

Infrastructure in Marginalised Roma Settlements: Towards a Typology of Unequal Outcomes of EU Funded Projects¹

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Infrastructure in Marginalised Roma Settlements: Towards a Typology of Unequal Outcomes of EU Funded Projects. The social exclusion of the Roma population in Slovakia is manifested in many areas of life– from housing, education, access to healthcare and services, to employment and spatial distance. More than half of the Roma live in segregated settlements, which are characterized by a lack of fundamental infrastructure. Although a substantial number of infrastructure projects funded from EU funds were implemented to address these conditions the outcomes had been inconclusive. In this paper, the authors suggest that significant factors affecting the outcomes are general structural conditions, power asymmetries, and rooted social practices at the local level. Employing P. Bourdieu's theoretical concepts and building on extensive fieldwork in municipalities of eastern and southern Slovakia, the authors identify three types of outcomes. These might serve as 'ideal types' for the better understanding of social processes leading to decision-making, and how various social agents may shape implementation of infrastructure projects at the local level. Finally, the authors discuss possibilities of how to mitigate discrepancies between the declared goals of the projects and their real outcomes.
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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine the outcomes of EU funded infrastructure projects (e.g. roads, power grids, sewerage, water pipelines, waste disposal) and their intended or unintended impacts on the integration of the Roma population in Slovakia. More specifically, we explore how these projects, officially designated to support the Roma groups, meet or failed to meet stated goals. Applying analytical concepts suggested by P. Bourdieu, we explore the social space ('field') at the local level that is relevant to our topic. The empirical data comes from a short-term ethnographic fieldwork conducted in villages and towns with Roma settlements where EC funded infrastructure projects were implemented. Rather than presenting an overarching evaluation of projects targeted at the Roma we offer a qualitative account in order to offer a sociological insight. Thus, our approach differs from a quantitative assessment of output indicators since its intention is an examination of a more

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subtle nature. We tried to identify determining factors influencing the outcomes, which are not apparently visible but are rather concealed beneath the surface of social interactions and institutions.

Characterized by high unemployment, low education and poor housing, the situation of the Roma population in Slovakia has for years been the subject of national and international concerns. The EC policy documents and the programming for the structural and cohesion funds⁴ identified poor living conditions of the Roma minority as one of the key problems to be addressed. (EC 2010a, 2013a, 2014a) To this end, preferential targeting at the groups encapsulated in the somewhat technocratic term the ‘marginalized Roma communities’ (MRC) has become a so called horizontal priority for the Operational Programmes and a substantial amount of investments were officially aimed at alleviating the hardships of these groups. Addressing the living conditions of the Roma population also became the substance of the National strategy for Roma integration (2012). One of the strategical goals has been providing access to physical infrastructure (housing, access to water, sewage, waste management) and improving housing. Yet, the outcomes of interventions of this nature and their impact on the Roma, as indicated by several researchers, were inconclusive. (Hurrell et al. 2012; Škobla – Filčák 2014; Filčák – Steger 2014; Baláž et al. 2015a, 2015b, 2015c)

For the purpose of our exploration we set up two inter-related research questions: (i) what was the typology according to the outcomes of the infrastructure projects?; (ii) what were the factors that were influencing the diverse outcomes of the projects? First, we briefly discuss the theoretical framework and methodology. We explain how we conceptualize social ‘field’ under our investigation and briefly characterize the positioning of the Roma at the local level. In the empirical part of the paper, we describe three types of projects’ outcomes. This typology was modelled on specific municipalities but was not meant to capture the whole complexity and details – rather it represents the ‘ideal types’. In conclusion, we indicate that outcomes at the local level depend on the degree of prevalence of the interests of dominant groups, which are firmly embedded in broader social-economic inequalities. We also discuss some specific measures and procedures, as to how the adverse impacts might be mitigated or avoided.

⁴ The EU programming period 2007 – 2013 and projects supported within its span are the principal source of data for this article.

Theoretical background

EU cohesion policies

The European structural and cohesion policies aimed to decrease disparities within the European Union. To achieve this aim, EU policies have been designed on assumptions that gaps exist between EU regions and structural policies are able to reduce those gaps, and that regional growth and convergence leads to cohesion (EC 2013a)⁵. Special attention has been paid to rural areas, regions affected by industrial transition, and areas that suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps. (EC 2013b) Supporting infrastructure and investments into infrastructure was understood as a basic condition for development leading to economic growth and employment. (EC 2010a)

Social inclusion of the Roma

The marginalisation of the Roma population has been a focus of concentrated attention from the EU institutions for the last two decades. The idea of a European Roma Platform emerged at the European Roma Summit in Brussels, in September 2008. Following this event, Council of the European Union called on the member states to organise “an exchange of good practice and experience between the EU countries in the sphere of Roma inclusion, to provide analytical support and stimulate co-operation between all parties concerned with Roma issues, including organisations representing the Roma, in the context of an integrated European Platform” (2008: 4). The platform was supposed to be a kind of branch forum, which brings together national governments, the EC, international organizations and Roma civil society representatives. According to the stated goals it had been supposed to promote cooperation and exchange of experience on successful Roma inclusion and integration. The first meeting of the Platform took place in Prague (during the Czech EU Presidency) and 10 Common Basic Principles to effectively address the inclusion and integration of Roma were identified. (EC 2009) A milestone in the European debate on Roma integration was the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. (EC 2010b, 2011) According to this document, the national strategies should create a basis by which the issue of basic human rights connects to issues of human development and the basis on which specific interventions at national and local levels should be implemented. Among other issues the document emphasised: “Member States should promote non-discriminatory access to housing, including social housing. Action on housing needs to be part of an integrated approach including, in particular, education, health, social affairs, employment and security, and

⁵ For academic analyses see Puigcerver-Peñalver 2007, or Crescenzi – Giua 2014.

desegregation measures...” and “they should actively intervene with targeted programmes involving regional and local authorities.” (Ibid.: 7) European institutions, according to this document, understand social and economic integration of Roma as “a two-way process which requires a change in attitudes of the majority population as well as members of the Roma community.” (Ibid: 2) Member States have to ensure that Roma are not discriminated against but “treated like any other EU citizens with equal access to all fundamental rights ... action is needed to break the vicious cycle of poverty moving from one generation to the next.” (Ibid.: 2) Addressing the inequalities regarding the housing and infrastructure the Roma had to face can be seen as ultimately pertaining to both frameworks: fair access to infrastructure on the one hand can lead to social cohesion and on the other, it meets the goals of equal access to fundamental rights.

Evaluations of the EU interventions

Evaluation of the impacts of EU cohesion policies has increasingly been in the spotlight of competent authorities and researchers at European level. (Becker et al. 2010, Bachtler et al. 2013, EC 2014b) The Slovak government has adopted an evaluation plan, to be performed during the 2014 – 2020 programming period, with a focus on implementation and on the assessment of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of European structural funds⁶. Evaluation of the impacts is regularly done at the level of individual operational programmes and there are approaches to evaluate cross-cutting issues of the interventions on intelligent, inclusive and sustainable growth. (Baláž et al. 2015a, 2015b, 2015c) The adverse situation of the Roma ethnic minority is identified in a majority of the evaluations as one of the key factors influencing development indicators. There have also been several studies to specifically evaluate interventions targeted at Roma funded from EU structural funds. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assessed the impact of the European Social Fund’s employment and training projects (Hurrell et al. 2012) and an independent evaluation of the field social work programme, funded by the European Social Fund was also conducted. (Hrutič 2010, Škobla et al. 2016) However, although infrastructure in Roma settlements has been mapped, a complex evaluation focused on the cohesion policy and infrastructure interventions is missing⁷.

⁶ Plan for the Evaluation of the European Structural and Investment Funds for the 2014 – 2020 Programming Period. Adopted by Central Coordinating Authority, Government Office of the Slovak Republic.

⁷ There is a descriptive mapping of the Roma settlements infrastructure, the Atlas of Roma Communities (Mušínska et al. 2014), which may serve as a background document for further research in this aspect.

Social field and forms of capital

In order to understand or explain ‘what is going on’ it is neither sufficient to look at what is ‘happening’ before our eyes nor to listen to what is ‘said’ by others. Instead, we believe that in order to understand any event, relations or interactions among people, it is necessary to examine the social ‘field’. According to P. Bourdieu (2005)⁸, ‘field’ represents a structured social space with its own rules, hierarchies, and actors. ‘Field’ is a social space in its own that operates relatively autonomously from the wider social structure in which people relate and operate through a complex of direct and indirect social relations. Even though ‘field’ is not fixed, activities inside follow ordered patterns and have some predictability. A ‘field’ is hierarchically structured: not everyone inside is equal, there are some who are dominant and have decision-making power and some who are subordinate and have no influence on decisions. Groups of people and individuals may occupy more than one ‘field’ at a time and there are relationships between ‘fields’, which make them inter-dependent. Another of Bourdieu’s useful concepts (1985) ‘social capital’ refers to the wider system of exchanges within complex networks of circuits and is a form of resource, which for people and within the networks is central for their positioning. People are held in place within the social environment by the influences which structure it, and their freedom to change position is strictly limited by the availability of power within the sub-systems in which they are located.

The focus of our interest was a social space we tentatively called the ‘local field of infrastructure projects’. At the empirical level we defined it both by the actors and interaction related to infrastructure projects. In our opinion, this area was an apt subject of study, since the projects’ initiation, development and implementation rely on a plethora of decisions that reflect the hidden nature of power relations. The fact that these decisions are spatially bounded and documented and thus can be the subject of analysis, is also convenient. On the other hand, we are aware that the ‘local field’ we defined for the purpose of our research does not comprise all important actors and factors, and that there are also external factors that exceed the local level and have a crucial influence on the outcomes. The setting of our research was a municipality (a village/town) where projects took place. During the fieldwork we paid attention to the relation of domination and subordination.

Methodology

We adopted a two stage approach to the identified municipalities for the sample: First, we screened two Operational Programmes (Regional Operational

⁸ Besides Bourdieu also see Silver 1994, Daly – Silver 2008, Wacquant 2009 or Hilgers – Mangez 2014.

programme and Operational Programme Environment in the 2007 – 2013 programming period, from which a list of projects clearly reported as ‘benefiting’ MRC either in the title or in a short project description were selected. Projects focused on reconstruction of schools were omitted and only ‘hard measures’ projects related to water, sewage, and reconstruction of public space were chosen from the list⁹. After this filtering, we came to a list of forty projects, from which in the final step, we selected fifteen municipalities for a short-term ethnographic fieldwork using the Rapid Appraisal (RA) method. Social housing, which is inseparably linked to infrastructure projects¹⁰, was also taken into consideration in order to better capture the complexity of the situation related to the Roma living conditions. Basic available project documentation and minutes from the council meetings were screened prior the visit¹¹. We usually started with semi-structured interviews with representatives from the municipality, which gave them ample opportunity to state their own opinions, while at the same time the list of our questions ensured that we discussed the key points regarding the decisions about initiation and implementation of the project. In addition, we held impromptu interviews with the local Roma and non-Roma we met on the streets or in the settlement. The intention was to include both non-Roma and Roma respondents and identify dominant and subordinate actors in the social space. In several cases we identified a person with knowledge of the local situation (i.e. a local ‘key informant’) to help us establish a context for specific situations¹².

Towards the understanding of the ‘local field of infrastructure projects’

Although the situation in municipalities we visited varied, there were some general tendencies and similarities. In order to somehow reduce the complexity of factors in a variety of local environments, we suggest three ‘ideal’ types of the interventions’ outcomes: (i) ‘Roma’ label as a false signifier: projects officially earmarked for the Roma groups, but missing real impact on these groups; (ii) Keeping the distance: projects that somewhat improve the living conditions of targeted Roma, but also foster segregation; and (iii) Bounded progress: relatively successful projects that reached Roma, but which built their relative success upon favourable structural conditions.

⁹ Infrastructure projects are clearly linked to local decision making in the village/municipality and infrastructure stays in place and have a long-term tangible impacts.

¹⁰ EU funds in previous programming period did not support construction of social housing and these projects were supported by the state budget. Although social housing projects were not funded by EU funds, we decided to include them in our scope of investigation since they closely relate to water and sewage infrastructure.

¹¹ We studied project documentation and the council meeting minutes available on the internet.

¹² Names of the towns/villages in the text were changed to protect informants/respondents and in order to focus on outcomes rather than distract the reader with geographical particulars.

Type A: 'Roma' label as a false signifier: projects officially earmarked for the Roma groups, but missing a real impact on these groups

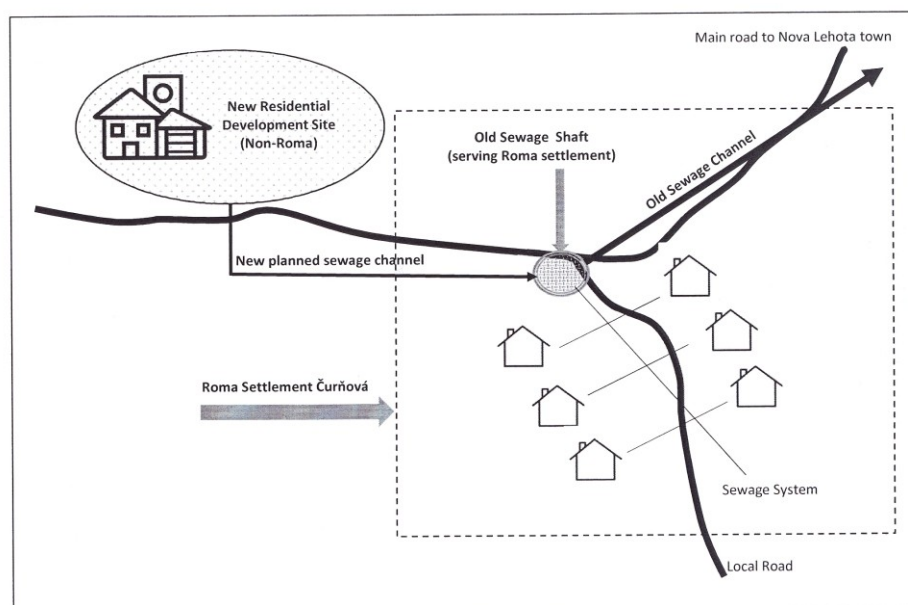
Sikenica is an emerging residential area on the outskirts of *Nová Lehota*, a mid-sized town with 40,000 inhabitants. Out of that number, approximately 2,300 Roma are scattered in different parts of *Nová Lehota* and 1,200 live directly in the *Čurňová* Roma settlement, which inhabits part of the *Sikenica* area, and is located in a small valley consisting of only one main street with social housing. (See figure 1) According to the representatives of the *Nová Lehota* town, their approach towards Roma integration has been "relatively successful" since the municipality had in the past mobilized funding for social housing and the related water/sewage connections. Social housing for the Roma were built here in three phases between the years 1996 – 2012. In addition to *Čurňová*, the municipality has two other segregated Roma settlements (*Skalisté* and *Lesík*) in other areas of the town and both are in comparatively worse condition, sprinkled with scattered shacks and without any access to clean water. In *Čurňová*, there is a (segregated) kindergarten for Roma kids, and given the increasing number of Roma children, the municipality, according to our respondents, plan to expand its size. Although field social workers are assisting inhabitants of the settlement,¹³ the key challenges of social integration remain only weakly addressed: the lack of decent work in the town and the region, as well as institutional discrimination. The men of the settlement were usually involved in some income-generating activities in the informal economy ('*fušky*'), or seasonal work, or other unstable forms of labour. The infrastructure projects had some potential to generate temporary jobs for local Roma, but demand for Roma labour was low. The common practice has been that a private construction firm brings in its own workmen and state-of-the-art machinery.

The project consisted of the preparation of the water pipelines and sewage to connect individual customers who plan to build a family house on the plain above the Roma settlement. (Figure 1) Land plots were to be sold to customers with fixed water, sewage and electricity connections at the edge of the estates. Prospective plot buyers then only needed to connect their newly built houses to the utilities networks. The project was initiated by a private developer, who in order to reduce his investment costs, approached the municipality in order to motivate them to apply for EU funding. The project was supposed to build 2,400 m of drinking water pipelines and 4,600 m of sewer pipelines, in addition to 133 new water and sewer connections. The municipal representatives and the town council adopted the idea and a regional town equipped with adequate administrative and technical capacities (*Nová Lehota* had some previous

¹³ For more on the social work field programme in Slovakia see Škobla et al. 2016.

experience with EU funding schemes and implemented several projects) drafted project proposal including technical documentation, measurements, calculations of technical parameters, secured the building permit (*stavebné povolenie*) and co-financed the project at 5% of total costs.

Figure 1: Scheme of the *Sikenica* residential area and the location of the Roma settlement area called *Čurňová*, with water and sewage system already built. The new housing development area (circle) will connect its pipelines down to the valley, an entry point to the town water and sewage system.



Source: The authors.

According to the project documentation, Roma from the settlement in the adjacent *Čurňová* were supposed to benefit from the investment (the appendix of the contract between the grant provider and the municipality explicitly stated that there are 3,600 Roma beneficiaries but does not specify in which way). In reality the *Čurňová* settlement was already connected to existing pipelines and the town's sewage system. Houses in the new residential site, for all practical purposes, only connected pipelines with the town's existing infrastructure.

The project was developed and adopted in a top-down approach by a private developer in partnership with the municipality – an arrangement that critically reduced the private investment costs. Our fieldwork signals that in fact, the Roma were neither direct nor indirect beneficiaries of the project, and as a

“target group” were perhaps added to the documentation in order to ensure that the project had better chances to be considered for funding. Furthermore, *de facto* the project was aimed at well-off customers who had the intention to settle-down in an emerging residential area. In a broader perspective, it is questionable whether EU funds should support interventions that are apparently subsidizing private entrepreneurs and are benefiting rather rich families and individuals.

The decision-making relevant to the project indicates substantial power asymmetries and disempowerment of the Roma. The town of *Nová Lehota* has a non-Roma mayor and 19 non-Roma council members. In fact, since the 1990s, there has never been a Roma council member. There is no commission for the ‘Roma agenda’ at the town council and the Roma are not represented in any of the town’s decision-making structure. Ordinary Roma and their access to information on intentions and results about the investment activities and projects being prepared or undergoing implementation is very limited. The project in *Nová Lehota* is representative of the type where the ‘Roma’ label is used as a ‘false’ signifier, i.e. the project cannot either directly or indirectly benefit Roma, and it is not possible to document any direct or indirect impact on the Roma community. This is a clear contradiction in regard to the project documentation and an example of abuse of the disempowered minority in order to increase the chances of large private investment being subsidized from public sources. It also illustrates the broader problem encountered in the 2007 – 2013 programming period, of correctly monitoring implementation and evaluating projects’ results to determine whether they met their stated goals or not.

Type B: Keeping the distance: projects that somewhat improve the living conditions of targeted Roma, but also foster segregation

The *Jarošovo* village is situated nearby former mining and metal processing industrial areas and has been heavily impacted by the economic transformation and deindustrialisation of the region, which has caused massive unemployment. Out of the 3,100 inhabitants of the village, around 50% are Roma. Practically all of the Roma are formally unemployed, while joblessness among non-Roma is also widespread, due to structural economic conditions in the region. The Roma live in either of two segregated settlements (*Fajka* and *Grúň*) and one mixed neighbourhood, *Trnávka*. Rather paradoxically, the two segregated settlements with social housing are connected to the water and sewage systems (*Grúň* in 1996 and *Fajka* in 2007), while the ethnically mixed *Trnávka* neighbourhood is only partially connected to the pipelines and depends on water from wells and septic tanks for its sewage needs. Despite that fact, *Trnávka* is the only area with a Roma presence that is an integral part of the

village ‘proper’ and is not clearly segregated. However, infrastructure standards here do not reach the level of the central part of the village *Jarošovo* (e.g., in the *Trnávka* neighbourhood there are no paved sidewalks). Both Roma and non-Roma use wells (either in their backyards or a public well on the street) and water from a spring beyond the hill at the edge of the village. A local river is regularly used for washing clothes and carpets.

The project – construction of sewage and water pipelines for the *Trnávka* neighbourhood – was a part of the overall strategy of the village to provide all inhabitants with water and sewage services. The expected positive outcome from the project was the improvement of sanitation conditions and of the living conditions of inhabitants. From the perspective of the interviewed municipality representatives, the initial impetus to prepare the project came from the municipal staff in discussion with the municipal council and the mayor. The approved and signed project documentation estimated 200 potential beneficiaries (out of them 111 were Roma) and the interviewed municipality representatives estimated that out of the approximately 60 houses connected, 12 are Roma households – however, the final number of households that were connected to the system, and thus benefited from this project, depended on the home owners’ ‘willingness’ and financial ability to pay the water company’s bills. The project was initiated by the municipality and prepared by an external private company that was eventually also tendered to implement the project. The company in collaboration with the municipality also prepared the required technical documentation.

The municipality has long term plans for sewage and water: besides the already mentioned 60 houses in the *Trnávka* neighbourhood, there are only an additional 10 houses in the central part of the village, which are not connected to the pipelines. Those houses are occupied by non-Roma, and have been bypassed so far by previous stages of construction work. Providing them with pipelines is planned to be the subject of another project, implemented in the unspecified future. In interviews, municipal representatives also expressed the opinion that water management companies, although state-owned, were operated with the aim of generating profit and were not very keen to embark on construction for the marginalized Roma given the expected loss rather than profit from such an operation. However, according to current law, water companies (whether private or public) are obliged to serve all clients. Moreover, in *Jarošovo*, there were no substantial problems in the collection of payments for water and sewage. This was due to the fact that the municipality subtract the corresponding amounts from the welfare provisions for non-paying households, which has been an informal but widespread practice.

The municipality had experience with project development and had already secured various funding from both government and EU funds for several

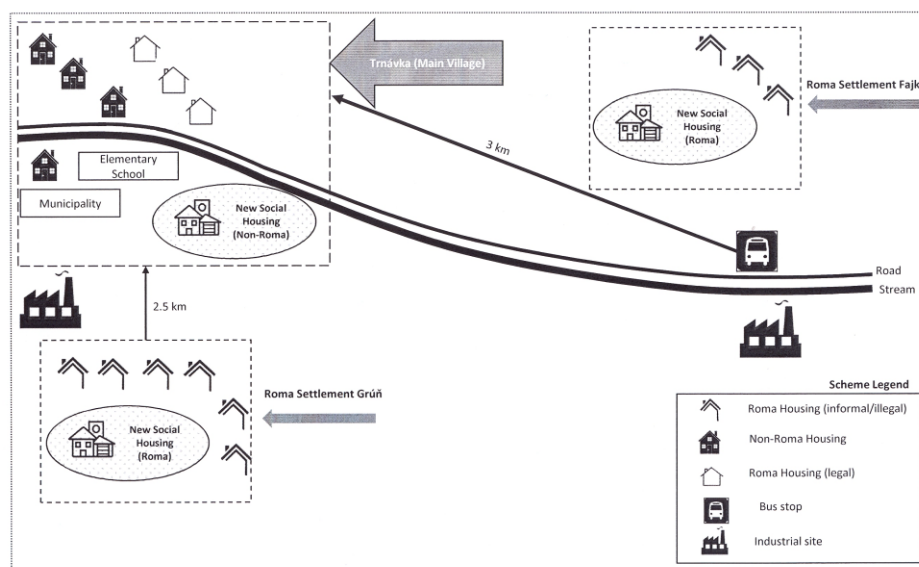
Roma-related projects. Social housing was built at *the Grúň* locality with governmental support for 16 flats (1st phase: 1994 – 1998), 28 flats (2nd phase: 1997 – 2004), and a few years later for an additional 20 flats in the *Fajka* locality (3rd phase: 2004 – 2006). In these social housing developments, water and sewage systems were part of the construction work. An estimated 1,050 Roma benefitted from these housing projects. Nowadays, however, these houses are in rather bad condition. The village constructed social housing using subsidies from the programme supporting the construction of municipal rental flats allocated by the government. Beneficiaries (tenants) of the housing project in *Fajka* were moved in from various areas of the village and selected by the municipality based on criteria that was given by the regulation of the grant programme – among these criteria was also ‘behaviour’ of the family. We had also noticed that there is a certain social distance between the Roma of *Fajka* and those of the older *Grúň* settlement: the Roma interviewed in *Fajka* described the *Grúň* settlement as being ‘in poor condition’, ‘messy’, ‘dirty’ and ‘full of rats’. For an outsider, however, the difference in conditions between *Fajka* and *Grúň* is not so visible.

Yet all social housing (in *Grúň* and *Fajka*) were built in segregated areas and instead of contributing to the integration of Roma, projects maintained or fostered spatial segregation. Social housing in *Fajka*, although connected to water and sewage infrastructure, was built 3 km outside of the village, close to the former industrial zone and without paved roads or pedestrian walkways. What is even more striking, the houses were built on wetlands and have since then been endangered by floods (in 2010 the settlement was flooded). The *Grúň* settlement, located over a former mine with landfills, is the area where the commercial value of the land is practically zero. Around official social housing in both *Grúň* and *Fajka*, sprawled a number of unofficially built shacks, small wooden cottages and portable cabins, which completely lack sewage or water. People thus use the nearby river, with complex, adverse health and hygienic consequences (one of the mothers showed us a child with a rash). According to our respondents and council meetings’ minutes, there was no serious attempt to solve the unbearable situation of the residents in the unofficial part of the settlement, because those dwellings are not formally ‘legal’.

According to the governmental document, *The Long Term Conception of Housing for Marginalized Groups of Population* (MVRR SR 2005), the location of new houses must not increase spatial and social segregation, but on the contrary must be an instrument for integration. Often, however, violations of this principle are overlooked and tolerated and new social housing is built on the edge of villages or divided by artificial or natural barriers from the areas occupied by non-Roma. Such tolerance of segregation regarding the location of

new social housing is clearly manifested in *Jarošovo*. The decisions, made by dominant actors, about where to locate new social housing did not respect the desegregation principle, even though there was a feasible alternative to construct it centrally, on municipality-owned plots. Instead, its aim is to keep the Roma families as far as possible from the central part of the village.

Figure 2: New social housing in *Fajka*, connected to infrastructure, but built 3 Km outside of the village, surrounded by a river and a motorway.



Source: The authors.

The *Jarošovo* case points out the importance of EU funding in developing infrastructure for marginalized Roma communities: access to water and sewage is the basic precondition for human development, improving sanitation conditions, and health and support integration. Although the project, in its design focused upon the Roma and the non-Roma alike, we can see that the outcomes were indecisive and (intentionally or unintentionally) the project actually maintained inequalities and spatial segregation.

On the positive side, the local council for Roma issues works with Roma participation and in the village there is a community centre. The village has been the target of several projects initiated and implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). One of them was a project implemented by a *Košice* based NGO, which focused on Roma economic development

through micro-financing¹⁴. Several Roma from *Jarošovo* are members of local sport and cultural clubs and associations.

As the fieldwork indicates, the ‘local field of infrastructure projects’ is occupied by the dominant social agents whose interest it is to keep the Roma spatially separated and development projects are a tool to keep power and the *status quo*. The mayor in *Jarošovo* is non-Roma, so are all nine members of the municipal council. Lack of political representation, even in the situation where Roma constitute a *de facto* majority in the village, may result in a bypassing vital interests of marginalized Roma. As one of the municipal council members stated: “building these [Roma] houses closer to the village was impossible, people [i.e. non-Roma] would not accept that”.

Type C: Bounded progress: relatively successful projects that reached Roma, but which built their relative success upon favourable structural conditions

The Village of *Krásna* is located in the Prešov region of Northern Slovakia. It is a small village and out of its thousand inhabitants, around 800 people (approx. 80%) are of Roma ethnicity. The Roma population is living spatially mixed with non-Roma inhabitants, i.e. the locality does not have clearly spatially segregated dwellings, however, it can be noted that Roma are predominately located on one side of the road that centrally cuts the village. The population is relatively young: there are 448 individuals (50%) under 18 years of age. After WWII and the expulsion of the majority of German inhabitants, the village was settled by people from neighbouring localities, many of whom were Roma. During the period of socialism the newcomers mainly found jobs in the agricultural sector and some commuted to factories in the surrounding towns.

The relation between *Krásna* and its neighbouring village *Lubová*, located at the foot of the Tatra Mountains, is important because the Roma from *Krásna* have provided cheap labour for construction works in *Lubová*, where real-estate market generates some opportunities and temporary jobs. It can be seen that the Roma in *Krásna* have income and can invest money to repair and maintain their homes and purchase necessary building materials. While the adjacent *Lubová* offers some job opportunities for *Krásna*, another neighbouring village *Slovenská potôň* provides an elementary school and medical services. However, a neoliberal restructuring economy and automation in the segment of manual labour-intensive jobs resulted in massive layoffs

¹⁴ The project helped local Roma through micro-finance loans to buy basic equipment for newly constructed social housing. A common problem observed with social housing projects is that while they do provide basic conditions for living, they also require certain investments (e.g. kitchen, appliances, toilet bowl). For the tenants this initial investment represents a substantial burden. Loans, which are provided with low interest rates may help overcome the barrier and enable people to fully utilize their flats.

which caused deterioration of the living standards for most of the *Krásna* inhabitants.

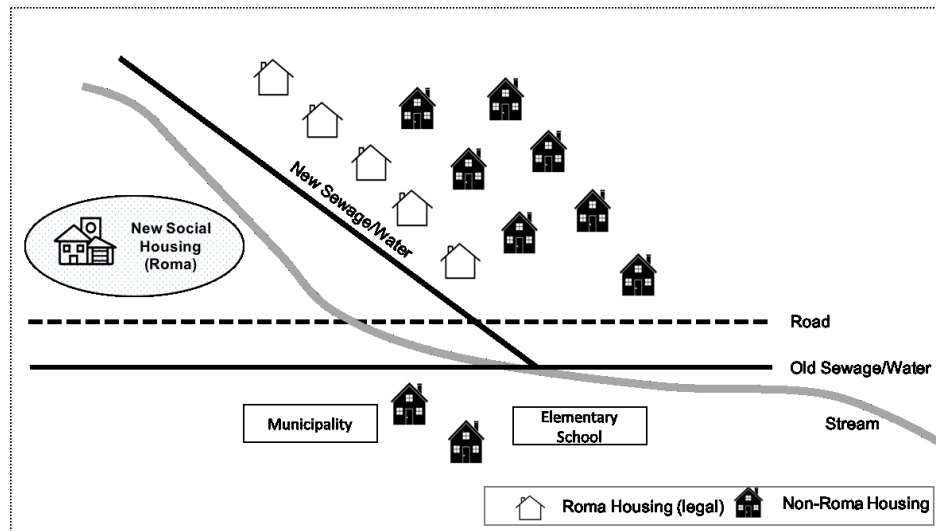
The village was involved in a social housing program and since 2004 and began building social housing using governmental grants. Social housing was recognized by municipality representatives as the priority for addressing the deteriorating situation of local, unemployed Roma and as an important measure towards 'integration'. The initial plan of the *Krásna* municipality was to build 36 apartments – of these costs, one half was supposed to go for sewage and water systems. Even though the project was, at the request of the grant authority, scaled-down to 12 units, apartments were officially inaugurated in 2012. Through the municipal territorial plan, the social housing project was integrated with the infrastructure project. However, a notable weakness is the sustainability of social housing (in *Krásna* and also elsewhere), there is a lack of mechanisms or opportunities for tenants to obtain decent, regular incomes. The Roma tenants thus remain dependent on low-paid, unstable and temporary jobs in neighbouring localities, closer to tourist resorts.

The village has had a long-term deficiency with securing basic infrastructure facilities for its inhabitants. A 'flagship' large-scale infrastructure project initiated in 2004, consisted of four components: construction of public lighting, construction of pedestrian paths, reconstruction of local roads, and construction of water and sewage pipelines. According to the documentation, the project was supposed to benefit an estimated 1,054 beneficiaries, out of whom 800 are Roma. Although the municipality was officially the applicant, the project was technically prepared, drafted and even implemented (after winning a tender) by an external private firm. The key roles of the municipality were: incorporating the project into the municipal territorial plan, securing building permits (*stavebné povolenie*), and securing funding at 5 % of the total costs. Despite the high demand for jobs locally, neither non-Roma nor Roma were employed to do the construction work.

There is no documented public meeting with the inhabitants to discuss the project. On the other hand, *Krásna* is a very small village and the interaction between the municipality's representatives and inhabitants is often relatively direct and immediate. The priorities of the project were formulated by the mayor and municipal council based on first-hand knowledge of the problems in a small locality, where it was for them, as the respondents indicated, "it is clear what is lacking and what is needed". The cooperation with the managing authority (as well as the staff at the respective Ministry) has changed over time after the national elections. This may suggest that political changes at the

central government level regularly bring about changes in staffing at the managing authority¹⁵.

Figure 3: Roma houses dispersed in the central part of *Krásna*. Given structural ‘idiosyncrasy’ (small size of the village) infrastructure investment into the roads, lighting, sewage and water might serve all inhabitants.



Source: The authors.

The village is small and the municipal council has only seven deputies. From the perspective of decision-making power asymmetries, despite the fact that the Roma population is the overwhelming majority, the mayor was a non-Roma. On the other hand, a municipal council shows a more ethnically balanced composition: out of the seven members, three were Roma. Furthermore, there was the absence of a Roma NGO, cultural or sport club, and no presence of a community centre.

However, this type of outcome we characterize as ‘progress within limits’. The outcome is relatively progressive because of the existence of relatively favourable structural conditions, mainly due to several factors. First, the village is geographically close to a more prosperous region at the foot of the High Tatra Mountains, which provide outlets for cheap Roma labour, mainly in construction work, and thus provide some income to the local population.

¹⁵ This may also indicate ‘vested interests’ behind the management and decision-making process in regard to the EU funding and importance of the main agents’ social networks.

Additionally, given the size of the village and the size of the Roma population, there is no prominent spatial segregation of Roma and therefore infrastructure built in the central area of the village reach both Roma and non-Roma. Last but not least, the fact that the marginalized Roma population constitutes the local majority makes it not workable for the municipality to neglect their interests.

Conclusions

The EU funded projects focused on the Roma generally had two overriding goals: to improve living conditions and to strengthen integration. Yet, as we have seen, in practice the infrastructure projects often failed to address these stated goals and at times lead to the opposite: the increase of inequality and segregation. We suggest that this is caused by the power asymmetries, locally rooted discriminative social practices, prejudice and Roma 'doxa'. The positionality of the local Roma as a subordinated group vis-à-vis dominant classes, which are pursuing their individual and collective interests, inevitably engenders an antagonistic relationship – under such circumstances the interests of dominant groups tend to prevail. Marginalized Roma who have neither adequate representation in municipal councils nor possess sufficient social, economic and symbolic capital are not able to counter these practices and interests.

We identify asymmetrical power relations, resulting from a vast amount of accumulated 'capital' on the part of dominant group, which play at the expense of weaker groups. The pursuit of the collective interests of those who accumulated considerable 'capitals' determines how resources are used and how much they (do not) contribute to goals of social inclusion of the disadvantaged. Lack of approval or support on behalf of local Roma could be inferred from interviews with municipal representatives and also from available council meetings records. Under such a set-up EU funds are used and shaped in line with interests of the dominant and dominating rather than in support of the marginalized. Domination, in this sense, lies fundamentally in the imposition of certain project designs and in the adoption of a wide array of small decisions that maintain the existing power asymmetries and intentionally or unintentionally further contribute to the marginalisation of the minority. In a way, domination is also manifested in the long-term inertia of the municipality regarding the lack of clean water for the Roma, or is embodied in decisions to locate new social housing far behind the village, even though there are no legal barriers (e. g. related to land ownership) to localise it centrally.

On the other hand, we are aware that the 'local field of infrastructure projects' we defined for the purpose of our research does not comprise all important actors and factors. There are also external factors that crucially influence the outcomes. Among these are, for example, the structure of land

ownership, water pricing and/or regulations of water distribution companies, available jobs, social protection policies and national laws and regulations and overall administrative set-up of EU projects. Yet, closer identification of these external factors would require a move beyond the scope of this study. Even if our analysis is in this respect sketchy and incomplete, we believe that the change in local configuration of power towards a more symmetrical one, increase of Roma self-governance and municipal participation could have substantial positive effects on integration.

In regard to EU projects in Slovakia in the 2007 – 2013 programming period, despite formal attention (priority) given to targeting the Roma, it was generally hard to quantify how much money was in fact spent ‘on the Roma’ and what the impact was. Often the criteria of relevance used in the administrative monitoring of the projects were ambiguous and unclear. (Hurrell et al. 2012) Not merely our fieldwork signaled that there is a practice of designating project documentation with the label ‘relevant for the Roma,’ which was rather widespread in order to increase chances to be awarded the grant (in the application process evaluation of ‘relevant for the Roma’ projects received extra points). This practice was allowed by the benevolence of funds’ management authorities who concentrated on checking administration and bookkeeping instead of checking projects substantively and qualitatively on the site in the process of implementation. To this end, good results could rather easily be obtained by overcoming the fragmented nature of the management of the Operational programmes, where the managing authority practically focuses solely on the technical aspects of the project (tendering procedures, cash flow, accounting, subcontracts, checking invoices, technical requirements, work specifications). It would also be necessary for the managing authority to monitor projects qualitatively and substantively and evaluate how these projects fulfil the goals stated in the project documentation. If a project declares an impact on the Roma and estimates an expected number of Roma beneficiaries, it should then be monitored whether these outcomes were actually achieved or not. Thus, from this narrower perspective, another challenge is better and more impartial supervision of the projects both at the central and local levels. This means carry out regular, substantive, quality monitoring and evaluation.

Even though the Roma marginality is a complex phenomenon and is embedded firmly in structural conditions, we believe that it is worthwhile to make an attempt to prevent or mitigate some adverse outcomes we identified in ‘field of the infrastructure projects’. We suggest that investment into the infrastructure needs to be unconditionally linked with integration considerations and ‘hard measures’ projects should be accompanied by ‘soft measures’ activities, which focus on the development of social capital and the

empowerment of the marginalized. More specifically, it is important to withdraw support for projects that lead (intentionally or unintentionally) to segregation and search for synergies with other supporting activities for settlements' inhabitants: e.g. field social work, teachers' assistants, and others.

The overreaching challenge for EU infrastructure projects to meet their goals lies in the wider socio-economic inequalities and also in lack of proper political representation to secure minority interests in the processes of decision-making. Even though power asymmetries, social hierarchies and positionality of agents in the social 'field' we investigated are rather firmly anchored, there is always a potential for change over the time. Understanding to what extent an excessive power of dominating and lack of strength of the poor influences the outcomes, is the very inevitable step in a search for equality and social justice.

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