The readiness of many small employers in ethnically mixed communities points to another field where measures of support could be directed.

5. Participation and activism: Roma in the social, economic and political life of the local community

5.1 Political and civic activity and participation of Roma in Serbia

Serbia took a major step toward increasing the visibility of the Roma issue, advancing Roma political and social rights, and promoting the quality of living for Roma by adopting the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015* (the Decade). In 2005, as a part of this process, the Government adopted National Action Plans (NAP) to improve the position of Roma in the fields of education, employment, housing, and health care, with a special focus on anti-discrimination, gender equality and poverty reduction. In 2010, a National Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Roma was adopted. The basic principle of the Decade is to include representatives of the Roma community in the planning and realization of all proposed measures. Serbia's NAP helped to spur 35 municipal action plans, including 42 small-scale projects in 31 municipalities targeting

5 The German company 'Leoni', in Prokuplje, produces cables for the automobile industry. Under the policy of corporate social responsibility they employed a high share of Roma workers, especially women. Currently, 'Leoni' employs 437 men and 1,513 women, among them 34 Roma men and 161 Roma women (the share of Roma in Prokuplje is slightly less than 5%). In the year preceding our research 'Leoni' had to fire 32 workers, only 4 of whom were Roma.

some 25,900 Roma in 129 communities. Infrastructure and reconstruction projects expanded water and sewage systems, and built or repaired houses, community centers and children's playgrounds. Employment projects provided vocational or self-employment courses, and education projects focused on preschool and primary school, and 100 Roma students were included in the school system. Although several projects and programs have been realized since the adoption of NAP and the National Strategy, the major problem remains that there is no permanent budget to finance the NAPs or the Local Action Plans (LAP).

Meanwhile, the Government of Serbia has established or has supported the establishment of several offices at national level to advance Roma inclusion and harmonize its efforts with international human rights protection standards. These are: the National Council for Ethnic Minorities, the Office for Human and Minority Rights, and the Permanent Secretariat for National Strategy. Working groups in the ministries in charge of implementing the Decade Action Plans and the Roma Strategy were also established. The working groups are in charge of proposing yearly priorities and mechanisms for allocating financial resources. After the National Council of Roma was established, Municipal Councils for inter-ethnic relations were set up in many municipalities with a significant share of Roma minority. In Vojvodina, the Provincial Council for the Integration of Roma and the Office for Roma Inclusion were established.

Concerning civil society representation in the political participation of Roma, the number of Roma NGOs increased significantly over the last 10 years. As a consequence of initiatives coming both from the 'top' and from the 'bottom', representatives of the League for the Decade, a network of Roma-led and pro-Roma NGOs, have been involved in governmental bodies addressing Roma issues. The Coordinator of the League identified these mechanisms as the most efficient models found in Serbia for regular dialogue between Roma civil society and the government. He pointed out that civil society's role in the council and working groups has gone beyond the boundaries of consultation to "active cooperation on implementation at the local level".

Apart from the above-mentioned formalization of political and cultural presentation and participation, most of the achievements in the Decade framework were made through project financing from the EU, UNICEF, the Fund for an Open Society and other donors. They have advanced the institutionalization of support mechanisms that target direct poverty alleviation. Notable examples include the establishment of the Network of Roma Health Coordinators and the service of educational assistants.

5.2 Roma voices in the Serbian sample

In the Prokuplje cluster, there is one local Member of Parliament (MP) of Roma ethnicity and a Roma Office comprised of 4 coordinators from the municipality of Prokuplje. Most importantly, the President of the National Council for Roma is from Prokuplje and the Western Serbia Regional Center of the National Council for Roma has been seated in Prokuplje. There are several Roma NGOs there, one of which is very active. There is no local Roma media, and no specialized Roma show or column. There is a folk dance group organized by an NGO and Roma organize a few public celebrations during the year. In Žitoradja municipality no Roma are represented in local government, and there is one Roma coordinator and two Roma NGOs, although they are not particularly active. Roma are not presented in the media and have only one organized public event per year. Roma living in the two villages in the cluster do not participate in the political,

social or cultural life of their settlements. They are completely oriented towards Prokuplje in all of these aspects. The exception is one school board member in elementary school in Žitni Potok.

In the Lebane cluster no Roma take part in local government. There are two NGOs in Lebane and none in the Bojnik segment. Lebane's NGOs are only indirectly involved in decision making, through communication with a Roma coordinator. Roma participate in school boards and trade union councils. There is no local Roma media in the cluster, and no specialized Roma show or column. The same 2–3 public celebrations of Roma cultural heritage, as in the other two southern clusters, are organized in the municipalities of Lebane and Bojnik (the International Day of the Roma on April 8, Saint Vasilllis [Vasilica] on January 14, and Saint George [Đurđevdan] on May 6). Roma living in the two villages from this cluster tend not to participate in the political, social or cultural life of their settlements, except for being occasionally visited by the Roma coordinator.

In the Surdulica cluster there are two Roma members of the local parliament and one member of the municipal council (local government). There are a few NGOs in Surdulica, one of which is actively involved in consultations with local government and with the Roma coordinator. There is one more Roma NGO in Prekodolce. There is no local Roma media, and no specialized Roma show or column, but for some time the daily news in Romani language was broadcasted on a local radio station once a day. The same 2–3 public celebrations of Roma cultural heritage, as in the other two southern clusters, are organized in the municipality of Surdulica.

In the Kikinda cluster there is one local Roma MP and at the same time he is the Roma coordinator and a member of local government. There are Roma NGOs in Kikinda, one of them being active, but controlled by a political party and playing only a symbolic role in decision making. In Nova Crnja there are no Roma in local government (the only municipality in the sample without an appointed coordinator) and there is one active Roma NGO. There is no local Roma media, and no specialized Roma show or column. In Kikinda there is a Roma dance group and a jazz band. The celebration of Roma Day was funded by the local budget.

In sum, the typical structure of Roma representation and participation is as follows: there is no Roma representation at regional or sub-regional level; there might be 1–2 Roma members of local government, although they do not necessarily represent Roma political parties (they often represent the most influential parties, usually from the left side of the political spectrum); there is an appointed Roma coordinator with a consultative role, also influenced by the dominant political party; there are a few Roma NGOs which play a consultative role and advocate for Roma interests; there is no Roma self-government; there is no local Roma media; Roma cultural life is based on private practices with occasional public events, as well as a few religious celebrations and the Day of Roma.

However, large differences are obvious among settlements in which Roma live with respect to Roma representation and participation. Again, as with education, employment and housing infrastructure, it is rural Roma who are the most disadvantaged. The larger the settlement, the better represented Roma interests are. But there are differences between the clusters, too. Prokuplje seems to be far ahead of the other clusters, followed by Surdulica, Kikinda and Lebane at the end. Roma representation in Prokuplje seems to be close to what the design of Roma institutional support should provide. However, it is the presence of the President and one member of the National Council of Roma and their devoted activism that linked all the institutional components and organizational resources into a recognizable structure of action. Ties with national level institutions and cooperation with political parties in the localities are important for the

promotion of the Roma agenda at local level and improved inclusion. In Surdulica, not all institutional components mentioned above are present, but much is compensated by the highest civic engagement of Roma in the Serbian sample. Although here the influence of strong political parties on Roma representation is visible due to the activity of local NGOs, Roma participation seems to be the most authentic of all the clusters. In Kikinda major progress has been made thanks to the concentration of roles, positions and power in one person, but this also presents a major risk for sustainable inclusion of Roma in the local community. The Lebane cluster, and especially the municipality of Bojnik, has the highest concentration of extreme poverty and the weakest structure of Roma representation. These seem to be interrelated.

Roma participation in the planning of local development is weak, formal and restricted to 'Roma issues'. This situation is not brought about solely by the reluctance of local authorities to include Roma representatives in local planning, but also by weak Roma capacities to effectively engage in planning project activities. Budget shares devoted to Roma inclusion are symbolic. EU project funds represent important potential resources for advancing Roma inclusion, not only for their size, but also for the goals and clear targeting involved in the projects they could fund. The Delivery of Improved Public Services project, as mentioned earlier, is an example of good practice.

The above conclusion about Roma representation and participation is reflected in local planning and budgeting. The Prokuplje and Surdulica administrations are paying more attention to Roma inclusion and investing substantially more in this direction. This is especially so in Prokuplje which has a much larger local budget and is also influential enough politically to attract more resources from the central budget and more EU projects. This is the only municipality in the Serbian sample where there are significant investments in housing and infrastructure in Roma settlements.

6. Conclusion: where and how to proceed with the research

Roma marginalization is the result of a complex intersection of institutional development challenges, limited resources and opportunities, and suboptimal civic and political activism/representation. All of these factors are exacerbated by spatial segregation. Serbia's transition period has been defined by a heritage of weak national institutions and political clientelism on the one hand and the pressures from globalization and the neo-liberal atomization of society on the other. Against this context, Roma have had little opportunity to be successfully included in society. The individual resources of most Roma are too scarce for sustainable positioning in the labor market, and collective voice and action are too weak to accumulate enough political and economic strength to repulse the drivers of segregation and marginalization. Knowing that structures have been established to build capacities at all points of the Roma inclusion matrix (laws, strategies, political bodies, institutional measures, cultural identity, civic activism, etc.), two questions arise: why have Roma inclusion improvements been so slow and limited, and why does Roma inclusion fare better in some local communities than others, even if they seem similar in many aspects?

The general view of our sample shows that Roma who live concentrated in certain segments of settlements live in extreme poverty and segregation. They have small and poorly-constructed

houses built illegally in rural settlements. Infrastructure in the settlements usually means nothing more than a road and water supply. They have access to basic social services, although they face difficulties accessing them because of a lack of information and social and administrative skills. Roma people from our sample live from financial welfare assistance and occasional (seasonal) informal work. They rarely have secondary education or hold a permanent formal job. They have been poorly represented in local power structures and have minor influence on the planning and development of their communities. Some general measures have been established at the beginning of 2000s to alter these structural drivers of Roma exclusion. These measures have been widened and better tailored with Serbia's entry into the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005.

However, segregation is not a homogeneous phenomenon. It is worth observing the differences between the settlements and Roma segments in our cluster in order to detect the specific drivers of exclusion and segregation at the local level. First of all, there is notable evidence of differences in economic wellbeing and social inclusion between Roma living in more developed municipalities and those living in less developed municipalities. In this regard, the general disparity between Vojvodina in the north and the southern municipalities was expressed more in institutional practices than in economic support.

More important is the difference between Prokuplje and Kikinda as large municipalities on the one hand, and all of the smaller municipalities (including Nova Crnja in Vojvodina) on the other. Cities offered more opportunities for both formal and informal work and better access to social services and non-institutionalized support (NGOs). Cities also meant bigger local budgets, stronger communication links between local and central level institutions, a higher concentration of human resources and institutional capacities, and more space to solve Roma issues. Nevertheless, even these are of limited scope and very much dependent on project funds. Moreover, when scarce resources are invested in urban Roma segments this leads rural Roma to suffer more extreme deprivation. There are only a few exceptions here: Nova Crnja and Aleksandrovo are more urbanized and Roma there live dispersed throughout the settlement. In Prekodolce, Roma comprise the majority of the population in the village which is practically a suburb of Vladičin Han and well positioned on the road to Surdulica (but also has a strong Roma NGO in the settlement).

Second, there is small but important difference in the coping strategies of the households between the Kikinda cluster in the North and the other clusters. Roma households in the South receive very little help from the local administration. They reduce their expenditures by using electricity illegally and this is tolerated. On the other hand, in the Kikinda cluster, if a Roma household is not capable of paying for electricity it simply must make do without it. It can, however, access firewood for heating in the winter as well as free meals for children attending the school. It is difficult to say which of these examples is more inclusive. The system with more informality or the one with more formality? It is hard to measure because in both cases Roma live in poverty. It is probably more about less developed southern municipalities spilling over a part of their economic problem to the national budget through the (public) National Electric Distribution Company. Third, there are different approaches the local administration takes towards financial welfare assistance for Roma households. It could be said that it is more generous (more in scope than in size) in the Vojvodina cluster where local budgets can also count on financial resources from the provincial budget. In the South there is the case of Surdulica municipality where local Roma have regularly complained about the conservative approach taken by the local Center for Social Work. It is not only the structural determinants that place southern Serbia in a worse-off economic position or put Roma at the bottom of the social ladder but also the way in which local

administration interprets the process of redistribution. Finally, the importance of international projects in our municipalities is very high, not only because of the funds they bring, but also because they advance human rights and social inclusion standards and changes the values and normative framework at the local level.

Standards and goals set by international institutions and organizations through global policies of Roma inclusion provided a new institutional and political framework for improving the position of Roma in Serbia. Several basic structural gears of exclusion and deprivation have been addressed over the last several years: Roma ethnicity has been officially recognized as a constituency in Serbia, health care for the Roma population has improved markedly, basic education has become more widespread and inclusive and a set of institutional positions and mechanism has been enacted to serve as the backbone of sustainable Roma inclusion in Serbia. Still, moving out from extreme poverty is proceeding too slowly. Our research pointed to several interlinked causes for this which result in the marginalization of Roma from early childhood all the way through to old age. First, there is a vicious cycle of low education, unemployment, and poverty which often results in low education levels/attainment for the next generation. Recognizing that low education levels influence employment prospects and poverty, a set of measures was designed, introduced and preserved for several years to increase Roma enrollment in obligatory education and decrease the dropout rate. These measures were intended to become self-sustainable: schools played their role by providing enrollment opportunities for Roma children, Roma teaching assistants contributed by providing individualized educational support to children lagging behind, Roma NGOs promoted the value of education, and Roma health mediators maintained frequent contact with families, explaining the importance of education for childhood development. Enrollment has increased, undoubtedly, but the dropout rate remains stubbornly high. And, ultimately, it is the economic well-being of the parents that often plays the most significant role in a child's propensity to drop out of school. This can be due to a lack of income needed to pay for basic education costs or due to the need to migrate with the family in search of income elsewhere.

The pivotal role that poverty plays brings employment back to center stage. And this is where the system of support to Roma in Serbia is weakest. The carefully established institutional structure explained in the previous chapter might fail or be too slow to produce effective outcomes simply because the support to Roma employment is too limited. Public works have proven over and over to be ineffective in this regard. The NES measure called 'the first employment' usually requires at least secondary education, which is still rare among Roma. Measures for self-employment are insufficient both in financial and educational terms. In our sample it was the private sector that proved that things could be different. And examples of good practice are of exceptional importance. Support to Roma education was wide and deep; so too should be the support systems for employment. Some ideas are already being implemented in this regard (social enterprises, a trade union of waste collectors), but accessing sufficient resources in a time of economic crisis where the general unemployment rate is over 25% is particularly vexing. Some forms of employment support might be useful for the whole micro-community and not solely for the employed person and his/her family.

Recognizing the above, and having institutional mechanisms and legal provisions in place, the question is: why has there been so little improvement regarding Roma employment? Most concrete action to improve Roma employment will take place at local level and with local funds. This is where the capacity of institutional support to Roma is challenged most. We saw from the Prokuplje example that this is feasible, although the Nova Crnja or Lebane/Bojnik examples make

it seem almost impossible. The additional components needed are: better political organization and representation of Roma, increased political will (and less manipulation) from major political parties, more unity among Roma both at local and national level, and stronger advocacy and lobbying from the civic sector. Wherever we found at least two of these components to be strong, Roma marginalization was less severe.

* * *

From our research we learned how Roma marginalization is shaped by certain institutional development challenges, limited resources and opportunities, and suboptimal civic and political activism/representation. Still to be learned is how the combination of these factors should be approached and how policy makers and Roma activists should manage and combine their scarce resources to strengthen the Roma community and achieve better Roma inclusion results. In the next stage of the research we intend to investigate the dynamics and modes of intersection of these factors of inclusion in the empirical context of everyday Roma family life. For this reason we need to select different settlements to compare different levels of factors of inclusion/exclusion and their modes of intersection. We will investigate rural and urban settlements, various levels of economic development, and communities showcasing different degrees of inclusion.

Such research will help us better grasp the different structural factors that intermingle to produce marginalization. Yet, it is the everyday practices of certain ways of life by Roma families that perpetuate those sources of exclusion. Their social actions, individual and collective, can contribute to a decrease in marginalization. As such, we must investigate several family histories and accompanying contextual features (educational and employment opportunities, social services, etc.) to establish how individual resources and coping strategies result in similar patterns of exclusion or, conversely, platforms for a better life.

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Annex

Selected indicators of development, living standards and education

Table A1. Selected indicators of development, 2011, municipal level

Indicator	Serbia	CLUSTER 1		CLUSTER 2		CLUST. 3	CLUSTER 4		
		Prokuplje	Žitoradja	Lebane	Bojnik	Surdulica	Kikinda	N.Crnja	
Employed per 1,000 inhabitants	241	184	73	102	94	164	252	110	
Unemployed per 1,000 inhabitants ⁶	102	174	167	237	222	158	104	152	
Major industries of employ., in %	Public	28	45	53	51	62	51	23	42
	Manufac.	22	29	23	16	8	17	40	27
	Trade	14	5	3	8	6	5	9	9
Share of agricultural land in total land, in%	66	58	84	63	67	54	90	90	
Share of individual farmers in cultivated land, in %	83	87	88	87	92	54	67	84	
Employed in small businesses per 1,000 inhabitants	56	37	22	40	33	48	40	16	
Investments (Euro/head)	690	618	11	11	18	501	347	70	
Share of investments in new capacities, in %	58	82	0	0	77	18	29	44	

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Table A2. Selected indicators of the living standards, 2011, municipal level

Indicator		Serbia	CLUSTER 1		CLUSTER 2		CLUST. 3	CLUSTER 4	
			Prokuplje	Žitoradja	Lebane	Bojnik	Surdulica	Kikinda	N.Crnja
Average wage, in Euro		380	270	280	270	280	340	320	300
Newly built apartments per 1,000 inhabitants		2.5	0.6	0.1	0.6	0	0.8	1	0.1
Roads, km per 100 km ²		48.7	47.7	44.9	59	65.9	32.9	22.8	28.2
Share of modern roads, in %		63	65	89	41	68	72	100	90
Persons per medical doctor		345	255	863	572	603	236	421	788
Share of health and social protection in budgetary expenses, in %		18	38	34	35	33	47	33	38
Share of education in budgetary expenses, in %		12	22	35	42	40	36	29	39
Educational institutions	Preschool	2,427	18	6	15	10	8	18	6
	Elementary	3,469	37	20	25	18	17	15	6
	Secondary	497	4	1	2	1	3	4	1
	Tertiary	189	1	0	0	0	0	2	0

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

Table A3. Selected indicators of education/literacy, 2011, municipal level

Indicator		Serbia	CLUSTER 1		CLUSTER 2		CLUST. 3	CLUSTER 4	
			Prokuplje	Žitoradja	Lebane	Bojnik	Surdulica	Kikinda	N.Crnja
Tertiary education, % of 15+	Total	16.2	13.3	4.9	7.9	4.7	11.1	12.1	7.6
	Urban	23.2	18.6	—	13.2	—	15.6	15.6	—
	Rural	6.1	5.0	4.9	4.1	4.7	5.3	5.9	7.6
Without primary education, % of 15+	Total	13.7	16.3	28.0	26.0	34.0	20.8	14.7	23.2
	Urban	7.0	7.6	—	14.7	—	14.2	11.7	—
	Rural	23.4	29.8	28.0	34.0	34.0	29.2	21.0	23.2
Illiterate, % of 10+	Total	1.96	3.4	6.2	5.9	9.1	5.0	1.9	3.8
	Urban	1.0	1.8	—	3.23	—	3.3	1.5	—
	Rural	3.3	5.9	6.2	7.8	9.1	7.2	2.6	3.8

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

ROMA MARGINALIZATION AND EXCLUSION IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Júlia Szalai

Comparative perspective

The “**Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities**” inquiry explored the economic, political, demographic, and social forces at municipal and community level which shape practices and consequences of social exclusion and potential pathways to inclusion. **Phase 2** of this research focused on a representative sample of municipalities (20–30 per country) in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia to explore basic local social services and infrastructure provisions, conditions of political participation of the Roma, and local interventions targeting Roma inclusion. This research phase relied on structured field research collecting both quantitative and qualitative data.

This study presents the comparative findings of the second phase (Phase 2) of the “Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities” research project. The major objective of this phase of the research was to identify the conditions and local dynamics that produce and reproduce marginalization (and often exclusion) of Roma within the localities where they live. It was also our aim to understand those processes of inter-ethnic encounters which severely hinder individual and familial attempts to break the cycle of reproduction by forcefully applying on each case the majority’s deeply stigmatized categorizations of the Roma community. Finally, the research also aimed to reveal those rare instances where attempts were made to change the conditions and relations toward opening pathways for Roma inclusion.

Phase 2 had another equally important objective: to elaborate and test a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators in the broad areas of education, work and employment, housing and infrastructure, developmental issues and Roma socio-political participation that can provide a basis and a toolkit for the Roma communities to monitor how trends of ethno-social inequalities shape themselves locally and to identify the means at the disposal of the Roma collectives that, at least in the long run, may help to attain a more equal and more equitable distribution of resources and assets in the administrative settings (municipalities, communes) where they belong. This second objective was met by embedding Roma participation into all phases of this research project, including the preparation of the methodological design, undertaking the fieldwork, analyzing the research results, and drafting the country reports. The reactions and responses of the Roma and non-Roma interviewees and local leaders provided important lessons. These experiences showed the potentials but also the historically and structurally conditioned unevenness of shared knowledge within the Roma communities, and raised important issues about ethnic identification and recognition and the need for a “vocabulary” to express and communicate the striving of Roma for acceptance and integration both within their own ethno-cultural collective and also in inter-ethnic exchanges.

In light of these main objectives, all elements, routines and tools applied in Phase 2 were designed to serve the dual goals of revealing new information and analysis as well as establishing new procedures for future inquiries so that members of the Roma community can harness them without high-level training in social science research. The discussion below is constructed in consideration of this duality. This comparative report presents the major findings and variations across the three countries of inquiry (Hungary, Romania and Serbia) and offers some conclusions for policy-makers. It discusses the conditions and challenges associated with regular monitoring if done by those who, at the same time, are the very subjects of the relations and conditions that are to be critically supervised. By revisiting issues of recognition and representation, it also explores some key aspects of participation, “voice” and adaptability. A detailed discussion about the pros and cons of collecting personalized ethnic data, the introduction of the idea of relying on institutional estimates of ethnic profiles instead (again, with the advantages and the drawbacks of such routines), the difficulties that arise from internal divisions and conflicts in deprived Roma communities, the potentials offered by collaborative multiethnic research teams that are able to speak the language of both the majority and the minority, and the advancement of the Phase 2 toolkit to regularly monitor Roma deprivation and exclusion are all issues of key importance that require a “cross-reading” and further careful processing of our research findings and fieldwork experiences.

As will be demonstrated in the last segment of this report on Roma representation and political participation, the success of putting Roma needs on the local political agenda and claiming their due recognition in redistribution and development planning is preconditioned by a number of

important factors. Trust and cooperation within the community are the primary prerequisites towards agreeing on major goals and priorities which, in turn, require deep and accurate knowledge. In this context, the capacity of political representation is painfully restricted at present by the lack of data and a haphazard interpretation of associations and responsibilities. This lesson has some further important implications suggesting that data collection and monitoring of the facts and processes affecting the daily life of Roma requires a “language” and an agreed-upon set of tools and measures that cannot be elaborated without Roma, but that cannot be left to their sole responsibility either. A trustful, inter-ethnic understanding and mutual commitment to professional investment in equality and inclusion (or, at a minimum, to avoid marginalization and separation) are the preconditions for establishing meaningful cooperation and for guaranteeing proficiency and public usefulness in this domain.

1. Issues of visibility and identification

Phase 2 aimed to extend knowledge about the causes and manifestations of ethno-social marginalization and exclusion by bringing into the fore the *collective* components and aspects of marginalization and exclusion in their interaction with the individual and familial attributes of poverty, deprivation and discrimination. To do so, our Phase 2 inquiry focused on the settlements that had been chosen for the 2011 large-scale regional UNDP Survey on the situation of Roma¹ so that direct connections could be established between the measured attributes of the households and the community-level indicators brought up by the qualitative research. At the same time, we had two equally important requirements to meet. First, our focus on the collective aspects of marginalization/exclusion necessitated selecting communities in which Roma lived in well identifiable territorial arrangements and with a certain degree of separation from the local majority. By this requirement we implied that marginalization and exclusion of entire ethnic communities arise from collectively experienced separation and, further, ethnic separation may be preserved even if the given Roma groups have succeeded to escape from poverty. Although ethnic separation and exclusion might affect entire settlements (as in the case of the so-called “Roma villages” in the poorest corners of our countries), it is even more likely that such segregated parts form identifiable “units” comprised of poor, mostly Roma, households and that these units are recognized by the locals as distinct formations within the settlement—be it a town or a larger village. It is important to note that visibility is not a precondition: our research identified cases where the physical borders of a previously demarcated Roma/poor unit have indeed disappeared (e.g. as corollaries of certain urban renewal programs, Roma were compelled by the authorities to move out to a designated territory), but the notion of the old unit—now perhaps inhabited by impoverished non-Roma—outlived its physical presence and was still listed by local people as a living entity.

Second, we assumed that the depth and sharpness of separation/marginalization/exclusion may vary depending on the degree of access to resources and opportunities of a larger surrounding. Therefore, we aimed to map the potentials for commuting for education, work and also for accessing services within the scope of a larger unit that can be considered an organically

1 “The Situation of Roma in 12 EU Member States.” This large survey covered the new EU member countries of Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. All three countries participated in the research.

developed “small region”² with center(s) offering better and more widespread services that are assumed to cater to the populations of a whole cluster of territories in their vicinity. The need to shed light on these collective potentials and the often severe limitations in exploiting these services led us to incorporate a range of settlements that exemplify how far Roma can capitalize on the differing sources and assets of larger surroundings.

Our attempts to meet the above aspects through a proper selection of settlements revealed certain difficulties and led to some important lessons.

First, it turned out that the UNDP samples omitted certain “white spots” in all the three countries, i.e. smaller regions that were known by local experts and the wider public to be densely populated by poor Roma communities but, in fact, turned out to have a modest proportion of Roma according to the census data (the major source of the UNDP sampling procedure). The controversy points to important dynamics. Past research in these countries identified the respective settlements as populated by one or more Roma groups that had lived there years or decades before in far larger numbers, but the ethnic profile of these localities has markedly changed in recent times. The discrepancy between the past and present indicators pointed to two phenomena that have to be considered when the collective aspects of marginalization are examined. First, the willingness or reluctance to declare one’s Roma identity is unevenly distributed. The inhabitants of settlements who endure sharp exclusion and collectively experience poverty usually face unceasing stigmatization. As such, members of such communities eventually internalize their devaluation by agreeing to a “Roma” labeling with all its—usually negative—implications and they declare their ethnic identity on the grounds of such internalization.

At the other extreme, Roma communities that have a history of traditions of inter-ethnic cohabitation (and work) in a given locality often identify their Roma ethnicity with pride and important local meanings. However, between these two extremes the identification of “Roma units” as collectively shared entities may face the dilemma of contrasting individual and collective needs. While the needs for recognition and effective representation would require a collective acceptance of Roma identity, individuals and families might find it more promising to follow certain paths of assimilation that may seem easier if one avoids ethnic identification. Therefore, the identification of “Roma units” within settlements and in larger territories is a delicate issue: such endeavors should be built on collective deliberation and the simultaneous observation of individual and collective interests. In the absence of these—as exemplified by certain units that the country research identified as having “blurred” ethnic and social boundaries—the communities themselves turn out to be weak social constructs with low levels of cohesion.

This fact should be considered as the second important manifestation of the above controversy. While settlements with a high proportion of Roma seem to be easily identifiable units when viewed from the outside, the internal structure may in fact be of deep division into distinct segments. The *socio-tours* that our research team applied as a procedure to tap into the local distinctions and divisions revealed this to be a common feature in a great number of localities.

2 In this report we use the term “small region” as distinct of the concept of “micro-region”—a customary term in planning and developmental programs. We have two reasons for the distinction. First, the clusters of towns and villages in a “small region” often consist of settlements that, according to their administrative categorization, belong to different micro-regions. Second, when we examine our “small regions” we intend to grasp interconnectedness and a certain degree of cooperation among settlements as manifested in people’s movements and, often, in their career orientations and their longer-term plans on developing new lifestyles; however, with its focus on the redistribution of resources, administrative categorization might follow different principles and comprises towns and villages across our “small regions”.

In most cases, these divisions emerged along the departing histories of “old” and “newly arrived” inhabitants, or shaped themselves by the still important and meaningful differentiations between traditional crafts, skills and patterns of inter-ethnic cooperation. Yet in other cases, socioeconomic differences—especially the differing opportunities for work—divided the Roma community further, and inhabitants of the different segments were keen to emphasize such distinctions.

These experiences have led us to reconsider what we should identify as a “Roma community”. The point of departure is how people describe their regular contacts (be these supportive or conflictual), how they draw the frame of reference within which they define their positions, and what they have in mind when asked about their group-belonging. Solidarity and mutual support are often parts of the relations within the ethnic community, but in other cases, it is disorganization and frequent clashes that characterize daily life. At any rate, it is important to note that the content of togetherness matters a lot. It seems that a low degree of solidarity within a Roma collective often becomes a serious obstacle when trying to raise recognition and increase the voice of Roma within the framework of administratively defined localities (municipalities, communes, etc.). Our research attempted to overcome this problem by acknowledging it. Phase 2 research identified as many communities as Roma themselves depicted and described with regard to the chosen clusters. While this might seem a simplistic solution when our aim was to collect new knowledge and information, it actually pointed to important differences between two large groups of local associations: the units held together by the shared experiences of stigmatization and exclusion while lacking the potentials of self-representation, on the one hand, and the local formations acting as self-reflective communities with shared identity and a degree of agreement about the common goals and the ways to represent them, on the other hand.

Our attempts to examine Roma marginalization and exclusion in the context of the larger territorial units of “small regions” provided some further important lessons. First, it turned out that the concept itself has different implications in the three countries. In Hungary, the term is in administrative use: yearly budget allocations and the distribution of EU-funds as well as certain governmental resources are channeled towards designated small regions which are officially recognized as the units of developmental planning. This categorization is especially important in localities and local clusters that are identified as “disadvantaged” or “cumulatively disadvantaged”. In Romania, the distribution of similar funds follows distinctions by larger regions, thus our “small regions” might consist of settlements that are never reached by financial support and others that enjoy distinctive attention on the part of decision-makers. Given that Serbia is not yet a member of the European Union, funding follows primarily project-driven goals in geographic clusters that often overlook even loose ties among the constituent settlements and thus cannot be interpreted as “small regions”.

These differences in the administrative structures influenced how settlements and their Roma and non-Roma inhabitants negotiated their relations with the neighboring towns and villages in the three countries. While in most cases very few signs of regional togetherness and cohesion could be identified, the reasons for this differed according to the views and hopes regarding future local development. This was true even in Hungary where lay members of the local communities hardly ever considered their belonging to a larger unit; nevertheless, they expressed general agreement that issues of such belonging have to be taken up by the elected local politicians who were entrusted to convincingly speak the language of small regions when matters of funds and budgets were the subject of discussion.

The limited use of the concept of regional cohesion and togetherness manifested itself in additional ways. Upon close inspection, neighboring villages with largely the same characteristics of well-being, quality of infrastructure, socioeconomic composition, and proportion of Roma show sharp differences in their relations to their wider surroundings. Some have lively connections with the nearby urban centers as well as with some of the surrounding villages while others show signs of stagnation and extreme separation. In this sense, it proved difficult to establish certain general characteristics of the different “small regions”. Instead, our fieldwork revealed significant differentiations of which the causes and mechanisms require further research.

Such differences proved especially important with regards to issues of development. As it seemed, the distribution of developmental funds and opportunities reflected more the “lobbying potential” of the mayor than the needs of the collective. Even in instances of extreme poverty, some villages were capable of attracting attention and funding while others were ignored. The result was that the various attempts at regional resource distribution often unwillingly contributed to a self-perpetuating increase in inequalities which could hardly be halted by the one-time injections of project-based funds.

In sum, the identification of Roma communities—especially those forming segments within settlements otherwise dominated by the majority—proved more delicate and more complicated than one would assume at first sight. The actual risk of easy identification might be an unreflective reiteration of the often prejudiced categorization of the non-Roma surrounding. In order to avoid such an undesirable outcome, it is important to approach the structuring of local societies through outreach to and feedback from both Roma and non-Roma members of the community in question. As our socio-tours revealed, such two-way approaches bring to the surface half-hidden conflicts and also demonstrate the divisions in matters of identity-formation within the Roma collective.

When looking at the relationships among the locally identified Roma segments within the more spacious surrounding of the immediate “small region”, our research revealed occurrences of setting up administrative units in such a way that lumped together settlements that in reality lacked any cohesion. This happened frequently in areas where poor villages that have become seriously deprived even from their earlier contacts in the de-industrialization process, were squeezed into one “developmental unit”. It is no surprise that such artificially constructed “units” are weak and lack the necessary capabilities of efficient interest representation and negotiating power and thus, instead of closing up, they contribute to further marginalization and exclusion. However, poverty and deprivation now appear as characteristics of the unit as an entity; this way visibility of their manifestations within the constituting settlements is greatly reduced and this leads, in turn, to a further reduction of their potentials for powerful representation.

Such experiences have two implications. On the one hand, they show that regionalization is not an innocent and purely technical process: if it lacks sufficient economic, social and political backing embedded in living contacts, as well as cooperation and solidarity among the constituting units, then it easily might become a contributor of deepening deprivation now functioning “in its own right”. On the other hand, revising the current administrative structures and articulating needed changes and corrections calls for making civil contributions and controls a regular and routinized part on all levels and in all domains of the distributional process. However, as our research shows, civil society involvement is rarely a part of the process in policy-making, planning and implementation even in “small regions” where a sense of mutual belonging is an element of

the region's self-identification and where cohesion in the constituting communities provides grounds for powerful social and political self-representation. In this context it is important to emphasize that the lack of mechanisms and arrangements of Roma presence and representation on the level of the regionalized units easily deprives the community from even those, rather weak, channels of articulating needs and lobbying that are in place on the local level. This way, paradoxically, Roma might lose the potentials to influence distribution and development even in those contexts where successful self-representation pays in access to increased funds and grants for use at the regional level. These experiences raise important questions about how one should think about issues of regional and local development and how the reconstruction of organic relationships between neighboring settlements could be fostered in order to liberate Roma from their ever intensified deprivation and tightening territorial captivity.

2. On residential segregation

The vast literature on the causes of deep and lasting Roma poverty and exclusion identifies residential segregation as one of the major sources of collective deprivation and as an important factor in the failure of individual attempts at breaking out. In its general conceptualization, segregation is seen as a primary form of discrimination and as an outcome of enforced separation originating from the sharp inequalities in the prevailing power relations between Roma and the non-Roma majority. The phenomenon is identified in three major contexts that usually work in an interactive way. It is segregation in residential relations, education and the labor market that are generally argued to construct and maintain the framework of inequalities and that themselves work as major vehicles in reproducing the prevailing disadvantages and deprivations.

At the same time, it is heuristically known that segregation is not a uniform phenomenon. In certain cases, it becomes obvious at first sight that there are drastic differences in housing and the state of the infrastructure of a village, a district, or a town, or in the conditions of two neighboring schools in the community. Other times segregation is more difficult to discern when, for example, parallel classes are organized in an otherwise "integrated" multiethnic school or in the ways that public works schemes are administered along ethnic lines. Yet in other cases, the walls between Roma and non-Roma are not recognizable in their physical reality, however, they still powerfully organize the ways of cohabitation and the division of labor—due to their strong presence in people's remembrance and the patterns of inter-ethnic encounters and local mentality.

Furthermore, the forms as well as the degree of segregation differ according to the institutional frameworks. Spatially, the phenomenon manifests itself in different guises whether the point of reference is local communities or larger units of loosely tied settlements within an administratively or economically defined territorial unit. Likewise, important differences can be identified by the forms of work and their institutional contexts in the formal and informal labor markets. The differences with regards to the framing of segregation are interrelated: collective exclusion in the emerging "Roma villages" hinders individual attempts at accessing work; at the same time, Roma enclosure into certain occupations that, at best, find their market in the locality, often becomes a serious obstacle to breaking out from the local residential ghetto.

The above considerations inspired us to delve deeper into the causes and manifestations of segregation from a range of simultaneously applied perspectives. While acknowledging the outstanding importance of residence, schooling and employment in framing the phenomenon, we were interested in additional aspects. First, by looking at the patterns of Roma residence within the larger units of “small regions” we examined whether the different collectives living in different geographical constituents of such units face similar degrees of integration or exclusion. Second, given the above discussed sensitivity of collective identification and also the supposedly differing acceptance of the “borders” between Roma and non-Roma within a given settlement, we attempted to measure the directions and the intensity of such differentiations by allowing for multiple (sometimes even contrasting) identifications of local ethnic separations. Third, by assuming that the socioeconomic structuring of the local Roma communities may take different degrees and forms of segregation, we aimed to reveal the sometimes opaque local hierarchies and their implications for Roma-Roma relations within the local societies.

Studying segregation through these different perspectives required a multiplicity of methods. While available official data on the level of the “small regions” helped to identify the internal inequalities among the constituent settlements, and while associating them to the ratios of Roma populations helped to identify spatial segregation in its territorial aspects, the ban on collecting ethnic data of individuals (which is in effect in all the three countries) hindered any closer analysis by household formations, socioeconomic conditions, educational level, and employment that would have helped to identify the social and cultural characteristics of those most affected by the considered territorial aspects of segregation. These aspects had to be revealed by qualitative methods. It was mainly our socio-tours, which followed a detailed design, and interviews in multiple sessions with key informants in the Roma communities and their non-Roma counterparts, that provided the necessary information. These methods proved efficient in giving some “living” content to the currents of segregation across settlements. Their mobilization also helped to shed light on an under-studied aspect of the phenomenon: the internal structuring of the Roma communities inducing different degrees of forceful separation within the borders of their localities.

Let us summarize the results along these different perspectives and then draw some conclusions for desegregationist policy-making.

3. Inequalities and segregating trends across the settlements within a “small region”

By looking at the ethnic composition of the settlements that make up a “small region”, our research put a question mark to the rather frequent equation between the spreading of poverty and the proportion of Roma within a given territorial unit. While the association usually proves valid in the larger contexts of administrative regions, it is important to refine the picture when smaller and supposedly more coherent units are considered. As the data show for all three countries, Roma are generally concentrated in areas where the economic indicators signal widespread poverty: in these areas the measures of economic development as well as the rates of employment and unemployment are below the national average, production is confined to traditional monocultures with a heavy concentration in agriculture, and the social indicators of

educational attainment, housing, infrastructure and mobility point to severe conditions. As the census data demonstrate, large numbers of Roma live in these regions, and their proportion has increased in all the three countries between the last two censuses.³

However, these easily identifiable and straightforward associations are no longer in place when the constituent settlements of a given “small region” are considered. First, the proportions of Roma greatly vary within these units. While the selected “small regions” are considered densely populated by Roma, the high average indices might reflect remarkable internal unevenness: the concentration of Roma in one or two villages, in contrast to very low proportions in other settlements. Such configurations were observed in all the three countries, although the reasons behind them were different: long-term and highly unequal development accompanied by sharply differing opportunities of employment and great inequalities in the standards of living in Hungary; the long-term effects of varying distances from the local centers and, in particular, deeply unequal access to transportation in certain parts of Romania; the lasting impacts of unequal industrial investment and the varying levels of developments of the physical and human infrastructure in Serbia. The highly uneven concentration of Roma in certain settlements within the “small regions” pointed toward a further implication: movement across the settlements, and/or efforts for evening out socioeconomic conditions through deliberate investments with an eye on future collective growth and development hardly ever appeared on the horizon of local policy-makers. Despite the spread of regional thinking and the built-in incentives of the European funds and grants that inspire an approach to developmental issues based on larger territorial units and with longer time frames, the cohesion that regionality presupposes rarely becomes the foundation or even a seriously considered aspect of regional-level policies. By the time the funds arrive at the place(s) of utilization, plans for cooperation and cohesion fade away and at best are considered as a mere framework for equitable distribution: the unit that policy-makers and the public conceive is still “our” own town, village, district or street—and rarely anything beyond. Besides reinforcing separation and inequality and thereby strengthening the tendencies of segregation within the “small region”, such mental restrictions in people’s approach to regionality undermine solidarity across the borders of the settlements. This is especially harmful in those cases when the concentration of Roma in one single settlement reaches a level that qualifies the given village as a “Roma-only” territorial unit. In such cases—which surfaced in all three countries—the village soon becomes a ghetto that ceases to have contact with the outer world. In such extreme occurrences of segregation, inhabitants of the “Roma-only” localities become de facto imprisoned: children get a very poor education and, on the basis of lacking knowledge, skills, the demanded behavioral routines and an education-centered orientation, they are not accepted at the schools of the neighboring towns and villages to continue their studies; a long history of unemployment and exclusion from employment have undermined the skills of adaptation on the labor market and inactivity becomes a self-sustaining fate of the adult Roma population; being cut off from access to transportation hinders any attempts at seeking work within the larger vicinity; and the widely known stigma surrounding the settlement as “dangerous” and “full of criminals” accentuates discrimination that, in turn, gives rise to efforts and attempts of further separation.

However, the emergence of “Roma-only” localities as an outcome of massive fleeing is not the only manifestation of the segregationist trends that characterize many of the “small regions”—

3 It has to be noted that the increase is partly a result of the efficient campaigns targeting Roma self-identification. Due to successful efforts, the measured proportions and indices were brought closer to what people know as characterizing the given territory and what appears as an aggregation of Roma informal identifications.

especially the poorer and more disadvantaged ones. As it turns out, a recent increase in the differences in access to transportation has increasingly become an important factor of exclusion. Here one observes clashing interests with structural implications: narrowly-defined economic considerations have led to the closing down of public transport in areas where cost-benefit indicators have shown little return. These are the very areas where marketization and privatization have led to the closure of the one-time socialist factories and where the rapid impoverishment of entire large areas has become a source of deterrence for new investments and regenerative policies and actions. For some time, access to relatively cheap transportation was practically the only hope for the affected communities. However, by drawing transportation under the regulation of the market and by decentralizing its management, public expenditures on routes and services connecting such areas have come to be viewed as “superfluous”. Preserving such critical services has proven to be a matter of powerful representation and lobbying, and considerations regarding different constellations of local needs have practically had no influence on the outcomes. The result has been that the potentials to travel and commute have been drastically restricted for the inhabitants of those villages facing the most severe unemployment and poverty.

Cutting off access to transportation has quickly become a singular source of exclusion that has been further intensified by another aspect of marketization: the steady rise of the rates and prices that poor people are unable to meet. It is hardly a surprise that it is villages with a high proportion of Roma that are hit the hardest and that bear the brunt of the upwards spiraling of collective deprivation and exclusion. It is easy to foresee the future: given that all who can—Roma and non-Roma alike—make concerted efforts to leave such settlements with the prospect for continuous decay, those who stay will soon find themselves as inhabitants of utterly excluded, newly emerging “Roma-only” villages with no hope for returning to even the conditions and the level of living of the near-past. It has to be noted in this context that improvement of transportation within and across the localities is hardly ever identified as a developmental goal. True, efforts in this direction are usually beyond the financial capacities of the region and/or the municipalities. Nevertheless, it is a painful insufficiency of “regional-level thinking” and a limited willingness for a cost-sharing based on solidarity that are equally important hindrances of countervailing and curative actions. The outcome is usually a hypocrite solution: justified by their central role in providing for large numbers of people beyond their borders, investments in transportation concentrate on the center of a “small region” and within it, serve primarily the local middle class.

The above-described forms of segregation impact Roma as inhabitants of given localities that have become segregated mainly because of their impoverished state and, relatedly, because of their lack of powerful representation. However, the true terrains of segregation through outright discrimination and the violation of citizens’ rights are the settlements themselves. Experience as well as a vast literature have shown that residential segregation within the confines of a town or a village usually leads to the emergence of clearly visible borders that separate the inhabitants along sharp differences in the conditions of housing and infrastructure. In the majority of the cases, such segregated segments evolve on the periphery or in the outskirts of the settlement or emerge as deeply impoverished slums occupying adjoining streets and squares in the middle of towns. While our research confirmed the prevalence of such formations, it revealed striking structural differences across similar manifestations, thereby pointing to great variation in the causes and mechanisms of ethnic separation and, further, raising the importance of distinguishing a particular form that not only involves detachment but actually leads to the emergence of ethnic ghettos.

4. The many causes and faces of segregation

By looking at the local manifestations of segregation through a comparative lens, our research revealed significant differences in the factors and forces that produce and reproduce the phenomenon. While the major type in all three countries is separation along ethnic lines, the actual social meanings are different. In Hungary, Roma are squeezed into one or two distinct territorial units that embody social class relations: it is primarily the depth and length of poverty that “justifies” spatial separation which, in turn, appears as a self-sustaining collective trait in the eyes of the majority. If more than one segregated unit is involved, they can usually be distinguished by further refinements as “more” or “less” impoverished as seen by the majority in terms of appearance (the state of the houses, the streets, and public spaces), the spreading of unemployment and the estimated ratio of families living on welfare assistance. In certain cases, such differentiations (and simultaneous attempts at segregation) are accentuated by recognizing ethnic origin. If Romungro, Vlach and Beash Roma are present among the inhabitants in parallel, members of the different groups tend to live in separate segments and usually avoid inter-marriage or even close neighboring.

At the same time, these different groups have developed common forms of representation. Our research identified several villages where the groups which otherwise kept a physical distance from one another, arrived at a viable compromise in finding joint candidates for local minority elections and agreed on the mechanisms for controlling the work of the elected body. Due to the strength of the socioeconomic differentiation and also to the lack of deep segmentation by language or religion (important sources of division in the two other countries, as discussed below), spatial segregation within the localities rarely resulted in the emergence of “Roma-only” segments within the confines of a given locality. Instead, non-Roma living in similar conditions and also suffering long-term unemployment and poverty tend to reside inter-mixed with Roma. Such mixing frequently results in the dissolution of ethnic distinctions by “gypsy-izing” the non-Roma poor while underscoring the importance of the ethnic borders of the segment that separate it from the spaces inhabited by the majority. Further, a relatively new divide works as an important structuring factor in regions that rapidly change their profile. Certain impoverished parts of the country where the collapse of socialist production has left behind an economic vacuum have attracted waves of Roma migration in search of cheap living and housing. In such areas the “newcomers” quickly became part of the local society though both the “old” Roma inhabitants and the local majority still consider them to be “aliens.” Typically, the “old” and the “new” groups tend to maintain their distance from one another, which is expressed by living in different segments—though both away from the majority. It is important to note that such a structuring of the local Roma community often generates serious conflicts between the two groups that can hardly be settled by relying exclusively on the groups’ own resources. At the same time, attempts to even out their conditions or stimulate inter-group cooperation are rarely incorporated into the projects targeting desegregation and as a rule, similar endeavors remain outside the scope of developmental efforts.

In the Romanian case, Roma segregation seems to follow old historical lines. Due to the rather late inclusion of Roma in socialist production, old divisions often dating back to the times of slavery seem to come through with greater strength than in Hungary. The traditional cleavages by crafts and occupations are still forceful factors of separation and inter-group conflict. Furthermore, religion, the use of language, the differing forms of family life and the distinct patterns

of patron-client relations that bind members of the different groups to the majority society are also important components of internal structuring. All of these factors and forces weaken solidarity and cohesion and put Roma into situations in which they remain defenseless in facing oppression and direct and personal discrimination on the part of the local majority. The ceasing of regular employment and the decline of even the weakest forms of labor market participation through day-labor and casual work have accentuated the internal breaks and conflicts and pushed masses of Roma into hopeless poverty.

On top of all this, those suffering the most critical conditions face eviction and unlawful expropriation of their properties—without any restitution. Such widespread local practices of the majority to “get rid” of Roma by designating new lands for living often in hygienically dangerous, dilapidated areas have produced a new group of the most disadvantaged people whose entire life has become “illegal” by having no traces of their actual belonging in formal documentation. What is more, these harsh acts against basic citizens’ rights hit entire Roma families and create insurmountable obstacles with regards to school enrollment or access to welfare assistance when mere subsistence is at stake. Furthermore, Roma with somewhat safer recognition and local acknowledgement try keep away from those who might compromise their status by their “illegality.” Like elsewhere where occupational distinctions or different religious affiliations are known as sources of Roma-Roma separation, the divides within the local Roma community work to the advantage of the better-off non-Roma and the middle class of the locality. Segregating Roma into the far-off and run-down corners of the settlement becomes an easy process concluding in ever deeper impoverishment amidst the conditions of the current economic crisis. This process is intensified by a rather new development: increased migration. Following the patterns of many non-Roma, Roma have started to emigrate in large numbers to the Western parts of the European Union (France, Italy and Germany in particular) where they hope to find a better livelihood and more humane conditions. The chains of emigration follow old networks and rely on the niche of old acquaintances. Since rich and helpful contacts and their supportive potentials are concentrated in the hands of the better-off families, their emigration implies that the village suddenly loses its most capable and most mobile members. Although the successive emigration of the entire family is always part of the plan, in reality, women and children are rarely able to follow the men, at least not in the short term which would ease the need for extra accommodation. The result is that the segregated Roma communities risk losing even the tiny protection that they have enjoyed thus far. The deepening of familial poverty, together with heightened child drop-out rates and the emergence of dubious forms of income generation, such as drug-dealing and prostitution, are the most frequent outcomes. This is an important lesson: without the necessary resources and protective shields, the impact of emigration turns upside down, and instead of serving to improve conditions, it gives rise to further disintegration and the gradual erosion of familial and communal ties. In sum, the manifold lines of cleavages and conflicts within the Roma community raise matters of ethnic cohesion and solidarity to paramount needs: without helping the (re)construction of ties and cooperation within the local communities, it remains a matter of wishful thinking to claim desegregation, recognition and equity.

Roma segregation is shaped by different patterns in Serbia. While the country is characterized by massive inequalities in economic development across the large regional units, the clusters of the “small regions” within them demonstrate rather similar conditions. The major differences appear along the different histories of modernization: the poorer regions are still dominated by agricultural production—though the local potentials show a steady decline amidst the opening up of the international flow of capital, investment and trade. It is hardly a surprise that Roma are con-

centrated in these least developed and least modernized parts of the country. At the same time, their presence in the constituent settlements shows variation according to the level of urbanization and the intensity of participation in the modernizing terrains of agricultural production: however, their access is in steady decline. The rapid segmentation of the labor market seems to work as the prime factor of segregation that induces intense internal migration of Roma toward the localities that offer relatively better livelihood and provide access to cheap housing in the informal market—though these settlements increasingly tend to reduce or cut off the services and provisions they offer due to non-recognition of changes in demand and also as a result of declining funds for maintenance.

At the same time, internal migration towards the most impoverished parts of the country is not a “Roma-only” phenomenon: great masses of the one-time socialist working class are also affected. As a consequence, the least developed settlements are the ones characterized by multi-ethnic cohabitation. The inter-ethnic relations arising within these segments are fuelled by the degree of general poverty: the forces of segregation are the weakest in units where Roma and non-Roma share similar conditions of disadvantage and deprivation. It follows that a general trend proves to be sharpest in Serbia: the intensity of segregation grows by the degree of urbanization and economic development. This is demonstrated by the apparent inequalities within the “small regions”: Roma find somewhat better living in the centers, while suffer increased discrimination and face unceasing attempts of the local majority at their ghetto-like segregation; at the same time, their living conditions are deeply impoverished in the adjoining villages, while the local relationships between them and the non-Roma inhabitants imply a sense of solidarity based on shared experiences of destitution and marginalization.

Ways out of these traps include moving out of the ghetto and, if possible, emigrating. However, the current economic crisis has put an end to these two forms of mobilization: the resources required for moving have been fading away, and unlike in Romania, the potentials for migration have steadily declined. In sum, it seems that impoverishment in a poor country is the most important factor behind the prevailing sharp ethnic inequalities. In light of the processes that it has generated, differences in language use, religion, and culture seem to have only secondary importance in inducing further internal stratification.

By looking at the above presented variations of residential segregation within and across countries, one can conclude that attributing the phenomenon simply to widespread discrimination on the part of the majorities would be an oversimplification. While different forms of discrimination against Roma are always present in the background, the prejudiced and humiliating attitudes themselves would not be enough to make segregation a *structural feature* of how localities and communities are organized. As noted, discriminatory tendencies in face-to-face relations need to be backed by power to become the vehicles of collective separation and ultimate segregation along ethnic lines. True, ethnic distinctions resulting in inequalities of the prevailing local power relations are usually part of the story: as a rule, the means and the potentials of control over access to services and provisions, as well as over redistribution and development, tend to be consolidated in the hands of the non-Roma majority. The fragmentary involvement of a few Roma representatives in the local administration does little to change such imbalances. Furthermore, one can assume that, in principle, it should not be a matter of ethnic belonging when it comes to deriving policies for a general betterment of living and Roma inclusion. Hence, even considering the local power relations proves inadequate in finding exhaustive explanations for the practices of Roma segregation that apparently work as an iron rule across localities and countries.

In light of these considerations, it seems necessary to put the issue of local residential segregation into a larger context and examine those relationships and processes in society-at-large that, at present, leave little room for countervailing policies and actions within the meso-level communities of the “small regions” and the immediate settlements. Such an overview is all the more important because of the conclusions one can draw as to the potential intermediate actions in support of desegregation which presuppose certain large-scale changes and measures for backing the arising local initiatives.

5. Considerations for policy-making toward desegregation

With regard to the large-scale changes, three crucial factors have to be mentioned. The first is the rapid regional/territorial polarization of impoverishment that has characterized the process of post-socialist transformation in all of our three countries (and across the whole post-socialist region). Such polarization partly resulted from marketization: backed by neo-liberal incentives and measures, the flows of capital and investment targeted the best developed areas while abandoning more underdeveloped regions. Parallel to this process, the distribution of work and of the ever-shrinking employment opportunities has become highly unequal and has manifested itself across entire regions suffering from high unemployment, widespread inactivity and massive poverty. Since these outcomes were rarely countervailed by anti-poverty measures and policies to maintain a certain degree of livelihood on universal grounds, the formation of segregated pockets of poverty was an unavoidable outcome. In this context, the concentration of Roma appears as the problem of the poorest among the poor: ethnic segregation can be viewed as a consequence rather than a cause.

The second important factor behind ethnic segregation can be identified in the changing patterns of self-defense against the losses of transformation that the shaken one-time middle class has worked out and has developed to widely-applied attitudinal and behavioral routines. Since the processes of economic transformation implied an increase in insecurity well beyond those layers of society that were directly hit by unemployment, attempts at reconstructing one’s social standing and earlier level of living have generated sharp competition and induced tendencies for “private accumulation at all costs” on the part of the vast social strata permanently fearing impoverishment and a downward turn in position and livelihood. The transformation of the systems of social security and a wide range of governmental measures in social policy aimed to maintain tranquility and prevent social unrest by quickly breaking down the earlier prevailing universal schemes of distribution and by introducing reforms clearly favoring the middle class. Furthermore, such policies tacitly accepted attempts of the non-poor and nearly-poor to re-establish the clear divides between the majority and the truly poor minority by privatizing housing, infrastructure provisions and certain public services as well as by permitting enforced separation in the local residential and institutional relations. This way segregation as a source of status maintenance and self-esteem became a shared interest of large social groups that enjoyed state support in all attempts to distinguish themselves through squeezing out Roma and the poor from the earlier shared spaces. Examples of status-driven struggles for separation can be found in all domains of everyday life. The prime manifestation is the widespread “white flight” in education that has concluded in the emergence of a great number of ghettoized Roma schools and

classes in all three countries; likewise, the separation of Roma workers in employment and public work programs has often been driven by a wish to keep apart different status groups behind the veil of professional and technical considerations. Similar traces of forceful separation have been generated by the sharply unequal distribution of developmental and urban renewal funds to upgrade local infrastructure in middle-class-dominated segments while allowing for prolonged spontaneous degeneration in quarters inhabited by Roma and the truly poor.

The third significant all-societal factor of Roma residential segregation is intersectionality that has gained a “convenient playground” amidst the processes of decentralization. Since decentralization has been an important driver of reshuffling public administration and reforming education, while it also framed the transformation of the local labor markets, the interplay among these developments has taken place largely within smaller regional units and, simultaneously, it has become more or less invisible from a macro-level perspective. The decentralized framing of the intersecting inequalities has led to the personification of poverty and to the spreading of ideologies of “non-deservingness” by which the reasons for extreme forms of poverty among Roma became identified with behavioral and cultural traits. On the ground of such shifts in reasoning, Roma marginalization has appeared as a “just” reaction and has invoked local actions to be applied for the entire community. In this context, residential segregation seemed both necessary and useful. It is “necessary” because of the cleavages in culture and habits, and it is “useful” because in its enclosure, the Roma community can maintain its “collective traits” and practice its collective routines—and all of this can happen in the name of autonomy and collective “rights”.

These briefly introduced large-scale factors behind Roma segregation carry some important implications. While the outlining of a complex program for targeting the phenomenon is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to underline that, given its macro-social embedding, little can be done to effectively promote desegregation exclusively at the local level of policy-making, even if we broaden the meaning of “local” to include a range of settlements and their clustering into “small regions”. As the above implies, a key matter for halting segregation is a deep change in the way in which the middle class relates to Roma. This, in turn, requires stabilization and a vast improvement in the currently insecure and downward-pointing positions of large groups of families and households. However paradoxical it may sound, in this sense, the clue to turning the tide of local segregation calls for reforms in education, employment, and welfare to support these groups of the middle class in order to reduce their interest in distinguishing themselves through segregation against those occupying the lowest positions in the social hierarchy.

Further macro-level prerequisites towards local desegregation involve a thorough rethinking of universalism that considers equality and equity in meeting basic rights a foundation of redistribution and policy-making in welfare. Against this background, lessons of decentralization point toward the need of redrawing the boundaries between the central and local constituents of education, employment and social policy. While re-centralization may bring about new risks of authoritarian tendencies and a top-down management of public affairs, the reformulation of state responsibilities toward the entirety of the citizenry seems to be a prime concern for developing local policies of inclusion. Such a reformulation seems to be needed in all three countries, regardless of the actual division between the central and local organs of public administration. As our research revealed, even if education, labor and redistribution are administered in a top-down manner—as in Serbia and, to a lesser degree, in Romania—local currents and interests find ways to translate the central regulations into divisions and institutional arrangements according

to the needs of those with influence and power. It is not difficult to see that it is the weakness of universal rights and norms that makes such transformations easy regardless of the actual technical routines of governance.

While the above may imply that local attempts at desegregation have to face strong limitations without being backed and supported by macro-level laws and regulations, the results of our research do, in fact, suggest some scope for action.

First, our findings point to the need to understand residential segregation in broad spatial terms. As indicated above, segregation affects Roma to varying degrees even within a reasonably coherent “small region”. It follows that policies for desegregation should embrace whole clusters of settlements by considering the tendencies and potentials of Roma movement within their confines and beyond. Designing policies and actions solely within the rather static bureaucratic boundaries of administrative units may even deepen the territorial inequalities and further marginalize Roma in the most vulnerable conditions.

Second, facing the rich arsenal of factors and causes inducing forms of segregation that appear on the surface as similar, calls for an adjustment of desegregation policies to reflect local specificities. Recognition of the differences should be expressed in the diversity of actions. Hence, policies addressing the inequalities of socioeconomic conditions and their spiraling toward separation should mobilize measures to redistribute local assets and welfare to reducing inequalities in livelihood. Such policies will certainly differ from those in which the key issue is to establish (revitalize) local production through investment and state-driven actions for job-creation. Yet in other cases, recognition of Roma skills and crafts might lead to attempts at desegregation by invigorating local markets and forms of Roma-non-Roma cooperation.

Third, as our findings indicate, conflicts between different Roma groups related to traditions, language and religion (as in Hungary and Romania) or generated by political divisions (as in Serbia) prove to become high-risk sources of segregation that, in turn, easily block any attempts of collective action and self-protection. At the same time, low levels of cohesion, weak self-representation and failures in attaining recognition for the entire Roma community intensify the defenselessness and put the collective at the mercy of the deeply prejudiced majority. In light of this, it seems that reconstructing trust, cooperation and cohesion within the ethnic community should be a primary step to enable all other desegregation actions.

Fourth, by considering intersectionality as an important component of deepening residential segregation and surrounding it with an endless reproduction of low levels of education and marginality in labor force participation, we should emphasize the necessity of local (“small-regional”) programs and actions aiming to break up the interplay of factors pointing toward the same directions of separation and exclusion. In practical terms this means that policies of desegregation should be rooted in a design that synchronizes actions across areas of housing/infrastructure, education and employment. Such policies require a good deal of flexibility in order to cut through bureaucratic boundaries between these three areas. However, it is important to underline that attaining flexibility is not simply a matter of how local administration is organized. Flexibility is rather a practical adjustment to the conceptualization of poverty, exclusion and ethnic segregation that are recognized to be caused by intersecting forces and processes in various domains, and that therefore should be mitigated by compound measures and actions. Such an understanding and converting its ramifications into local-level policies expands the circle of potential actors as well. The elaboration of powerful measures and actions implies a bottom-up

involvement of civil participants and the representation of all important social groups within the locality that might contribute toward such an innovative approach. While civil participation in local development is a precondition for successful interventions, it is of profound structural need with regards to planning and attaining desegregation.

Finally, our inquiry into the causes and faces of segregation revealed the importance of churches and Roma NGOs in mitigating the problem. As it turns out, certain municipalities in certain segments of our three countries acknowledged the role of civil and church actors in this regard. However, the recognition of non-governmental efforts often implies a tendency of shifting the burdens and responsibilities toward them, this way tacitly “liberating” the municipality from its tasks and duties with regard to the poor, and moreover, with regard to the segregated Roma communities. These developments call for some caution as well as some control in order to stop the advancement of “decentralization” in instances where it results in the further obfuscation of the “Roma issue”. While the involvement of the churches and NGOs is necessary for expanding civil participation and making these entities the regular actors of agency, protection and service provision, their engagement should be predicated on clear divisions and accurate circumspection of the respective tasks and duties in a way that does not allow for transgressing the boundaries that are customarily drawn between the state and non-state agencies in administering the “normal” routines in the case of the non-Roma majority and also with regards to macro-level governance. Through multi-sided deliberations about tasks and responsibilities, while avidly working to improve the conditions of living of the Roma community, the civil sector can also become a spontaneously evolving agent to help raise Roma recognition, whereby the chances for elevating the “Roma issue” to the level of local politics might substantially increase. We return to some further implications of these developments below when discussing matters of Roma participation in public affairs and politics.

6. Education and employment: some new insights

According to a rarely experienced, broad consensus among scholars, practitioners, policy-makers and Roma representatives, education and employment are the two major domains where the immediate sources of producing and reproducing the collective marginalization and exclusion of Roma can be identified. It is argued that low levels of education passed from one generation to the next hinder proper inclusion by making entrance to the labor market near to impossible: amidst the conditions of an increasing demand for high levels of knowledge and skills, low-educated Roma cannot keep pace with the heated competition for available positions, while their exclusion from the organized world of labor undermines any attempt for mobility and integration. Further, Roma exclusion from employment deprives members of the community from the very basis of social participation, subverts individual and collective recognition, breaks down any attempts at organized representation through the customary forms of workplace-based trade unions and professional associations, and serves as the major source of perpetuating high levels of poverty.

While these associations are widely acknowledged, there is less consensus concerning the factors, forces and processes that maintain them. Structural, institutional, cultural and behavioral frameworks have been in place to provide explanations but rarely have these attempts been applied

in a synchronized way, and even fewer efforts have been made to describe their intersectionality. By taking into consideration the richness and also the controversies of the knowledge about the exclusionary trends in education and employment, we designed the fieldwork in schools and in (or around) workplaces by implicitly relying on already available knowledge and concentrating on the least studied and/or most debated aspects to reveal the mechanisms of intersectionality. As for education, these attempts led us to look at schools as institutions with their own interests and routines, and to focus on the interplay between the above introduced, highly varying forms of residential and territorial segregation and the restrictive mechanisms of institutional segregation. Being aware of the recent trends of decentralization in education in all the three countries, it was also our aim to reveal the locally evolving, varied forms of “professionalizing” segregation in schooling by creating highly ethnicized categories of disadvantage that then translate into “disqualifying” Roma students as poor performers and as incapable participants. In addition to placing the disadvantaged situation of Roma children and youth into the broader context of ongoing changes in education as part of our countries’ post-socialist adaptation, we also intended to contribute to the widespread debate surrounding school segregation that is often seen in black-and-white terms either as a direct product of the residential conditions or as an “independent” terrain of discrimination driven by majority prejudices and incentives.

With regard to employment, we intended to look beyond the well-known correlations between low levels of education and training among Roma on the one hand, and their reduced employability amidst the drastically changed conditions of post-socialist economies on the other hand. Through a closer observation of the workplaces and the recently launched public work schemes we aimed to reveal how Roma employment fits or fails to fit the apparently “technocratic” considerations of employers (be they public or private) and how these considerations have been assessed by Roma themselves. Finally, conceptualizing our research in the spatial framework of “small regions” allowed us to look at some rarely studied associations between education and employment. This way the study revealed how local economic interests directly influence the contents and orientations of streaming and tracking in secondary education and how the conflicts of de-industrialization and the challenges of market adaptation shape vocational training in various, hidden and overt, ways so that the training programs they provide often better meet the trainers’ needs for safe employment than the trainees’ interests with regard to their future employability. Furthermore, the concurrent studying of the respective actors of education and employment brought up important differences with regard to the “languages of ethnic distinction” by pointing to a widespread disinterest in the “Roma question” among employers, while emotionally driven attempts to “blame the victim” in a great number of schools and educational units of vocational training.

Let us start with the overview of the main comparative findings in education.

Ethnic/racial inequalities, the restriction of Roma educational opportunities, and school segregation as a violation of human rights were voiced as “hot topics” in the pre-accession negotiations in Hungary and Romania, and in a similar way are thoroughly monitored by Brussels as indicators of Serbia’s true commitment towards “Europeanization”. In parallel to Brussels’ call for attaining meaningful changes toward Roma inclusion, education has also become the rallying point of civil activism: a great number of Roma and committed non-Roma NGOs have provided strong advocacy and/or innovative new services to help reduce Roma disadvantages through intensified assistance in the forms of after-school provisions, training programs, the involvement of parents on a community basis, and—if needed—by bringing cases of Roma exclusion to court.

Apparently, the unceasing efforts over the past twenty years aimed at keeping Roma educational disadvantages and marginalization on the political agenda have had an impact: the harshest forms of segregation—first of all, the earlier widespread practices of placing Roma children into special schools for the mentally ill—have become unacceptable, and the respective governments had to introduce a set of measures to prevent against such routines if for no other reasons than to save their international reputation; further, local educational administrations, school principals and teachers have started to re-conceptualize ethnic disadvantages and to engage in applying new curricula and new teaching methods for improving Roma students' performance; moreover, Roma educational failures have been framed in the public discourse in a way that distinctively differs from how causes of Roma poverty or welfare dependency are presented by emphasizing the deeper economic, social and institutional associations undergirding the problem.

Our fieldwork revealed certain important traces of these developments. The recent closure of a great number of special schools was recorded in all three countries. Representatives of the local administration and the school principals we interviewed listed a range of actions they are taking to reduce Roma segregation by redefining the catchment areas of the local primary schools; by introducing inter-cultural lessons as part of the curriculum; by employing teaching assistants to provide personalized teaching and to act as “mediators” between the schools and Roma families; and by seeking cooperation with the local Roma NGOs to establish after-school programs for Roma children.

However, our research demonstrates that these positive developments have proven ineffective at reducing or halting segregation: just as a chameleon changes color, Roma segregation seems to disappear in one form but immediately reappear in another. The case of the above-mentioned widespread closure of local special schools is a clear example of this point. Demonstrating the delayed arrival of the notions of inclusive education from the Anglo-Saxon world, this process was accompanied by the introduction of a new category of children with “special educational needs” (SEN) that erased the sharp distinction between the physical disabilities and learning difficulties due to social and familial conditions and thereby opened the door for the inclusion of Roma children in “normal” surroundings. However, being an SEN student rapidly became a euphemism for being distinguished as “inept” and thus deserving special treatment through separation. It follows that Roma find themselves yet again segregated, though the manifestations of this phenomenon significantly differ across the three countries.

In Hungary, “old” special school attendees (and their younger siblings entering school today) quickly became redefined en masse. However, many schools cannot cope with the increased needs for personalized curricula and instruction, and by recognizing the necessity of “special treatment”, they organize “correctional-classes” for the SEN children –the majority of whom are Roma. This way intra-school Roma segregation replaces the earlier regime of inter-school segregation. Not surprisingly, the consequences are more or less the same: SEN children rarely have the chance to become “ordinary” students in “ordinary” classes and, even if they do, given the low pace and poor quality of their education, they soon end up among those whose low performance qualifies for class repetition, or they give up and drop out of school.

In Romania, a similar process of “reclassifying” Roma children as SEN students has been accompanied by extending the network of Roma teaching assistants to help Roma children and their families. However, the new network has quickly become a source of segregation: teachers usually do not regard the teaching assistants as equals and try to “ghettoize” them within the school and “gypsy-ize” them in the neighborhood. The constraints of the new provisions are signaled by a

significant increase in the proportion of dropouts from primary education (after years of steady increase, the ratio grew to 17.5 percent by early 2014⁴) and a steep rise of the number of the children of Roma internal migrants who are excluded from regular education because they lack proper documentation (something that the “special schools” tended not to care about).

Serbia provides yet another case. Although the new law on education (2009) urges inclusive measures and calls for the closing down of special schools, the pace of actual change is very slow. Such schools still operate across the country with no less than a third of their student body being of Roma origin. Reclassifying these children as SEN students is more an exception than a rule. However, even those formally registered in “ordinary” primary schools remain segregated in “special-teaching” classes or study groups. Furthermore, the requested health certificates to demonstrate the “coping capacities” of the child and the family exclude many Roma children from entering the mainstream system: having no or limited access to healthcare and lacking the knowledge of how to collect the necessary documentation serve as deterrents and barriers to entry. Moreover, the flows of in-country migration as well as international emigration produce a pool of Roma children in limbo who easily become “forgotten” by the educational authorities or fall through the cracks of the school system. In sum, reforming education has brought about worrisome results thus far: one-third of Roma children of compulsory-education age do not attend school, and among those who do, dropout rates are still persistently high (around 13 percent according to UNICEF), teachers complain that the upper classes of primary schools are full of hardly cooperating and often revolting overage Roma boys and girls, while expert estimates signal a decrease of the already low ratio of Roma who continue schooling on the secondary level.⁵

The above three variants of the responses that schools have given to governmental efforts to substitute the ill-famed special schools with more flexible and more inclusive services renders an important lesson: if institutional reforms affect only one aspect of education, they may have the unintended result of introducing even deeper segregation and sharper alienation of Roma in mainstream education.

The second lesson concerns the schools: it seems that educational institutions operate under the heavy pressure of majority “needs” for maintaining strict ethnic borders. In this sense, the structural forces creating hierarchies and segmentation in education along the principles of status and merit become powerfully accentuated by the individual attempts of families for drawing, maintaining and framing—in an institutionalized way—the borders that separate them from those at the bottom: Roma and the truly poor. Amidst these conditions, the decentralized system is practically incapable of fulfilling the desired task of inclusive education. Moreover, schools find themselves facing vast resistance from non-Roma parents who respond by fleeing, thereby further intensifying segregation. Of course, none of this implies that attempts towards inclusive education are in vain. However, the experiences of the past decade call for a wider embedding of the educational reforms into more comprehensive policies and measures targeting Roma segregation across and within schools as an organic part of ameliorating the troubled inter-ethnic relationships in society-at-large. Welfare measures for reducing poverty and steps taken to attain equal citizenship rights for Roma may be key elements of such a large-scale effort. Without them, local initiatives may rapidly wane or result in an unintended aggrandizement of the problem—as demonstrated by the failures of the above introduced three examples.

4 See the statistics published by the UNICEF Country Office, Romania.

5 Roma Education Fund: Advancing Education of Roma in Serbia. Roma Education Fund, 2007.

Of course, qualifying children as “mentally inept” or in need of “special education” because of learning difficulties, behavioral problems, disadvantages in terms of poverty, or simply because of their presupposed “otherness” due to Roma origin are not the only forms of educational segregation. Our methodology for data-collection in all educational units (primary, secondary and vocational schools) within the “small region” allowed us to examine the various forms of forceful (or sometimes spontaneous) ethnic separation. It also provided useful tools to reveal the cumulative effects of interplay between the diverse manifestations and it helped us to follow the paths and the dynamics of segregation across and within settlements, as well as across and within schools. The rich data collection partly confirms certain rather well-known associations, but also broadens the picture by uncovering deep-seated interests behind the segregating trends in vocational training and by exposing the relatively new phenomenon of “Roma flight” as a personal strategy for assimilation similar to patterns of “white flight”. Moreover, our data provide important additions about how residential and educational segregation accentuate each other’s impact and how their multiplied forces push Roma children and families toward exclusion. But they also show that school segregation is a phenomenon “in its own right”: the sharpest forms appear in schools that, at first sight, seem to be integrated on multicultural principles, but that actually work along strictly defined ethnic borderlines between parallel classes and by applying practices of allegedly “blind” student placement according to giftedness and performance.

In this vein, our data demonstrate the major types of Roma educational segregation as identified by a range of recent studies that also underscore the difference in their formations according to the various types of settlements. In smaller villages, which often have a single primary school, the concentration of Roma is a near-automatic consequence of residential segregation; however, the process is made worse by “white flight” as well as of the exodus of better-off and/or upward-striving Roma families. As discussed earlier, many of these villages are over-populated by destitute Roma families. However, when better-off Roma and non-Roma flee in order to provide their children with a better education it practically beheads the local society of children and youth who are caught in the severely abandoned, ghetto-like, “Roma-only” school as the only option left behind. The road does not lead anywhere from here: being aware of their hopeless situation, children usually do not even make a try to approach a secondary school or to apply to a fashionable, mainstream vocational school with a reputation of providing good access to employment afterwards.

The urban forms of ethnic segregation are no less drastic and harmful—though they are often less visible. As a rule, early streaming (in primary education, but with an eye to the successful continuation on the secondary level) leads to the establishment of “meritocratic” classes apart from the “general” ones—where Roma students find themselves in great numbers. The latter provide less knowledge and children are usually taught by teachers who consider it a punishment and a loss in reputation to work with poor and Roma children “who never will succeed in life”. In other cases, Roma students are separated in physical terms as well: if the school functions on different sites, it will be them who are placed in buildings often lacking even basic infrastructure and facilities. This is all in addition to the still prevailing practice of many local educational authorities and schools defining (and redefining) school districts in ways that keep Roma away from the good schools and “collects” them in designated educational units that quickly become the urban counterparts of the “Roma-only” schools of the villages. The consequences are well-known: dropout rates and the proportions of pupils in home-schooling with very limited educational content are three to four times higher among Roma children than even among their disadvantaged peers from the majority. The hardly correctible result is also known: the proportion of children who attempt to continue on at a secondary school is around 50 percent (in all the three countries);

moreover, as the principals of these institutions keep noting, the majority leaves behind schooling by the end of the first grade.

The picture is not better at the vocational schools. Roma applicants rarely join the “elegant” and popular institutions which provide students with modern skills; rather, they are oriented toward a few designated units and classes that offer old qualifications with no hope for ever using them anywhere. However, Roma teenagers are painfully “needed” in these latter types of vocational training: without them the institutions would be closed down despite their usefulness to provide employment for the one-time workers and foremen of heavy industry and mining who had succeeded to “invent” teaching in such schools as a way of escaping unemployment and who are successfully lobbying year after year for the preservation of these outdated institutions. The needs of Roma youth apparently do not matter. It is then no surprise that only one-third of Roma complete their studies in these vocational schools. The majority leave school behind and give up all aspirations of obtaining a certificate that demonstrates employability in certain domains of the economy.

As our interviews with the directors of a number of vocational schools and with local Roma leaders revealed, although reforming vocational training and bringing it up to the requirements of a modern market economy has long been on the agenda of the respective governments, it appears as more rhetoric than reality. Viewed from the local perspective, the permanent reshuffling induces widespread insecurity and the ultimate collapse of the one-time system of apprenticeship (as recorded at all our sites)—this way even those young people who stay on, finally leave the training without the minimally required professional experience and thus find themselves among those who start adulthood by being put immediately on the list of unemployed. In sum, vocational training in its current form is an extended form of the educational segregation of Roma which directly leads to marginalization and exclusion.

The gap between the “proper” secondary schools and the institutions of vocational training has been further deepened by local-level developments funded largely by European investments. As our data show, such grants have been used primarily to refurbish schools and equip them with modern IT-technologies. However, vocational schools that are often administered solely or jointly by different industrial boards have been left out partly due to the fact that they are tacitly acknowledged as dead-end units of secondary-level education, and partly because they fall through the cracks of improper coordination between the different bureaucracies. It follows that any attempts at their modernization and integration into the school system have been left to “civil initiatives” providing temporary training programs (without adjoining educational and cultural services) that quickly die out after the expiration of the grants and that are too narrow and too limited in scope to provide an alternative path for labor market entrance. At the same time, the burgeoning of such short-term training courses creates the impression of “reforming” the system by engaging increasingly in cooperation between the state and civil society, which then makes it reasonable to drop vocational training from the crowded basket of competing needs for EU- and governmental investments. As a result, there is an ever-growing distance between vocational and mainstream schools in secondary education, and Roma are the primary losers of the structural constraints that do not allow for modernization or better adjustment of these schools to the challenges of the market.

The troubled state of vocational training and its ever more pronounced functioning as a path of exclusion for Roma youth (with rather similar causes and manifestations in our three countries) leads us to the issue of work and employment as the second area where “self-evident” arguments

are frequently applied to explain ethnic (and ethnicized) marginalization as the “natural” and “unalterable” condition in the long and painful process of the post-socialist transformation.

Phase 2 research in this domain recognized that, unlike with regards to education, detailed knowledge about Roma employment and, moreover, the forms of work that Roma are engaged in, is painfully missing. Although macro-level analyses about unemployment (and its associations with gender, age, level of education, and regional economic indicators) provide important information that acknowledges Roma disadvantages in employment, data are scarce about local variations, and even less is known in comparative terms about statistical, institutional and face-to-face discrimination. By referring to the sensitive character of data on ethnic identity, the labor surveys regularly managed by the national statistical offices in our countries refuse to take stock of the apparently increasing ethnic inequalities in access to employment. However, two distinct problems seem to be mixed up here: while sensitivity is rightly observed concerning individual-level ethnic data, there is great need for data on the institutional level, i.e. on the ethnic profile of employment in different branches of the economy and at different firms. This knowledge would be all the more important for better targeting: Roma advocacy groups urge this in order to better focus on local and regional development programs and project funding that together assist Roma to (re)enter the field of organized labor, which potentially constitutes the most important path for turning around the otherwise unstoppable trend of exclusion. However, the lack of precise knowledge and data dampens their voice. Cries of the majority that Roma are “incapable” to work effectively prove loudest in the debate.

Given the above-stated challenges, we designed the fieldwork on employment and labor by experimenting with a new methodology that was inspired to a large extent by the vast experience of institutional data collection in education. In a similar manner, we agreed to approach the “principal figures” at each firm as responsible managers of the local employment policy to directly request sensitive data on the ethnic composition of the staff, the typical occupations they offer and the positions filled by employees of different ethnic backgrounds. In doing so we not only aimed to get the necessary data but also to monitor their views, attitudes, explanations and plans concerning the local employment/non-employment of Roma.⁶ These short interviews were complemented by similarly structured meetings with local Roma representatives whom we asked to characterize each firm in our sample and also to provide a detailed map of the overall employment and labor situation in their Roma community.

Even with the time constraints of the fieldwork, this applied methodology proved to be disproportionately burdening and time- and energy-consuming (and this experience suggests it be made simpler for the purposes of regular monitoring in the future). Nevertheless, the research results revealed useful findings that justified the designed tools and methods. One of the most important realizations was the employers’ willingness to enter a discourse about Roma—despite the fact that “publicly” most of them demonstrated unawareness and disinterest in the subject. To be sure, many among the smaller private entrepreneurs refused our request for an interview (the rate of refusal was exceptionally high in certain parts of Romania)—but this is usually the case due to their exceedingly long and busy working hours and their intense daily managerial engagement. In other words, refusal was less attributable to the topic than to the lack of time for “wasteful” academic encounters. However, the majority were ready to provide the exact number

6 The sample of the workplaces was drawn from the registry: public and private employers employing at least five persons were approached.

of Roma among their employees—which in itself indicates the relevance of the ethnic dimension when discussing work and employability. At the same time, our local Roma informants often could refer only to general impressions but were without any knowledge about the internal workings of the individual firms. Such discrepancies in factual information between those who, at least in principle, should be partners in negotiating conflicting interests signals that, unlike with regards to education, Roma exclusion from the world of organized labor has not yet entered the public consciousness, let alone the proper political formulation of the problem and a generally understood vocabulary for its public discussion. Instead, the fieldwork revealed virulent prejudices and stubborn refusals of the idea of institutional responsibilities in segregating tendencies in employment and a decline in readiness to make a trial by temporarily employing one or two Roma.

However, this last characterization has to be qualified. Despite the dominance of negative attitudes, our interviewees also experienced the opposite. At some firms, employers spoke about their long tradition of contracting Roma (these traditions often dated back to practices and networks during socialist times that somehow “survived” the changes in ownership or even in profile). Other entrepreneurs and managers provided elaborated arguments in favor of deliberate color-blindness and expressed their commitment to protect all their workers against discrimination and racism. In sum, the picture proved to be fragmented and controversial, but it contained the seeds of making Roma exclusion from work a political issue in which a significant portion of the “feared” and “blamed” employers can offer solidarity and cooperation.

The actual data on Roma employment indicate severe segmentation of the local labor markets and sharp exclusion from access to work. While the employers explain the dramatic conditions that Roma face by referring to their low levels of education and their lack of skills and experience in the routines of production and cooperation (due to decades of being unemployed), the details of their accounts and those of the Roma representatives reveal a more complex situation. As it turns out, the severe limitation hindering Roma to commute within a larger territorial unit is perhaps an even more important factor than their gaps in knowledge and skills: this is especially clear when we consider that a wide range of recently launched municipal and civil programs for adult education and retraining have targeted Roma in all the three countries, although such efforts have not resulted in any meaningful impact on their employment. Upon closer inspection, it turned out that most of them are too poor to spend money travelling to seek work outside the village or the small town where they live and, as such, they remain trapped in the immediate locality and their newly acquired knowledge ultimately proves to be useless.

However, some of the entrepreneurs in the larger vicinity find a solution to tackle the obstacle of spatial movement by organizing informal transportation for Roma to their places of work. Their knowledge and skills suddenly appear useful if no contract, no social security contribution, and no spending on hygiene and protection are offered. In these instances the Roma workers in their defenseless and often desperate situation have no option other than to accept the humiliating conditions for the sake of earning some meager livelihood. Our data confirm that Roma work long hours and very hard: they constantly seek the opportunity to be accepted—if for no more than a few days of engagement—while the tacit consensus about their poor “capabilities” pushes them deeper and deeper into informality whereby all their efforts remain invisible to the wider public. This way the widespread violation of basic human rights (e.g., the right to free movement, the right to live and work in healthy conditions, the right to organize and being organized, etc.) enjoys broad approval and is justified by the rarely questioned general conviction that “Roma do not like to work, instead, they constantly seek support from public funds that ‘we’ pay for.”

This broad consensus backs the public work programs that have been launched throughout the three countries. Although the regulations vary from country to country, the principles are the same and manifest a particular understanding of the notion of “workfare” that has been imported from the West. While the initial models regard incentives for work through “activating programs” as a way of getting the long-term unemployed back to employability by upholding their basic human rights and do not question their need for support through provisions in welfare, the post-socialist adaptation seems to rely on different principles. The respective programs concentrate on “economizing” and on disciplining the long-term unemployed (Roma in the first place) at the cost of questioning their basic human rights (e.g. personal freedom of mobility or choice) and mandating forced participation in dictated forms of work in direct exchange for their rights for support and welfare. However, the latter association is applied in different degrees in the three countries. While unconditional acceptance of the work on offer has been made a precondition to access welfare benefits in Hungary, and while public work is widely considered a way of reentering the formal labor market via employment in Romania, the respective arrangements are seen as alternatives for contracting day-labor in agriculture and construction in Serbia and, as such, they are applied with remarkable restriction for providing alternative pathways for the unemployed.

Our data show that, despite their diverse goals, the locally launched and administered public work programs provide clear examples of exclusion, even “ghettoization”, in all three countries. The pathways of Roma (and Roma women in particular) participating in such schemes never led to “true” employment, instead they resulted in even more “disciplined” and “grateful” queuing up for assistance and/or repeated entrance to the municipal office and even more willingness to accept *any* form of work in the informal domain. As examples of certain villages and smaller communes in Romania and Serbia show, the mayors and the local elite play a leading role in turning placement on a public work scheme into a means of personal reward and punishment. Given the limited funds and the restrictions on the number of employees, their right to distribute the opportunities becomes a source of harsh ruling—much the same way the old vassalage system functioned some two-hundred years ago. Amidst their excessive defenselessness and the risk of losing their sources of basic subsistence, Roma (and non-Roma in similar situations) not only accept these conditions, but even *compete* with each other. Their turning against each other brings about an additional advantage for the local majorities: it is easy to blame Roma (and the non-Roma in excessively ethnicized contexts) as troublemakers and thus avoid facing the unpleasant truth of the majority’s interests and responsibilities for the current state of affairs.

In short, although it is hard to establish an ordering among the different formations of segregation and unlawful exclusion, one is inclined to say that the world of labor occupies a top position: public control over the above circumstances and relations seems entirely missing in this domain, and the primary rules of the game are molded by attempts at direct exploitation of and unlimited discrimination against masses of Roma people.

Nevertheless, our fieldwork revealed some encouraging news as well. It was a recurrent experience across countries and “small regions” that Roma have better chances for employment if they live in the vicinity of a local branch of a multinational firm. As it seems, together with the moving in of such firms, the culture of color-blindness in matters where ethnicity should not play a role also was imported. At these firms, Roma had better chances for becoming regular, full-time employees with similar rights and duties to their non-Roma peers than at domestic private companies. Furthermore, public firms and institutions have also demonstrated somewhat more openness in comparison to their private counterparts. True, Roma are given the least esteemed,

hardest and dirtiest jobs and/or are “hidden” in backdoor kitchens or cleaning units. But at least they occupy registered and tax-paying formal jobs and as such, they have the prospect to receive a “regular” pension one day, and they can draw on sick-leave should they become ill.

Such differences call for a closer investigation of the departing “employment cultures” and also for a detailed exploration of the structures of interacting economic, technological, political, and social interests that are at play within the various types of firms and institutions. It can be expected that the Phase 3 part of the “Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities” research will deepen our understanding and it will provide contributions for establishing a vocabulary by which attempts at making Roma (non)-employment an *issue of politics* will become a realistic goal (at least at regional/local levels).

7. Roma representation and political participation

By looking at the internal relationships and mutual perceptions of Roma and non-Roma through interviewing the leaders of the minority and majority communities, our Phase 2 research provided a unique opportunity to gain insights into the formation of local power relations that condition Roma participation and representation. First, such an approach allowed for identifying the factors that induce variations in exploiting the existing institutional structures and for asking about the dynamics that help or hinder getting particular Roma needs on the agenda of local politics and policy-making. It followed that we could explore some important departures in representing minority needs by the different domains indicating relatively high Roma influence regarding matters of welfare while serious shortcomings in representation and efforts at raising public awareness and political will with regards to expanding Roma employment and revising the customary patterns of redistribution that affect infrastructure and access to services.

Second, our cross-country comparisons provided some important new results about the impact that the remarkably differing institutional arrangements of our three countries have on day-to-day politics and policy-making at the local level. In this context we could ask: how far do the structures of formally democratic elections, as opposed to top-down appointments, influence the performance of the institutions that were set up to represent Roma needs? Further, are there meaningful differences in the composition of the representative bodies if they come into being via elections as opposed to being professional assignments, and how is the legitimacy of the arising institutions affected? Third, our fieldwork in the communities helped us to reveal how political representation is seen by those who are represented: how strongly do members of the Roma community feel that their leaders keep their cause on the local policy-agenda and what are the channels and forms of feedback and control in this regard? Finally, a critical overarching question has come to the fore: despite all the debilitating implications of deep poverty and segregation, can one identify signs of a gradually empowering struggle for recognition that gives new meaning to Roma identity and belonging by turning around the symbolism of the prevailing ethnic enclosures and giving them new understandings as sources of ethnic pride and cohesion?

In contextualizing our findings, it is important to note that Roma visibility and the institutional capacities of representing the specific needs that follow from the minority status that Roma occupy have increased in all our three countries during the past two decades. This statement remains true despite the fact that, if compared to other minorities, Roma representation still

proves to be rather weak. Nevertheless, intense pressure from the European Union for breaking up exclusion and segregation through seeding new institutions that embody Roma needs, the launching of a complex program for Roma inclusion through the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and, most recently, the compelling governmental task in all EU Member States to elaborate national strategies to improve the conditions of Roma through a chain of clearly outlined tasks, adjoining policies and designated institutions have brought about some important developments. In the first place, these efforts have induced changes in political thinking and discourse: instead of the earlier conceptualizations that framed the specific needs of Roma either in terms of poverty or as a cultural issue, there has been a shift in all three countries towards articulating the specific Roma needs in the context of minority status and by acknowledging minority rights within the legal and political systems. Second, it followed from the complex nature of the new initiatives that Roma poverty, marginalization and exclusion appeared for the first time as a product of intersecting forces and processes that, in turn, invoke coordinated policies and a standing framework for their implementation. Such an approach has helped to understand the deep cleavages in education, employment and access to a wide range of services and provisions in their embedding into the prevailing local inter-ethnic relations. This new understanding has weakened those interests and has driven back those forces trying to consider these issues as ethnic specificities with no relevance beyond the boundaries of the local Roma communities. However, despite promising developments, at least rhetorically, attempts to translate the broadened perspective of the macro-level approach into the daily working of local Roma political participation have remained sporadic and any institutional formations that have been called forth have proven largely powerless.

The surprisingly similar developments across countries invite an important question: how much do the laws and the established institutional structures influence Roma political participation as against the prevailing local inter-ethnic relations and the informally shaped rules and traditions of representation? This question is all the more important because the legal arrangements and the designation of public responsibilities have undergone important changes during the past two decades and the subsequent modifications have pointed toward some crystallization of the concept of minority rights and its positioning within the larger political structures in all three countries.

It is worth summarizing country by country the key points of change and their institutional implications.

In Hungary where the right for self-organizing is a strong pillar of the minority law, important modifications in the regulation of minority elections have brought the issue of political representation under the sole authority of the minority community. On paper, this step would have implied clearer formations of minority institutions at the level of the local communities. However, the actual trend has been the opposite: local Roma minority governments have been shrinking in size and importance. This outcome partially results from the ambiguities surrounding the declaration of Roma identity which, in turn, has become a precondition for participating in the minority elections. Given the weak entitlements of the local minority governments while their multifaceted dependence from the municipalities, the majority of Roma look at the new institution as lip-service to minority rights if not a new form of subordination to the ruling of the local majority. Widespread disinterest in the system manifests itself in decreasing turn-outs at the minority elections which then further reduce the potency of the institution for representing local Roma needs.

In the Romanian case, the politicization of the “Roma issue” took departure from a professional development: working with families in the field, Roma mediators, first in education and then in health care, started to frame the problems of the Roma minority by pointing to the intersecting impact of poverty and the lack of rights protection, and claimed complex policies to be backed by broad cooperation within the government. The pressures coming prior to the country’s EU accession from the European Union as well as from some powerful domestic NGOs lifted this new approach to the political level. In response, a system of representation combining elections and top-down pathways of appointment has been established. In this new broadened framework, the “Roma issue” has increasingly become a matter of expertise and professional performance while the electoral aspect and the striving for representation have faded away. The latter development has been influenced by party politics as well: by tacitly acknowledging their weakness, more and more local Roma politicians have left behind the Roma parties with the hope of expanding their influence within the color-blind majority political context. Ironically, while their decisions were wise and rational considering it is important to infuse the Roma cause into macro-level politics, their departure clearly weakened the political weight of the minority institutions.

Much in accordance with the top-down organization of public affairs and political participation, Roma representation is built on a hierarchy of assignments in Serbia. Appointed Roma coordinators (who might be non-Roma) are seen as responsible agents with a dual role. On the one hand, they are expected to articulate the needs, claims and complaints of the Roma community that they represent; on the other hand, it is their clear mission to “discipline” the community and to teach its members to observe the majority norms of “decency” and “right behavior”. Although variations across the settlements are substantial, there seems to be a gradual shift toward the latter roles: in the hope of increasing influence in local government and the higher-level municipalities, Roma coordinators increasingly emphasize their “educative” role while expectations toward them as representatives of the minority community are declining.

Given the important differences in conceptualizing and organizing minority politics and Roma representation as part of its framework, one would expect significant departures in the acceptance of Roma by the majority as political partners and as a community with claims on recognition and rights to a fair share of redistribution. One would assume that a system based on minority elections might carry stronger legitimacy and thus render more compelling claims than a bureaucratic arrangement of hierarchically defined tasks where representation is replaced by professionalism and adaptation to the prevailing structure of governance. However, an important finding of our research is that neither legitimacy nor the actual political weight of representation is in close association with the arrangements that Roma political participation follows. We found examples of strong influence on local politics and policy-making in all three countries as well as similar positions of denied acknowledgement and practical neglect in all three cases. Such a loose association between the legal-political structures and the contents and potency of local Roma representation called for further analysis. It inspired us to look beyond the curtain of formal arrangements and attempt to reveal the drivers and obstacles that bring about these differences through shaping the local inter-ethnic relations.

By assessing the differences in the political formations that host representation and participation, it was the issue of trust that seemed to matter most. A decline in trust has been an important trend over the past decade in all three countries. Although public opinion surveys and the political debates signaled a similar trend at the macro-social level, Roma have had a few specific reasons for expressing distrust in the political institutions and those set up for their representation.

First, the failure of efforts to alleviate poverty, reduce unemployment, and eliminate segregation and exclusion suggested a negative conclusion: irrespective of whether Roma have certain forms of representation or not, politicians engaging in minority politics have proven either weak or outright mischievous with regards to the daily needs of their people. Roma tend to be left behind, and if they as a collective help certain representatives into power, these figures quickly and easily “forget” them in their efforts to attract the approval of the majority. With these recurrent experiences of “forgetfulness”, rank-and-file members of the Roma community see it as a waste of time and energy to engage in politics. Instead, they tend to emphasize the practical advantages of individual struggles and accommodation and state that they do not see any need for mediating agents in these endeavors.

Second, the involvement of local Roma representatives in distributing welfare funds and access to public work has led to substantial losses of trust in the eyes of those for whom they are supposed to speak. Amidst shrinking resources and tightening regulations towards making “deservingness” the most important (if not the sole) principle in providing assistance, Roma participating in the formation of the highly selective local lists of acceptance and refusal—and willfully contributing to the investigation on “deservingness”—seem to be the unconditional supporters of the prevailing inequalities and injustices. Again, it is easy to draw the conclusion that Roma delegates (or those acting on behalf of Roma) easily distance themselves from the community and even agree to act against it. Such a conclusion finds its strong expression in distrust and a questioning of the usefulness of the frameworks for participation.

The third source of distrust is the experience of large Roma groups concerning general elections. In the run up to elections the Roma cause often finds sudden interest among opportunistic candidates looking to procure votes — often via unfounded or false promises to the Roma community. But after elections that interest usually disappears just as fast as it initially materialized and the promises go unfulfilled—this way demonstrating serious instrumentalization and a good deal of cynicism among those who feel at ease to play the Roma card. It was a recurrent thread of the narratives on local Roma participation that fooling the people for the sake of increasing the number of votes by promising meaningful changes in the local conditions and then letting such promises to become “forgotten” as if never existed was one of the most painful and degrading collective experiences the minority community had to face. The conclusion Roma have taken away from this is that politics is a dirty business and politicians do not deserve trust. If one wants to avoid humiliation and instrumentalization then it is best to withdraw into individuality and engage in setting and fulfilling personal goals.

While the reasons for distrust have been accumulating in recent years, our fieldwork also revealed cases demonstrating trust, cohesion and relatively powerful political participation that concluded in Roma recognition and well-shaped inter-ethnic political cooperation. These promising exceptions to the rule revealed some specific stories. In most cases, mutual acceptance between the Roma and non-Roma parts of the community dated back to socialist times. The new structures of representation smoothly followed the old patterns of erstwhile cooperation in mining, agriculture and construction: one-time foremen, who once efficiently organized fellow Roma for the changing tasks of production and successfully represented them in disputes with the management, now became acknowledged leaders enjoying widespread trust on the part of the minority community. In certain cases, the old memories of collegiality were passed from father to son, which seemed a natural development to entrust the latter with the roles and duties that their fathers fulfilled with highly appreciated efficacy. This way leadership—informal leadership

in particular—turned into an intergenerational inheritance that, as long as the remnants of old cooperation kept such positions alive, all actors found a most satisfactory solution for selection.

In other cases—again, independently from the actual institutional arrangements—it was the outstanding qualities of charismatic local Roma leaders that resulted in achievements. Accounts from the locals revealed long histories of inter-ethnic negotiations preceding the peculiar accomplishments. Most frequently, the issues at stake were related to education. Attempts at desegregation were underscored by the innovative after-school services provided by a local NGO that not only Roma but also non-Roma families found attractive to enroll their children. The experiences of improved inter-ethnic relations and cooperation in the civil domain encouraged some local schools to gradually launch programs aimed at integration. As a next step, local leaders succeeded in drawing larger-scale conclusions and argue with the attained results to increase the involvement of local Roma in additional domains. Besides (re)gaining trust, the charismatic leaders contributed to invigorating Roma participation by pointing out its potentials for a breakthrough. As the examples show, such achievements were easier to attain in villages than in towns, though the more structured urban settings provided better opportunities for turning exceptional examples into lasting foundations of inter-ethnic cooperation.

Variation in regulating the forms of Roma representation became relativized from an important sociological standpoint, namely when looking at their impact on Roma mobility. As a rule, Roma willing to fill the positions on offer have been recruited from the relatively better educated and better-off parts of the Roma community who find their own cases replicable and have sufficient energy to turn those into models of combating poverty and exclusion. They are usually dedicated to representing Roma identity as a source of pride and acknowledgement and apply for the position of collective representation with a sense of mission, i.e. to turn around the degenerating public views of the minority. All of these characteristics are met with diligence and commitment which are the two most important drivers behind upward mobility not only in political but also in social terms. These inspirations are often welcomed by the local majority, although their reading of them is often different: there is a widespread belief that upward striving Roma are ready to pay the price for full-fledged acceptance by following the path of assimilation. In other words, it is assumed that Roma gradually have to give up their ethnic identity and become indistinguishable members of the majority community. As experience shows, Roma are willing to take such an offer, although they try to maintain a balance between their belonging to the two communities. However, given the sharp departures, sooner or later they face a challenging choice. More often than not, they opt for a continuation on the path of assimilation. However, this difficult choice brings about serious sacrifices. On the one hand, the Roma community sees a sort of a betrayal in their choice and responds with distrust and allegations of unethical behavior of the originally entrusted leader. On the other hand, assimilation is rarely acknowledged as a performance on the side of the majority: while appreciated as a personality achievement, it is never thought to deserve unconditional acceptance as a strong enough foundation of genuine inclusion.

In sum, we can state that all three arrangements that have evolved over the course of democratization during the past decades have offered certain new potentials for Roma representation, even if they remain under the unchallenged primacy of majority rule. At the same time, variations in the strength and achievements across localities revealed the importance of previous existing models and connections and their interplay which shapes today's majority-minority relations. A serious drawback of the weak impact of the prevailing regulations and institutional formations is the exceptionally high influence of personal will and aspiration that is accompanied by fragile and easily distractible trust and a straightforward questioning of the utility of political involve-

ment and participation. As a result, weak institutions tend to become weaker and lose legitimacy, thus the new patterns and routines of political participation can be easily undermined either by competing inner forces or by the majority. As a consequence, Roma political participation appears useless and futile for ordinary Roma and this notion is reinforced by a declining recognition of Roma claims on the part of the majority. It is easy to see that such a process of emptying the notions of politics deprives Roma from the shields of self-protection and meaningful representation.

As a further consequence, civil actors and churches tend to take over certain political roles on behalf of the disappointed and distrustful Roma communities. While such developments seem to be strongest in Romania, similar cases have also been recorded in Hungary and Serbia. This is a double-edged phenomenon. On the one hand, through the active role that influential religious congregations and NGOs might play in the community, the cause of Roma is kept on the public agenda; on the other hand, this form of representation increasingly becomes impregnated with the particular aims and visions of these substitute actors who thereby unwillingly legitimize the uselessness of political participation and representation of Roma. Furthermore, in most of these cases, such substitutes reinforce dependency and the prevalent patron-client relations which create serious obstacles to any new formations based on partnership and collective deliberations.

In light of the above-described weak representation and widespread disinterest in political participation, it is not surprising that the patterns of local redistribution demonstrated little change toward Roma inclusion. True, our research took place during the tense conditions brought about by the global economic crisis that have directly and indirectly affected the markets of the post-socialist region for the past 5-6 years. In response to the crisis, austerity measures have been broadly applied in the public domain which have seriously curtailed the resources of local governments and the institutions under their management. Amidst these circumstances, competition for the remaining resources has been heated; local actors that previously cooperated found themselves rivals while their inclination to exclude the weakest has become more pronounced as a way of establishing viable new compromises. Predictably, the weak or non-existent institutions of Roma representation were among the first to be sacrificed: the ceaseless postponement of taking Roma needs on board and allocating resources for their fulfillment seemed increasingly rational without assuming a racist tone. Roma leaders caught up in the dilemma of dual loyalty could hardly oppose such decisions because, given the weak contents of minority representation, they were rarely authorized to stand up for certain goals and to advocate for a fair share on the part of their community. As a consequence, the pressing housing, infrastructure and educational needs of Roma were taken off the local agenda, while needs (at least for public work) were relegated to the market, together with a reduction in public responsibility for their fulfillment.

However, despite the unfavorable conditions, while undertaking our fieldwork we came across a number of ongoing development projects. In Hungary and Romania EU structural funds were helping to improve local infrastructure and, to a lesser degree, local education. Typically, infrastructure projects targeted primarily urban areas and concentrated on the inner parts of the settlements. Nevertheless, Roma needs were not completely neglected. Although on a smaller scale than for the majority population, investments for paving roads or extending water pipes and sewerage reached the Roma-inhabited outer circles of the towns as well as some of the neighboring villages. As a rule, the extension of such projects to the Roma segments rarely stemmed from political negotiations between the representatives of the majority and the minority; rather, these investments usually resulted from the dedicated work of certain NGOs. However, such new

initiatives led by NGOs were often launched for Roma but without involving Roma: the details were worked out above the heads of local Roma who were left out of both the planning and implementation phases of the projects. The latter can be understood as a dual loss: on the one hand, it demonstrated Roma incapability for interest-representation, on the other hand, Roma were deprived from the arising employment opportunities that they might have gained through participation. This way the development projects reinforced the practical wisdom of considering Roma participation unnecessary and unimportant. The story of many of such projects suggested the ironic conclusion that greater efficiency and better social justice can result from Roma projects that are organized and implemented without Roma.

The picture is somewhat different with regards to development projects targeting education. First, new projects can build on a long history of experimentation with different attempts at promoting inclusion. The most important steps in this direction involved widespread institutional efforts to bring about desegregation through the closure of special education units. As it turned out, this way schools went through profound changes: suddenly teachers and staff had to face the needs of individual students who beforehand were faceless parts of a stigmatized segment functioning apart from the world of mainstream schooling. The success of eliminating—or at least substantially reducing in influence and power—the institutions of stigma and degradation piqued the attention of influential professional circles toward integration as a viable alternative to the prevailing segregationist arrangements. It was this change in the discourse and thinking on the part of dedicated teachers, community workers, welfare assistants and social workers that opened the door for a few new experiments going farther than claiming integration only in the formal sense and targeting inclusion as a new way of inter-ethnic partnership based on mutual recognition and acceptance. Amidst this awakening interest, the innovative attempts and projects launched by dedicated domestic and international NGOs suddenly enjoyed expanding publicity backed by important political currents mainly at the European level. Due to invigorated international interest and the voice of domestic professional circles, inclusion in education has increasingly become viewed as a basic tenet of citizens' rights and, accordingly, has been taken on as an issue of high importance by human rights activists. Although such progress stumbled amidst the revival of anti-Gypsy sentiments and slow-down has been justified by a lack of resources in our three countries, the lessons of the former period of experimentation have not been forgotten. Examples of good practice in education are often recognized as providing patterns for improving Roma inclusion. The phases of this learning process have been consistent in our three countries—a characteristic that calls attention to the internationalization of the Roma debate as the single most important factor assuring its preservation on the agenda of domestic politics and policy-making.

As if it was on another continent, our research faced ignorance and neglect when issues of inclusion through labor were brought up with employers and managers or the representatives of trade unions and chambers. Although local leaders unanimously listed the poor access of Roma to employment as the core factor ensuring persistent poverty and exclusion, we rarely encountered any local initiatives aimed at enhancing employment opportunities and making efforts towards Roma inclusion. At best, it was public work programs of limited duration that were on offer. However, these programs work against inclusion by their very conception. Their primary aim is to assist clients in their income generating activities and, as such, they are seen in terms of welfare distribution but rigidly away from “true” production. Thus it is “by default” that they do not lead to sustainable employment. Furthermore, public work programs are implemented under the tight control of economic and political institutions ruled by the majority, whereby they rein-

force old patron-client relations instead of negotiated conditions with the participation of equal partners. As experience of the spreading public work programs shows, these induce exclusion instead of inclusion; moreover, they keep their clients caught in a narrow domain where the rules of performance and reward do not apply. In this way, the political message is clearly segregationist: instead of rights and entitlements, Roma have to accept the subordination by contributing to its strengthened institutionalization via placing them into work in designated areas away from the mainstream employees.

The picture is no less controversial concerning infrastructure development. Although the segments where Roma live usually lack basic water supply, access to gas, sewerage and often even to electricity and illumination, it is rarely the case that development funding would serve to even out the availability of such provisions and services by concentrating on such remote territories. Roma representatives often find it futile to advocate for such things: experience has taught them to come up with more modest ideas to help Roma settle utility bills and to avoid offering modern but more costly provisions that, given their fragile financial conditions, Roma households simply cannot afford. Driven by practical considerations, this way Roma representatives tacitly accept the prevailing sharp inequalities and justify local policies that reinforce different norms according to the prevailing status hierarchies.

And even the meager infrastructure conditions are not secure. The local histories revealed a recurrent pattern: due to urban development goals, Roma living in centrally positioned parts of the settlement were often forcefully relocated to the outskirts. This usually happened without compensation or assistance, while the legalization of their new territory, their individual ownership rights and some loosely defined “upgrading” were offered to them. However, the promises were quickly forgotten and Roma found themselves deprived of basic provisions and services and without documentation to make any claims. While access to infrastructure funds typically followed the hierarchy among the settlements within a cluster, ironically inequalities in distributing the available resources turned out to be greater within the towns than between them and the surrounding villages. While Roma representatives lacked sufficient power and influence to change these patterns, some of them had good enough connections in the municipality and a supportive community that entrusted them to launch a smaller-scale, one-time local project. However, even such successful endeavors had their problematic side: the beneficiaries of the projects usually remained restricted to the upper circles of the local Roma community and the distribution of funds followed the lines of personal acquaintances.

Apart from support based on small-favor exchanges, we did not encounter examples of Roma involvement in negotiating development policies in the broad context of local society. As if a tacit rule was in place, while specific minority interests are acknowledged constituents of policy-making in education and, to a certain extent in employment as well, minority interests are seen as non-existent in the large-scale redistribution affecting the entirety of the population. In accordance with such a general understanding, Roma representatives and our local Roma informants refrained from claiming influence and control over development policies and measures in housing and local infrastructure, and considered it a great achievement if some subordinate and temporary project affecting the conditions of Roma households could get a green light and funding as a “concession” of the municipality in control.

The above overview indicates that even if certain forms of Roma representation are acknowledged as constituents of municipal governance with restricted influence on matters that are

seen as “Roma-specific” issues, Roma participation in the formation of local development plans and interventions is very limited. Decisions on redistribution and the initiation of new endeavors are dominated by negotiations and compromises among the most powerful and vocal groups within local society and Roma representatives have a gravely restricted scope of maneuvering within the set framework. These findings reinforce from a new angle that the actual arrangements of Roma representation are largely insignificant. Irrespective of whether they are elected or appointed for their positions, the personal capacities of local Roma representatives for initiating change and claiming local measures for inclusion remain weak against the more powerful constituents representing the highly differentiated community through the well-established and refined structures of local governance. In other words, the shaping of local politics and policies largely reflects the power structure of the local community, and the unheard voice of Roma signals the powerlessness of the minority community within this framework. At the same time, Roma representation and participation are not in vain: our fieldwork identified clear signs of a change in thinking about Roma and in viewing them as parts of the local society. True, thematization of the “Roma cause” is often impregnated with prejudices and false perceptions of “otherness”. Still, Roma needs are slowly taken on board and they have become acknowledged constituents in policy-making. As we saw above, the clearest signs of a gradual shift can be seen in education and educational policies in which ideas on integration and inclusion have become part of the standard vocabulary and vivid public debate. In areas directly related to the economy and employment progress has been slower and more controversial. This suggests that the potency of representation cannot be made independent of the community: given their low levels of education and lack of modern skills to be utilized in a profoundly changed market, any claims for expanding Roma employment remain unrealistic and thus suffer refusal on the part of employers, their representative bodies and local leaders in the community. In this regard, attempts to expand Roma influence and to make Roma employment a political issue have concluded by contributing to segmentation and exclusion. As a response to such claims, segregated schemes of public work have been spreading with the dubious implication of providing temporary employment in exchange for assisting the daily livelihood of Roma. This way Roma employment and welfare have become ghettoized in certain far-off corners of the labor market and sharply segmented social policies—across all three countries.

All of these outcomes can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, they signal slow and gradual change: by replacing silence and the abnegation of the specific needs of Roma as non-existent, the emerging forms of representation have brought about the thematization of minority needs and policies for their advancement. On the other hand, the slow pace of recognition and the built-in controversies of representation underscore the severe and lasting inequalities that seriously limit Roma participation and, moreover, its influence on shaping the conditions of inter-ethnic cohabitation. These inequalities in power often hinder the efforts of the Roma communities and their representatives to get Roma needs on the public agenda and to foster changes in the principles and practices of redistribution. As a troubling symptom of such failures, even if heard and acknowledged, Roma claims often become ghettoized and handled in a separatist way, away from managing the needs and claims of the mainstream. This way Roma representation easily becomes misused as a justification for segregation and second-order administration. Roma themselves are unable to convert their participation into a source of influence and power. However, the evolving public discourse that is shaped by their intense participation can help in politicizing the risks and hindrances that they face and can invigorate a genuine dialogue as an important precondition of any meaningful change.

8. Conclusions

By analyzing the rich data about the circumstances and institutional and social relations on how Roma living in marginalized conditions engage in daily struggles for subsistence, study, or work in different “small regions” and constituent localities in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia, our research offers some important methodological conclusions on the qualities and usability of the collected data and offers a range of implications for local-level policies to reduce marginalization and exclusion on ethnic grounds.

Let us first consider some lessons of the applied means of data collection, the reliability of the data and their applicability for monitoring local trends by regularly repeated small-scale surveys providing comparable results.

Given its nature, our research had limited relevance with regard to collecting data on individual ethnic identification. It is frequently argued that without such data which would allow for measuring inequalities, segregation and exclusion in an exact way, all attempts at desegregation and inclusion remain poorly backed by the necessary evidence. Our experience suggests otherwise. Without questioning the importance of widespread individual Roma identification from the perspectives of attaining recognition and claiming new shares of power in minority affairs and local politics, our endeavor demonstrates the potency of institutional-level estimates for learning about the state of inter-ethnic exchange and also for identifying the tensions and conflicts that are part of the daily inter-ethnic encounters. Such data collection provides new knowledge: the often departing views on the ethnic conditions carry important lessons from a policy perspective. It has to be emphasized that the two ways of approaching ethnic relations serve different purposes and one cannot substitute the other. While the frame of reference in individual data collection is the ethnic community, the institutional approach informs us about the inter-ethnic dimensions of power and redistribution. Given our interest in the latter aspects of inter-ethnic cohabitation and dynamics, our Phase 2 research targeted the institutional conditions and relations as seen from the dual perspectives of the providers and the recipients. If assumed as indications of actions with the involved values and interests, such estimates and the inter-ethnic concordance or disparity in their magnitudes and contents can be taken as important foundations for following up the ongoing currents of inter-ethnic relations and encounters as well as the points of departure for claiming change.

The data collection in our Phase 2 research was based on certain additional presumptions. We were aware that the ban on collecting data for individual ethnic identification limits the possibilities of arriving at exact statistical information about numbers and proportions regarding Roma presence in institutions, their share in redistribution, or their concentration in certain parts of the settlements. However, as experience shows, such knowledge exists nevertheless: after stating that they do not have data on the ethnic background of their students, school principals were ready to make estimates and even to explain their “informal methodology” to calculate their figure; likewise, mayors do not “know” the exact number of Roma in the population, but they are ready to describe in detail the neighborhoods where Roma live; again, after expressing their color-blind orientation, local entrepreneurs are ready to respond to questions about the number and actual position of Roma workers employed at their firms. The duality of lacking factual information and personally making powerful estimates about the presence of Roma in a given institution led us to specify the terrain where such knowledge is valid: and this is *the actual relating of our non-Roma informants to who Roma are*. In other words, the collected numbers and

ratios are tracing how they perceive Roma in their institutional context—and we can be sure that they act accordingly. In this sense, even if the collected data might be uncertain and inaccurate regarding the exact magnitudes and proportions of Roma, they accurately map the awareness of the institutional actors who organize and manage various aspects of the local ethnic relations.

At the same time, a novel aspect of our methodology was asking our local Roma informants about the very same numbers and proportions. In this way we aimed to reveal their views about the ruling approach in a given domain and the foundations of potential disagreement. As it turned out, in certain cases, one could find an impressive degree of correspondence that signals ongoing dialogues and evolving agreements. In these cases, estimates given by the two sides can be read and interpreted as firm data reinforced by a high degree of consensus. Usually, consensus is born in a policy context: even if Roma and non-Roma disagree on the implications, their agreement on the facts as the common points of departure indicates an ongoing exchange of ideas on the basis of mutual engagement. However, the sharply departing estimates demonstrate the lack of shared knowledge—if not the deficiency of contacts and involvement. Quite often this was the case with regard to employment: our local Roma informants seldom had sufficient knowledge about the firms where their neighbors worked, or even a general picture about the level of employment in the Roma community. This way our data on employment remained without the potency of dual confirmation, and could be read as an indication of the over-power of the employers' orientations that usually tended to deny any ethnic distinction in the economic domain. Nevertheless, the gap in knowledge called attention to the lack of public discourse about how Roma employment can be expanded in certain inclusive ways. In this sense, it was not the data themselves but the built-in imbalances that our two-way approach could reveal. The list could be continued by looking at housing or infrastructure or, for that matter, by the often sharply departing majority vs. minority views and estimates on the role of ethnicity in welfare distribution.

The applied two lenses allowed for simultaneously interpreting the collected data in two ways. On the one hand, it is majority estimates that guide those in different responsible positions in tackling the ethnic issue. On the other hand, by a critical interpretation of these estimates we gain a sensitive measure to assess the validity of the collected data. In brief, our data collection renders powerful information on two aspects of ethnic relations, though it certainly does not substitute for any statistical surveying. Given our qualitative approach, the strength of our method is to provide means to evaluate the performance of local institutions and the policies targeting improvement and development. The shortcomings follow from the source of strength: the collected data cannot be considered as painting a value- and policy-free reality.

The potentials and the limitations of monitoring the collected data by regular repetition of the surveys follow from the peculiarities of their character and content. In fact, monitoring aims to reveal certain shifts in how those in charge of one or another institution perceive the ethnic aspects of the institutional working and how they reflect by adjusting or changing their actions and behavior. In this sense, a closing of the gap between the majority and minority estimates signals some conversion and might point toward an enhancing consensus on a discursive level. At the same time, monitoring itself has important political implications. Since it is undertaken by those who are simultaneously the actors and the subjects of the inquiries, monitoring can develop into a domain of Roma political participation. While this is certainly beneficial in attaining recognition and aspiring for a degree of partnership, it could result in politically biased data and thus open the door to allegations of value-loaded content. This is not to say that the monitoring exercise would be in vain; instead of directly taking any singular source, replicated data collections

and the trends that these paint provide important backing by using them for informing local policy-making about certain recurrently underscored associations and for measuring the outcomes of the applied tools and interventions. In this context, it seems important to repeatedly point to the imbalances across the various policies and actions. Our research demonstrated that regular monitoring can be implemented in a straightforward way in education where risks and injustices to the detriment of Roma are part of large-scale discourses and policy experimentations. Measuring local indicators of segregation and exclusion and monitoring their trends have strong relevance on the macro-social level and the enhancing of an arsenal of previously collected data for comparative purposes. Such data have a good deal of self-explanatory strength that local Roma actors can powerfully use in policy-debates.

Employment matters are different, however. In the absence of similar large-scale data and discourse and amidst the often applied technocratic reasoning, local Roma communities and actors have been left without the backing of macro-level facts, figures and interpretations. In this domain, monitoring is faced with vexing challenges. More often than not, Roma disadvantages and exclusion appear in the fabric of low education and the lack of skills that seem to provide strong counter-indications to local policies framing these in the context of minority rights and the deficiencies of the prevailing inter-ethnic relations. It follows that in the domain of employment practically no reliable estimates on ethnic departures can be drawn at the institutional level and the rare attempts at framing economic participation of Roma in the local context remain at best restricted to experimental and short-lived projects. The discrepancy between the two domains implies an important conclusion. A certain level of general agreement about the relevance of data collection and monitoring framed in ethnic terms is a precondition for any further steps. The different actors might disagree on the ways in which ethnicity should be approached and might dispute the methodological tools, but without agreement on the *relevance of ethnic framing*, all attempts at measuring are destined to fail and be in vain. In this sense, the acceptance of monitoring and the topical construction of such endeavors are deeply embedded in the politics of ethnic recognition. However important the questions and reservations concerning the accuracy of data and their interpretations are, such considerations come after agreeing on the foundations of such endeavors, that is, after agreeing on the relevance of enquiring about the ethnic dimension in a given domain.

Additionally, our Phase 2 research identified a number of important lessons for longer-term comparative research and policy-making.

First, by reading the data across the three countries it would be difficult to define which country's Roma are the poorest, where they are least protected, and where they are most excluded from the economic well-being and the protection of rights that other people—the majority—enjoy. Marginalization and exclusion result in similar conditions and produce and maintain similar patterns of inequalities, defenselessness and deprivation. At the same time, the three countries represent a well-known hierarchy in economic performance and a range of important development indicators: Hungary is still ahead of Romania, and Serbia is markedly poorer and less developed than either. Furthermore, Hungary and Romania have a history of membership in the European Union which should have inspired marked changes by now (despite their three year difference that counts less and less, as time passes), while Serbia still seems to have a long way to go. The remarkable similarities in the destitute conditions of the majority of Roma and the prevalence of unlawful discrimination against them indicate that neo-liberal beliefs in an “automatic” disappearance of poverty and, especially, in a self-generating diffusing of westernized values and patterns regarding how different groups of society relate to each other are interest-driven fantasies

and dangerous illusions. Neither economic growth, nor true signs of the diffusion of important new values and patterns of living among the middle and upper classes have filtered down in the social hierarchy in a spontaneous way. Poverty and ethnicized exclusion are products of the prevailing structures of power that keep the vast majority of Roma in the lowest echelons of local societies—if not utterly excluded even from those. These positions do not change with the betterment of the general conditions, unless the struggles of the Roma community succeed in politicizing exclusion and segregation. Such rare cases of success show that Roma struggles for attaining due recognition of minority rights and the incorporation of these rights into the local political structures are prime preconditions of change that the local majorities are reluctant to render without experiencing some strength behind the claim.

Second, despite the striking similarities across the three countries as well as within their “small regions”, our research revealed rather significant departures in the extent and depth of Roma marginalization and exclusion. Importantly, though, majority openness and commitment to inclusion were also witnessed in certain places and institutions. The sources of these variations are manifold. A longer history of Roma–non-Roma cohabitation and work seems to be of paramount importance: the once elaborated patterns still may be in place and these infuse the forms and contents of today’s inter-ethnic encounters in meaningful ways. However, in other settlements or within other institutions it can be a single charismatic local leader who successfully manages to turn the wheel and instigate measures toward desegregation with the broad approval of the entire community. Still, in other cases it is geography that matters: despite living in residential segregation in a village or a small town, if local Roma are fortunate to enjoy the proximity of a larger city where they may find employment and acceptable schooling for their children, then they might have a chance to break out from poverty and to turn their relative geographical advantage into a source of social mobility. The positive examples and the contrasting ones of hopelessly ghettoized conditions with hopelessly perpetuated destitution from early childhood onwards underscore the importance of a closer inquiry into the variations of inter-ethnic relations: this will be the primary task of the next phase (Phase 3) of our research.

Third, although “segregation” is perhaps the word that the political discourse of Roma advocacy most frequently associates with Roma, Phase 2 research shed light on important “white spots” in our knowledge about how the phenomenon emerges and how it remains in place even if actions are taken to erase—or at least mitigate—it. Furthermore, the study revealed that phenomena which we designate with the same words vary according to the deep-seated causes as well as in their strength and consequences. This is not to say that any of its manifestations would be acceptable. Rather, the different degrees in risking ghettoization and/or cutting off Roma from even some mundane encounters with members of the non-Roma majority point toward the need for a thorough overview of the local contexts in order to identify and address the root causes of the vicious circle, that is, to explore how in the given settings one form of segregation generates (or accentuates) others. For such a new approach, *intersectionality* is the concept that our study identified as the key driver.

As we discussed above at length, there are two domains where segregation most likely propels harsh separation and exclusion in other domains: residential segregation in urban conditions and in remote “Roma-only” villages on the one hand, and the exclusion of Roma from formal employment or segmented local/regional labor markets, on the other. At the same time, most efforts (and funding) focus on reducing segregation across and within schools. While such endeavors are important, experience and research unequivocally show that the results have a tendency to quickly fade away without embedding the applied measures on educational inclusion into

a larger-scale and complex program that targets Roma residential marginalization and assists Roma in getting access to formal employment. As our findings indicate, mobility in its physical sense should be a key to such programs: without (re)gaining their right and ability to commute, Roma continue to be caught in their ghettoized conditions, and the hopes for halting the daily reproduction of segregation and multi-sided exclusion remain narrowly limited.

Finally, let us conclude this report with a few words about Roma representation and political participation in their localities. We were aware when designing this study that Roma presence and voice in striving for recognition and battling discrimination and exclusion are of paramount importance. In brief, without Roma participating on equal grounds, the most dedicated civil initiatives and advocacy, as well as the best designed projects for local development, will remain isolated actions reaching, at best, the tip of the iceberg. At the same time, a lasting and meaningful mobilization of Roma has certain preconditions. These include a proper understanding of the causes and components of their situation, deliberation within the community about resources (first of all, in networks and cultural capital), the formal or informal delegation of competent leaders and representatives and, above all, concerted efforts to free the concept of “being Roma” from its stigmatizing content and allow the ethnic community to elaborate its own notion of collective self-identification. However, experience shows that Roma, who have been discriminated against during decades—if not centuries—of history, have deeply internalized the ideologies and stigma of the majority whereby they are relegated to having low self-esteem, frequent self-hatred and very limited convictions about a better future. Furthermore, extreme poverty does not render Roma the time or capacities needed to engage in local politics which might then lead to societal changes. By taking into account these severe contradictions we chose a middle approach: we asked our local Roma informants about the general spirit in their community and about instances of political action in the broadest sense of the term. However, their responses revealed at best their own relations with the different parties and the frequent experiences of deceit and betrayal by key figures within the majority. At the same time, they did not consider the informal gatherings where a group discussed the poor state of the local school, the capacities of the community to contribute to the paving of the roads in their residential segment, or collective action to get their due share of public work to be within the realm of “politics”. In their view, such informal ways of forming opinions and attempting some way to represent their needs does not count as participating in public matters but as one-time, ad hoc reactions in order to avoid worse outcomes.

The differences in conceptualizing “politics” indicate that in order to approach the topic, a new methodology combining participant observation, interviewing and a systematic thematization of public issues that comprise local-level politics is needed to deepen our understanding about the informality and volatility—as well as the sometimes unexpected successes—of Roma political participation. New knowledge about the embedding of local politics into the daily life of the minority community and the inter-ethnic relations in the locality will help inform us about those aspects and issues in which new initiatives are launched with at least the tacit support of the local majority. It will also indicate where local initiatives tend to die out without larger-scale collaboration. Such an approach, which considers politics in its everyday embeddedness and considers the actual forms of expression to be of secondary importance, might provide empowering knowledge to the local Roma community for deliberating and designing actions for awareness-raising. It also might assist to expand the local involvement of members of the community with agency in the struggle to enhance recognition on collective grounds. Finally, such a broadened perspective on Roma political participation brings into our sight the importance of a language that evolves from the dialogues between the minority and the majority and

that potentially serves to substitute the compromised language of stigma and subordination with a new vocabulary and new notions of mutuality and recognition. At this point, actions and their cognitive receptions mold into one: a long history of informal political participation comes to an end by turning into formalized politics in the framework of new local institutions that are based on equity and equality and that serve Roma inclusion with active support from both the minority and the majority.

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The **Center for Economic and Regional Studies** is a research unit of the **Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest**, focusing on scientific analysis of the Hungarian economy, of the international economic and political environment, and of economics in general. The Center undertakes theoretical and empirical studies in the fields of national and world economics, in regional processes and in other interdisciplinary areas of the social sciences. The aim of the Center is to develop the scientific tools and databases necessary for social, economic and regional research endeavors, as well as to publish and promote new research results. One of the three main pillars of the Center, the Regional Research Institute focuses on the international environment of regional development and the European Union's cohesion and structural policies, regional development in Eastern, Central and South-eastern Europe and Hungary's regional (social and economic) processes and related territorially targeted policies.

<http://www.krtk.mta.hu/english/>

The **Institute for Sociological Research** at the **Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia**, is the leading empirical research institution in sociology in Serbia. The Institute has conducted quantitative and qualitative research in sociology and converging fields for more than 40 years. During that time more than 100 authors published their texts in more than 70 publications of the Institute. Also, the Institute is co-publisher of the leading sociological journal in Serbia – 'Sociology'. The Institute for Sociological Research also provides empirical evidence and an institutional framework for learning and practice of undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students of sociology at the University of Belgrade. The Institute was a partner organization in several international research undertakings and has a long-standing history of cooperation with other social science institutions in Serbia.

http://www.f.bg.ac.rs/en2/research/institute_of_sociology_and_social_research

Desiré Foundation in **Romania** was established in 1996 in Cluj-Napoca and provides a collective action platform for public intellectuals, academics, artists, and activists in a town characterized by a multicultural environment but also shaped by deep social inequalities. Desiré provides a flexible format for critical and transformative actions in research, community building, and advocacy. It coordinates investigations on inter-ethnic relations, access to labor, and Roma marginalization, publishes titles on these subjects, and it was linked to the development of two academic programs at Babeş-Bolyai University (cultural anthropology and gender studies). In 2011 the Foundation co-initiated the Working Group of Civil Society Organizations, an informal umbrella association that acts for placing Roma segregation and forced evictions on the public agenda of the city. Desiré elaborated and promoted research-based recommendations to national and local governments regarding policies for social inclusion and housing, an integrated approach on territorial development, prevention of forced evictions as means of eliminating social marginalization, and participatory budgeting as an instrument of inclusive urban development.

www.desire-ro.eu

The **Central European University (CEU)** is an internationally recognized, non-state institution of post-graduate education in social sciences and humanities accredited in the United States and Hungary. Founded in 1991, CEU is based on the premise that human fallibility can be counterbalanced by the critical discussion of ideas and that this critical spirit can be sustained best in societies where citizens have the freedom to scrutinize competing theories and openly evaluate and challenge government policies. The university's rare mix of nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures creates an ideal environment for examining such "open society" subjects as emerging democracies, transitional economies, media freedom, nationalism, human rights, gender equality and the rule of law. The **Center for Policy Studies (CPS)** is an academic unit within CEU dedicated to analyzing public policy. In recent years the Center has worked extensively on different equality policy issues, analyzing actors, processes and debates around them. Projects have covered gender equality policies, Roma policies, migration policies, trafficking and domestic violence and the politics of intersectionality. Recent research has also focused on the integration of migrants and indigenous minorities alike. With 8 core staff members and additional 10 internal and external research affiliates, CPS pursues research projects that are interdisciplinary and comparative in nature.

<http://cps.ceu.hu>

The *Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Communities* research endeavor explored the key factors perpetuating Roma marginalization at the municipal and community level in three countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Romania and Serbia. It sought to analyze the economic, political, demographic, and social forces at local level which shape practices and consequences of social exclusion and potential pathways to inclusion. A multi-layered approach was designed to implement this research idea: the locality (municipality) of ethnically mixed communities composed the first level; the Roma communities, neighborhoods or segments of selected localities were examined as the second level; and inter-ethnic relations within the selected localities were identified as the third level of the research approach. This volume presents the country studies and a comparative analysis about local communities that mobilize a variety of means and actions to either maintain clear-cut ethnic distinctions or to move toward a certain degree of inclusion.

The Center for Policy Studies at the Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) led the research initiative with contributions from experts of the UNDP Bratislava Regional Center. The research was carried out by the Center for Economic and Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Hungary), the Institute for Sociological Research at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade (Serbia), and Desiré Foundation in Cluj-Napoca (Romania). Two thematic programs of the Open Society Foundations—the Roma Initiatives Office and the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program—have provided support and funding.