

## MAPPING THE ROMA ETHNIC MINORITY

### A Pathway to a Roma Ghetto or a Development Opportunity?

**Abstract.** *The Roma ethnic minority is a community of overall deprivation. It lacks adequate space, municipal infrastructure, capital (social, cultural, financial, etc.), and tolerance by non-Roma. It also lacks the driving forces that could move the Roma from the margins of society and allow them to participate in the management of public good. One of the reasons is the fact that spatial planning providers only made it half way. They mapped the Roma settlements but failed to plan the social anchors which provide a settlement with satisfactory vitality. These anchors make up social, human and cultural capital, which are all important components of human resources development and thus a significant source of the development efficiency of the Roma community in Slovenia. The two pillars of development – human resources and development efficiency – should both aim at reducing the exclusion of the members of the Roma ethnic minority from the Slovene society. The paper presents the main findings of the research project entitled *The Increase in Social and Cultural Capital in Areas with a Roma Population*.<sup>1</sup>*

**Keywords:** *Roma, Roma settlements, social capital, cultural capital, non-discrimination*

## Introduction

The territory that ethnic minorities inhabit together with the majority population is an amalgam of several cultures, languages, and patterns for the creation, possession, and management of the cultural heritage – both material and intangible. We need to recognise that ethnic minorities co-create the cultural heritage and thus co-own the cultural heritage in the territory where they live. Territory is of particular importance for the members of ethnic communities since living in a certain territory for a long, permanent,

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the project: [www.khetanes.si](http://www.khetanes.si)

and continuous period of time allows them to be considered a constituent part of the territory. This is vital to preserve the special (ethnic) identity of the members of ethnic minorities.

The subject of interest in this paper is the members of the *Roma ethnic minority*. Being an ethnic minority painfully striving to achieve the legal status conferred on the autochthonous Italian and Hungarian national communities, the mapping of the Roma community and the spatial planning and regulation of areas inhabited by the Roma are thus all the more relevant. Unfortunately, however, it seems that over the past years spatial planners have too often considered the *Roma issue* merely as a social and security problem, as perceived from the viewpoint of the majority population. Only seldom was it seen through the eyes of the *Roma ethnic minority*: in the light of spatial integration, planning and regulation, preserving the identity of its members, promoting social and economic development, and including the Roma in Slovene society.

What to do with the Roma? Whether they should be expelled, displaced, or (forcibly) settled was a question that notable Slovenes had been posing for decades. At the time of the establishment of the independent Republic of Slovenia, Vanek Šiftar noted that

*the vast majority of the Roma live in urbanistically unidentified and often extremely unregulated isolates. Their inequality is also a reflection of our indecision: should their hamlets be developed in the same way as our villages, or should they be displaced? (Šiftar, 1990: 82).*

Of course, no one actually asked the Roma what their wishes were. After 1990, the prevailing belief was that the period of wandering by the Roma had passed and they had to be settled. The prohibition of wandering was also a consequence of the denationalisation processes. When land was returned in kind to the original owners or their heirs after 1990 (following denationalisation) nomadism became increasingly unwelcome.

The Roma live in settlements that have no proper names – they are simply designated by the adjective *Roma*. How many *Roma settlements* are there in Slovenia? There is no exact number. Some people say 103, others 105, still others 107. Are there as many as 128 settlements and/or hamlets, as suggested by Table 1? This is where things get complicated. Data gathered from different sources (Zupančič, 2007: 224; Klopčič, 2007: 125–137; Klopčič & Polzer, 2003: 112) reveal that we have only three settlements possessing all the characteristics of a settlement: a defined territory, regulated municipal infrastructure, and a proper name (Vejar, Kerinov Grm, Pušča). Other Roma settlements are merely *appendages* to settlements established by non-Roma. The Roma eventually settled on the margins of (or near) those settlements and took over their names.

The use of the adjective *Roma* in the name of settlements and village communities seems superfluous. It sounds exclusive rather than integrative. Every Slovene locality does not have the adjective Slovene in front of its name either. The perception of Roma settlements as ethnic isolates is a result of stereotypes and not facts. More and more non-Roma in fact live with and among the Roma.

*Table 1: THE NUMBER OF ROMA SETTLEMENTS AND POPULATION IN SLOVENIA BY REGION<sup>2</sup>*

Region	No. of Roma settlements/ hamlets	Share of total no. of Roma settlements/ hamlets	Roma population	Share of total Roma population in Slovenia
Prekmurje	38	29.7%	2,928	34.6%
Posavje	5	3.9%	364	4.3%
Dolenjska	30	23.4%	1,618	19.1%
Bela Krajina	14	10.9%	932	11.0%
Kočevska*	30	23.4%	528	6.2 %
The rest of Slovenia	11	8.6%	2,100	24.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,470</b>	<b>100%</b>

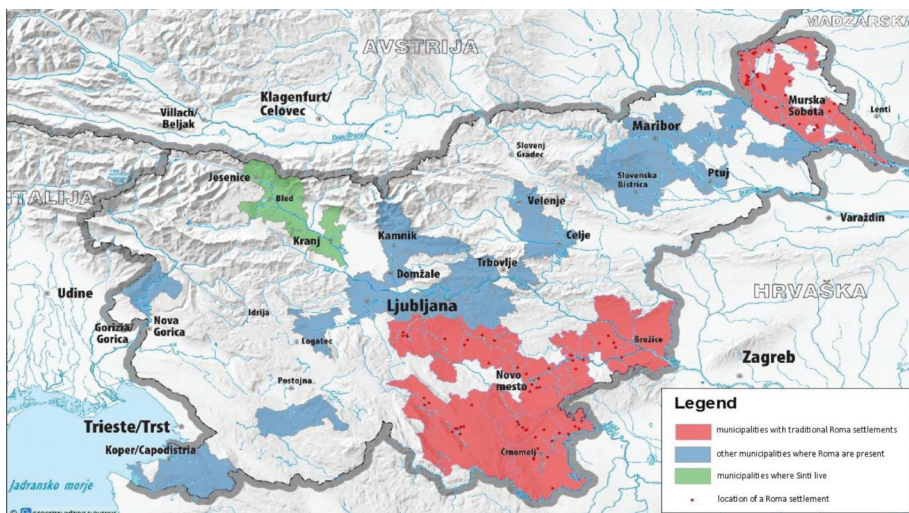
Source: Survey 2007, Survey 2010 (in: Zupančič, 2010; correction by Komac, 2012)

\*With the exception of 4 settlements, the region mostly features individual hamlets.

Map 1 indicates that the Roma are both a rural and an urban population. Part of the latter moved to the cities (Murska Sobota, Novo Mesto) from the rural hinterland, while the majority of Roma settled in Slovene industrial centres (Ljubljana, Velenje, Maribor) from former Yugoslav republics during a period of intense industrialisation in the 1970s and 1980s. They obtained employment in large factories such as TAM (Maribor Automobile Factory), TVM (Maribor Vehicle Factory), Ruše Nitrogen Factory and the Velenje lignite mine. The Roma were mainly Muslims, living in individual lodgings in the city or individual houses in the suburbs. The system worked well until the economic and political breakdown in the early 1990s. With the pauperisation of the industrial class in Slovenia, also the Roma industrial workers became a social problem. The last migration wave to urban environments involved Roma settling after 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. Documents relating to item No. 3 of the agenda of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Government Commission for the Protection of the Roma Community (28 September 2011).

Map 1: DISTRIBUTION OF THE ROMA ETHNIC MINORITY IN SLOVENIA.



Source: Žagor et al., 2013.

More recently, the traditional, historical settlement territory of the Roma has been associated with Roma settlements in the municipalities indicated in the provisions of the Act Amending the Local Self-Government Act of 2002, which states as follows:

*The municipalities of Beltinci, Cankova, Črenšovci, Dobrovnik, Grosuplje, Kočevje, Krško, Kuzma, Lendava, Metlika, Murska Sobota, Novo Mesto, Puconci, Rogaševci, Semič, Šentjernej, Tišina, Trebnje, and Turnišče are obliged to ensure the Roma community residing in the municipality the right to have one representative in the municipal council, pending regular local elections in 2002.<sup>3</sup>*

The above list should probably be extended to also include the municipalities of Ribnica, Brežice, and Škocjan, as well as the municipalities in the Gorenjska region inhabited by the Sinti (estimated to be approximately 60 families).

There are several forms and types of Roma settlements:

- *Independent Roma settlements that are statistically (administratively) part of other settlements, but are spatially separated from them (hamlets) and normally built in a completely different construction and architectural style. They are typical of countryside settlements.*

<sup>3</sup> Act Amending the Local Self-Government Act. Official Gazette of RS, No. 51/2002, Article 14.

- *Roma settlements as part of other settlements, yet concentrated in a specific part (a village street). The quality of construction is lower and these parts of settlements are normally poorly equipped with municipal infrastructure.*
- *Urban Roma "quarters" are located mainly in old parts of the cities that have been abandoned by the previous population due to the lower quality of life, or in grey city zones of unused space near industrial quarters and other less attractive locations. As a general rule, the prevailing type of housing is improvised housing units. Such parts of cities are mainly inhabited by Roma immigrants from former Yugoslavia.*
- *Individual houses or other housing units in rural (rarely) or urban settlements (Zupančič, 2007: 224).*

The permanent settlement of the Roma took a rather slow course. The reasons for such late settlement of the Roma need to be sought also in the attitude of the Slovene environment and authorities, which prevented the Roma from permanently settling in Slovene territory. The Report on the Gypsy Issue in the District of Novo Mesto of 1962 read:

*In the past years, the gypsies were literally persecuted, particularly by the patrols of the people's militia. When the latter came across gypsies coming from another area, they sent them back to their place of residence without delay. Hence, gypsies could not stay anywhere, and similar actions only accelerated their migration. If a gypsy came to Novo Mesto and had no reason for being there, or if he/she was caught in idleness or begging and similar acts, he/she was detained and denounced before a minor offence judge. Yet this was rather ineffective since the Roma feared the militiamen and hid from them. A number of other similar measures were carried out as well, yet nevertheless the expected results could not be achieved. This suggests that police measures should not be the only means to re-educate gypsies and combat the crimes committed by them, but that the issue should be dealt with by people's committees, by health, educational, and other institutions, and by mass organisations.<sup>4</sup>*

Persecutions, expulsions, and pogroms all accompanied the Roma's attempts to establish permanent settlements of their own. Adverse reactions by the local population preventing the Roma from settling in villages inhabited by a Slovene majority unfortunately still persist today. Yet despite

<sup>4</sup> Archives of the Republic of Slovenia 1931, Tech. Unit No. 1490, file No. 397. State Secretariat for the Interior of the People's Republic of Slovenia, Ref.: The Gypsy Issue, 5/2–1962, p. 8.

all the consequent misfortunes, human maelstroms were unable to 'wash them away'. The Roma withstood and remained. Gradually, they created the *Roma settlements*. Some of them are a hundred years old (particularly in the Prekmurje region), while others date back a few decades.

*As Roma, we have lived in Slovenia for thousands of years. Here, we have experienced many a humiliation, as being an ethnic group we have always been considered inferior and have been pushed to the margins of society. Today, Slovenia is finally gaining independence and is to become a sovereign state of the nation it belongs to, the nation that lives, is born, and dies here. But note that Roma have been living, have been born, and have died here in Slovenia for thousands of years as well!* (Rozman, 1991)

## Regulating the settlement structure of the Roma in Slovenia

Slovenia began to address the Roma (settlement) issue in the mid 1990s. The first Programme of Measures for Assisting the Roma in Slovenia stated, inter alia, that the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning would provide to municipalities

*[...] expert and material assistance in drafting spatial documents and implementing acts to regulate the Roma settlements.*<sup>5</sup>

A decade later, the Slovene government discussed the implementation of commitments from the Programme and established that things were improving, although very slowly. Therefore, it took the decision (among others) that

*[t]he Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy, the Ministry of Finance, and the Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, in cooperation with the local communities, will prepare a suitable proposal to finance the acquisition of land and infrastructure for Roma settlements in the municipalities where the Roma are traditionally (autochthonously) settled, and regulate all the necessary activities (legalisation or removal) of existing settlements.*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Programme of Measures for Assisting the Roma in the Republic of Slovenia, 30 November 1995 (accessible in Slovene at: [http://www.arhiv.uwn.gov.si/si/manjsine/romska\\_skupnost/index.html](http://www.arhiv.uwn.gov.si/si/manjsine/romska_skupnost/index.html), (accessed 20 December 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Government decision of 7 October 2004.



The Roma Community Act of 2007 deals with spatial issues in Article 5:

*(1) State bodies and bodies of self-governing local communities are to ensure the conditions for regulating the spatial problems of Roma settlements and for improving the living conditions of members of the Roma community.*

*(2) The regulation of the spatial problems of Roma settlements referred to in the preceding paragraph is to be realised by designing appropriate spatial plans. In accordance with the legal provisions in the field of spatial planning, these spatial plans are considered to be spatial plans of local importance or spatial plans of state importance if such initiative is submitted to the government by the city or municipal council in whose territory such planning is necessary, or if the government adopts such decision on its own.*

*(3) The government may adopt a decision referred to in the preceding paragraph or other necessary measures for the regulation of conditions on its own initiative if a lack of legal and infrastructural regulation of the Roma settlements in a self-governing local community leads to a serious threat to health, long-term disturbance of the public order, or a permanent threat to the environment. In such case, the government may intervene with a national spatial planning act in the territory of any municipality, and on a priority basis in the territory of a municipality that has not fulfilled the obligations referred to in the preceding paragraph. The procedure used for the preparation and adoption of such spatial planning act is the procedure defined by the regulations in the field of spatial planning for a shortened procedure.*

*(4) The resources for the implementation of state tasks referred to in this Article are to be provided by the state budget of the Republic of Slovenia.<sup>7</sup>*

Implementation of the above provision is very difficult since *the act is floating in the air!* It is in fact unclear which ministry is involved: the Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning? The Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment? The scope of work and the competences of both ministries are specified by other laws and regulations that are difficult to harmonise with the provisions of the Roma Community Act. Hence, the cited provision is more or less just a dead letter.

Another peculiarity worth mentioning and that confirms what has been

<sup>7</sup> Roma Community Act. Official Gazette of RS, No. 33/2007.

said above is that the Spatial Planning Act, published in the same issue of the Official Gazette (No. 33/2007, 13 April 2007)<sup>8</sup> as the Roma Community Act, contains no reference whatsoever to the Roma issue.

A significant problem in mapping the Roma community is also the fact that spatial planning issues are assigned/left to the municipalities. There is nothing wrong with the idea that a specific area is to be managed by the permanent residents thereof. The problem lies in the implementation of such provision. Besides the local officials lacking professional knowledge, the regulation of Roma spatial issues has been delayed also by the adverse attitude of the local population towards the Roma. The idea that in the foreseeable future the Roma would become *equal to us* is often unacceptable to the local population.

Another document worth mentioning is the National Programme of Measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2010–2015, adopted in March 2010. A whole chapter is dedicated to Roma spatial issues. The following provision is relevant for the purposes of this paper:

*The absence of comprehensive measures and lack of investment funds, as well as the absence of a development vision, has resulted in sub-standard construction, poor public utilities, an unsuitable architectural patrimony, and continuous problems with people living in their neighbourhood. Under the Spatial Planning Act, municipalities must prepare municipal spatial plans (MSPs). Municipalities are encouraged to include Roma settlements in these strategic documents and to plan the rehabilitation of such settlements, which are the result of haphazard construction without professional help and totally illegal. As part of such MSPs, municipalities must set up programmes for remediating the existing situation in which they define the method of tackling specific problems (such as: land use and property, accessibility, public utilities, a timetable for carrying out individual phases of the programme, financial means, etc.).<sup>9</sup>*

There should no longer be any forcible migration of the Roma! The Roma settlements must be mapped. They are in the process of being legalised. They must be entered in the register of settlements and named. They

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<sup>8</sup> Programme of Measures for Assisting the Roma in the Republic of Slovenia, 30 November 1995 (accessible in Slovene at: [http://www.arhiv.uvn.gov.si/si/manjsine/romska\\_skupnost/index.html](http://www.arhiv.uvn.gov.si/si/manjsine/romska_skupnost/index.html), (accessed 20 December 2012).

<sup>9</sup> National Programme of Measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2010–2015. Adopted on 18 March 2010. Accessible at: [http://www.arhiv.uvn.gov.si/si/manjsine/romska\\_skupnost/index.html](http://www.arhiv.uvn.gov.si/si/manjsine/romska_skupnost/index.html) (accessed 20 December 2012).



must be freed of the adjective *Roma*; after all, not every Slovene settlement bears the adjective Slovene. Roma settlements are finally being provided water, electricity, a sewage system, etc. They are getting the chance to build development infrastructure: kindergartens, common community premises, etc. Are they thus becoming less vulnerable? It is hard to say. Perhaps their vulnerability has even increased. In the past, they used to solve their problems (concerning basic existence, interpersonal relations, etc.) by wandering. When nomadic peoples are chained to a specific area and even forced to maintain themselves in such “immobility” (as regards water, electricity, etc.), a chronic lack of resources emerges. Social assistance services are currently in the process of solving most of the elementary problems.

Following independence, the social position of the Roma in Slovenia worsened considerably. An old Roma from one of the Roma settlements once told me:

*Prior to Slovenia's independence, we all had enough money. We could live quite decently on picking and selling herbs, moving from one place to another.*

When land was returned in kind to the original owners or their heirs after 1990 (following denationalisation), nomadism became increasingly unwelcome. After independence, the purchase of medicinal herbs decreased. There was only some mushroom picking left. Or collecting scrap iron. With the decline in traditional means of subsistence, the Roma ended up at social work centres, becoming permanent beneficiaries of social assistance.

### Moving the Roma from the margins of Slovene society

The three-years project, *The Increase in Social and Cultural Capital in Areas with a Roma Population*, was used to test the research hypothesis that turning the Roma settlement into an environment/space where a considerable number of activities take place will raise the human, social, and cultural capital, thus contributing to abolishing the “status” of the Roma ethnic community as a *floating minority*. According to the hypothesis, these forms of capital enable the Roma to have greater mobility, employability, and independence. They enable social and spatial de-marginalisation and de-ghettoisation. The hypothesis was studied by searching for answers to the following two questions: a. Is the Roma settlement *a pathway to a Roma ghetto*? b. Is the Roma settlement *a development opportunity*?

How were the above ideas tested in *The Increase in Social and Cultural Capital in Areas with a Roma Population* project? The basic idea was to make the *Roma settlement* the focus of the project and establish what are

known as *Roma Educational Incubators (REI)*. These were either spaces where educational programmes were implemented, or simply the programmes themselves. If no adequate space was available, the REI project was carried out in the homes of individual Roma families.

The programme consisted of providing educational support to Roma children, free-time workshops for children and parents, and sports. In the Roma settlement of Vanča Vas, a football school was established and attended by both Roma and non-Roma children. The football school was run by the Roma and the coaches were UEFA-licensed members of the Roma ethnic minority.

Wherever possible, Roma with at least secondary education were included in the programme. Ten Roma Educational Incubators were set up in different parts of Slovenia: the Prekmurje REI in Vanča Vas-Borejci (in the municipality of Tišina), the Prekmurje REI in Kamenci (in the municipality of Črenšovci), the Bela Krajina REI (Lokve and Boriha); the Trebnje REI (Hudeje), the Novo Mesto REI (Šmihel and Žabjek), the Krško REI (Kerinov Grm), the Željne REI, and the Grosuplje REI (Smrekec).

As regards methodology, the project put an end to the practice of *taking Roma out of the Roma settlements*, bringing them to settlements inhabited by the majority population, and implementing activities in settlements with a prevailing majority population. Following the new ideological concept of the project, we invited experts, opinion leaders, pupils, and students of the majority nation to come to the Roma settlements.

### **The Roma settlement – a pathway to a Roma ghetto?**

Mapping the Roma community stirs up different reactions. Some say that creating Roma settlements means *creating ghettos through the side door*, and a return to the *Roma isolates*. This is a realistic risk. Some local authorities actually demonstrate the intention to legalise the existing *Roma settlements* and regulate utility services therein, yet the municipal spatial plans do not envisage any enlargements. Furthermore, there have been proposals to designate greenbelts around the Roma settlements. If such an idea prevails, in just over a decade we will have to cope with the problem of overpopulation, i.e. *Roma slums*.

While emphasising the mapping of the Roma ethnic minority (as a positive value), the other pole needs to be mentioned as well: the *less positive considerations about territory* and the mapping of Roma settlements, which we tend to disregard for fear of being accused of racist views. An interesting question is how boundaries – either spatial or social – affect the development of a community. The presence of boundaries everywhere resembles life in a cage, with limited access to the goods to be distributed to the

members of the nation. How does this affect the relations within the wider community? Quite possibly, it leads to neuroticism, a condition that is characterised by excessive sensitiveness, resentfulness, contentiousness, and so much envy that it is said people would tear out each other's eyes.<sup>10</sup>

A number of questions cannot be avoided when designing development plans: What is happening in the Roma community now that it is gradually being settled? How do traditional cultural forms change? What processes of new stratification are in place? What role is assumed by members of the majority nation when they join the Roma community by marrying a member of the Roma community? The role of female members of the majority nation living in the Roma community is often significant. How do internal criminal organisations function? We all know outward crime, the Roma committing criminal offences against non-Roma, but we do not investigate how Roma criminal organisations terrorise the Roma themselves. The inhabitants of Roma settlements are particularly easy targets for Roma criminal groups. The doors of Roma settlements are wide open to drugs. Poverty and misery are strongly present in the everyday life of the Roma. The traditional structure of authority is crumbling or has crumbled already, while modern forms of family life are slowly replacing traditional ones. This security vacuum is a true paradise for criminal organisations.

So where can some progress for the Roma ethnic community be expected? In a Roma village or in a town that offers more development opportunities? Yet even if we create a development centre for the Roma community in urban centres (towns), the question that follows is: How high are the social walls between the Roma and the non-Roma?

### The Roma settlement – *a development opportunity?*

There are not many municipal administrations in Slovenia with a visionary mindset, that reflect on how to transform the *philosophy of handicap* often associated with the ethnic minority issue, the Roma in particular, into a *philosophy of progress* that can benefit the entire local community.

It is the duty of the state to legalise the *Roma settlements*, place them on the map, and provide for basic infrastructure: water, electricity, a sewage system, waste removal, and a multipurpose hall. Settlements should also be named. From this step on, the development of the settlement and its inhabitants depends on them alone.

The Roma settlement as a development opportunity for the Roma minority can be seen from various viewpoints:

<sup>10</sup> Anton Trstenjak: *Misli o slovenskem človeku. Založništvo slovenske knjige, Ljubljana, 1991, pp. 26–27*

a. As a *place of recognition*. They would be settled in a location bearing a proper name. This might be a sufficiently strong signal contributing to the awareness of the notion of *ours*. And if something is *ours* (in this case, *the settlement*), it is worth doing and sacrificing something for it. Self-initiative is considered a significant added value to various forms of grants and donations. But when I told the Roma years ago that their settlements should be named appropriately, one of the Roma from the audience said: "Don't do that, or everyone will know where we are!" The fear of pogroms is deeply anchored in the Roma conscience.

The issue of »Roma« settlements must remain high on the agenda. Numerous Slovenes who hardly reach above the level of *enlightened nationalists* would be very pleased with the new naming of Roma settlements. They could get rid of the gypsos<sup>11</sup>! A handicap of such solution is that Slovene settlements would lose financial support for regulating their own infrastructure. In fact, there have been cases where financing intended to regulate *Roma infrastructure* was spent in the so-called *civil*<sup>12</sup> part of the overall settlement. Legally speaking, that was not wrong since the money was spent on municipal infrastructure in a particular settlement. It was more of a moral issue. And there is not much to say about morality in Slovenia.

b. They would have a place that can administratively be *shaped and (co) managed* as a (local) *village community*, which thus far has been more of an exception than a rule.

c. As a precondition for the establishment of an (autochthonous) ethnic community. The Roma settlement could be understood as a *development opportunity in terms of obtaining the status of a classic ethnic minority*, like the Hungarians or the Italians in Slovenia. This opportunity to evolve is very important since the Roma only possess a modest amount of capital. If they wish to obtain any benefits there from, they absolutely need a living territory. In such a manner, they could rid themselves of the status of a *floating minority*. The territory that ethnic minorities inhabit together with the majority population is an amalgam of several cultures, languages, and patterns for the creation, possession, and management of the cultural heritage – both material and intangible. We need to recognise that ethnic minorities co-create the cultural heritage and thus co-own the cultural heritage in

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<sup>11</sup> In the Slovene Literary Language Dictionary: *ciganija* [translators note: a word deriving from the derogatory Slovene word for gypsy, i.e. *cigan*, as distinct from *Rom*]; 1. gypsies: *the ciganija are back*; 2. pig sty, dump; very poor, sordid dwelling or building: *how can they live in such a ciganija / they could clean their ciganija already / they packed all their ciganija [i.e. junk] on a cart and drove off*.

<sup>12</sup> Roma use different expressions to describe non-Roma. Most often they use *civil* or *gadjo*. The term *civil settlement* thus refers to a settlement inhabited by the majority, non-Roma population.

the territory where they live. Territory is of particular importance for the members of ethnic communities since living in a certain territory for a long, permanent, and continuous period of time allows them to be considered a constituent part of the territory. This is vital to preserve the special (ethnic) identity of the members of ethnic minorities.

The Slovene model of the protection of the *classic ethnic minorities* is based on the territorial principle. The Slovene Constitution refers to the *geographic areas where these communities live* (Article 64) or the municipalities where Italian or Hungarian national communities reside (Article 11). Municipal statutes “translate” such formulation into ethnically mixed areas.

An ethnically mixed area comprises the *territories of the settlements in a municipality* and is inhabited more or less densely by the members of a certain (autochthonous) national community. There are no provisions on which criteria are to be applied to designate such areas. It can be assumed, however, that the decision as to which areas should be “proclaimed” ethnically mixed areas is affected by the objective fact of the long, permanent, and recognisable presence of the members of a certain national community in a certain territory. Their settlement area has been preserved despite the maelstroms of war, the changing borders, and *ethnic cleansing*. Have similar criteria as those applying to the Italian and Hungarian national communities also been used for the Roma community? It is difficult to give an affirmative answer to such question.

d. As a *place of economic development*. Another characteristic of the Roma population in Slovenia is worth mentioning at this point. The Roma are a *population that does not own any land* (fields, meadows, forests) that would represent a means of subsistence. For such reason, improving the respective human capital is crucial for improving the social status and standard of living of the Roma ethnic community. Only adequate human capital that enables the establishment of social capital offers a way out from the Roma settlement as an isolate. It gives individuals the chance to find a living environment outside the Roma environment, or to gain the resources needed to improve housing conditions in the Roma settlement.

The mere copying of the developmental paths taken by the members of the majority i.e. the dominant nation, will keep the members of the Roma ethnic minority in a position of underdevelopment. Instead, it would be wise to test the ideas referred to as a *development economy* or *community economic development* (Durnik 2012: 74) applied by countries with a positive attitude towards native ethnic communities, such as Canada.

e. As a place to raise *social capital*. The entry point into the world of knowledge is nursery school. In past years it became evident that the

method whereby Roma children entered the educational process at the primary school level was inadequate. The children were (even forcibly) brought to school. Untidy and dirty, they were sometimes, not long ago, washed and had their clothes changed at school. Lacking an adequate prior preparation for school, they were often laughed at, insulted, and maltreated. Such policy resulted in Roma children dropping out quite early and never going back to school.

In order to fill the Roma children's gap in human capital, Roma settlements need to be equipped with facilities to *provide preschool education*. This is particularly challenging since a substantial share of Roma settlements are still illegal. Yet even this could be resolved by rational application of *positive discrimination*.

It can be concluded that by bringing members of the majority nation (instructors, preschool teachers, football school students) into Roma settlements, we opened new ways to generate (*increase*) *social capital*. Synchronous activities throughout the Roma settlement territory in Slovenia and tolerant collaboration between the Roma ethnic minority and the majority nation contributed to the awareness that the Roma are indeed a classic ethnic minority.

## Conclusion

The project demonstrated that in addition to building municipal infrastructure, spatial plans involving areas inhabited by the Roma ethnic community would need to focus on the construction of community event venues. Wherever possible, the Roma settlement should have *multipurpose halls* to host various all-year or part-time educational programmes, workshops, and lectures in the morning and afternoon: preschool education as an all-year activity, daily preparation programmes for children up to five years of age, educational support for pupils and students enrolled in regular education, extra-curricular activities, adult education providing specific skills, and basic education enabling employment and independence; the halls could also host the office of the Roma member of the municipal council, an office for visitors from social work or health care centres, a room for health education (nurses specialised in paediatrics and preventive dental care, etc.), and a room for meetings, events, sports, and dance activities. These multipurpose halls should be *owned by the municipality* to avoid problems associated with ownership involving material benefits and mutual relations.

The project's implementation over the past years showed that a key driver for moving the Roma minority from the margins of Slovene society was to provide the *constitutive elements of an autochthonous ethnic community*: settlements that constitute what is known as an ethnically mixed



area by combining individual areas. Considering the uncontrolled development of Roma settlements in the past, in the light of preserving the viability of the territory, more efforts will need to be devoted to such issue, within a multi-disciplinary collaboration of anthropologists, geographers, building contractors, architects, and landscape architects.

With the establishment of the REIs, the Roma gained premises to improve their level of education, skills, and individual competences. Providing educational support to children resulted in a better learning outcome for the Roma pupils involved. The instructors (Roma themselves) were given a suitable degree of responsibility, which enhanced their self-esteem. All these are elements that contribute to *increasing human capital*.

It can be concluded that by bringing members of the majority nation into Roma settlements as instructors, preschool teachers, football school students, we opened new ways to generate (*increase*) *social capital*.

In light of the findings of the research project "The Increase in Social and Cultural Capital in Areas with a Roma Population", it can be concluded that our idea of making the Roma settlement an environment where a considerable number of activities take place that contribute to raising social capital is appropriate.

By becoming more open, Roma settlements lose the negative connotation of isolates or ghettos and become simply ordinary villages. Yet even this does not suffice for the social de-marginalisation of the Roma: they remain at the bottom of the Slovene scale of ethnic groups. Without changing this racist view of the majority population there is little possibility for the status of Roma in Slovenia to improve.

The three-year research project *confirmed the hypothesis* that turning the Roma settlement into an environment/space where a considerable number of activities take place will increase the human, social, and cultural capital. Based on three years of research activities, it may be concluded that *our assumptions were correct*.

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