



European inclusion projects of Roma communities in Romania: power and inequality.

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Abstract

Established-outsider theory has become one main theory in this research paper, with the potential of providing one way of comprehending the existence of an unconscious but all too present conflict between Roma and Non-Roma in Romania. While it is true that today Roma are better than they were during the course of history, nonetheless, they still experience systematic discrimination and remain behind the Romanian majority in important areas of life. The prevalent assumption is they are responsible for their own situation based on an innate deviant character that is culturally determined, therefore enforcing the power relations between the established group (Romanians) and the outsider group (Roma). This differentiation is maintained by prevalent stereotypes internalized and used to justify Romanian society failure to act, even if strategies and financial funds for inclusion projects exist. An analysis of two European projects of inclusion with focus on Roma and marginalized communities respectively in Baia Mare and around Baia Mare can provide some understanding on why the impact of such projects, even if present, is imperfect.

Keywords: Discrimination, Exclusion, Inclusion, Othering, Roma

Introduction

Roma minority in Romania: Past to present

History provides an important aspect in understanding the perpetrated stigma when referring to Roma not only in Romania but Europe as well. Roma people settled in the Balkans around the 13th century. In Romania, they were victims of enslavement from three powers: the state, the church and private landowners up until the 19th century, effectively leaving them powerless. During this time, at a European level, they were considered burdens for a society and its progress. Moreover, they were considered as having delinquent characters and studied as such, which ultimately, had a direct effect on policies developed specifically to control this delinquent nature (Molnar, 2021). During the Second World War, Roma, because of their ethnicity and preexisting perceived inferiority, were executed all over occupied Eastern Europe and Germany. With the fall of the Nazi regime, and establishment of the communist regime, once again Roma were forced to oblige the new social norms as well as a new social order that

still saw them as inferior, imposing on them to become sedentary and „abandon their nomad way of life” (Powell & Lever in Molnar, 2021). Under the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, Roma people in Romania were placed in ghettos located in various disadvantaged areas in the country that gave an apparent impression of assimilation and decreased hostility (Molnar, 2021) as they were erased from official documents as representing a minority, leading to loss of culture to a certain degree.

What I argue here is that, hundreds of years of enslavement along with continuous persecutions and obliteration of culture, customs and way of life, left a mark not only on Roma people but on Non-Roma as well. Educating Non-Roma and Roma alike on the enslavement process and the direct link to discrimination faced today by Roma becomes one important first step in acknowledging that Roma discrimination is based on preexisting stereotypes. This would provide the ground for understanding how, at the moment in Romania, a color-blind racial ideology is in full force where, everyone is equal in rights and demands but only the Romanian majority gathers the benefits.

Romanian society turns a blind eye to the Roma past sufferings while systematically blaming them for not being able to integrate. Romanian society accepts that „that’s the way it is” (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) naturalizing a supposed inferiority and attributing Roma non-integration as a failure to act, an apparent lack of effort, resources, loose family structures and environmental factors such as spatial separation, that ultimately are external to Roma communities, created and kept in place by existing social and economic policies and local institutions enforcing these policies, therefore emphasizing Romanian society failure to act in accordance with Roma community needs on a larger scale.

This blaming stems from internalized stereotypes related to Roma ethnicity and perpetrated during and after the enslavement period, when Roma were considered less than human. Today, the structural nature of racism towards Roma is directly linked to physical appearance, how Roma are they (dressing colorfully, being darker skin-toned with dark hair and eyes, being loud) and spatial segregation. The social and biological aspects are bound by meaning given by participants in the classification infrastructure. One has to wonder, then, for whom it becomes relevant to create classifications. The perspective of fact versus fiction, a distinction made by M’Charek (2013) can provide a starting point in this case. Roma and Romanian ethnicity can be seen as both fact, which means a certain amount of markers that are biological become relevant when we refer to a group of individuals for example, and fiction

whereby an ideology is created when referring to the said group that is embedded in our minds both individually and collectively as well as in our institutions. It is a fact that our genes differ, but the meaning we create through fiction becomes fact, functioning together to make up Roma ethnicity.

Romaphobia and socio-economic impediments

According to the United Nations (UN) among factors that contribute to perpetuated poverty and inequality, discrimination and racism are majorly representative. (New York: UNDP, 2010). In this paper, I attribute the term Romaphobia to the hostility expressed towards this particular minority group. This emphasizes actions such as exclusion of Roma from „various intersecting spheres of life: the labor market, social services, education, housing, welfare and health provisions and even concerning human and citizenship rights” (Tremlett et al. p.645) As I mentioned previously, the Romanian society failure to act is very much based on a misperception continuously reinforced that Roma people, retain the sole responsibility for the scarcity of resources that lead them to poverty and separation from the rest of society. Consequently, Roma are seen as the others and in quite a harsh term, parasites for the welfare systems, burdens for the country they are part of, ultimately resulting in exclusion „from the notion of the nation and seen as non-members of a society” (Tremlett et al. p.646) This enforces a paternalistic approach to Roma minority in Romania, as they are repeatedly portrayed as powerless in the face of Romanian majority, at the same time fixing the ‚blame the victim’ attitudes towards Roma. (Roth & Toma, 2014)

Roma inclusion has been a site for policy and state focus but despite existing programs aimed at Roma inclusion, the lack of direct communication between social workers and institutions (police force, church and schools) with Roma people, results in a maintenance of the paternalistic system. Here, the legitimate authority responsible for solving local problems, completely disregards the main agent, Roma communities. This leads to a continued relation of superiority-inferiority, which through this unidirectional course of action „contributes to the dehumanization of the Other” (Roth & Toma, p.726)

Research question and justification

In 1993 European Parliamentary Assembly adopted the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1203 through which they declared Roma ‘a true European minority’ (Roth & Toma, pg.715) This represented a major step forward towards acknowledging the Roma vulnerability and prompted policy formulation for addressing discrimination at large and encouraged tolerance and inclusion. Today, an estimated 10 to 12 million Roma live in Europe, while approximately 6 million are citizens or residents of the European Union.

For centuries, Roma people have been politicized, romanticized and demonized in order to construct their identity by the larger community that they were living within. This is not to say that they were not a component part of the larger community, rather they existed to serve the said community, not given the decency of being considered human beings therefore, creating a long-lasting social stigma. Racism against Roma has been and still is a structure based on entrenched and ongoing similarly racialized stereotypes, adapted to different regimes and regions. Right after the fall of the communist regime in Romania, the new democratic regime brought about no fewer instances of anti-Roma hate speeches, coming from public figures at the time:

„August 16, 1998, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, then a member of the Romanian Senate, reportedly stated that his platform for running the country included isolating Gypsy criminals in special colonies in order to stop the transformation of Romania into a Gypsy camp. In 2001, Ion Bulucea, Mayor of Craiova, the largest city in south-east Romania, said "those stinking Gypsies should be exterminated. In 1999, Mircea Bot, at that time Bucharest Police Chief, said: Those scum Gypsies are responsible for all the wrong-doing in Romania. In 2001, Army Corps General Mircea Chelaru, former Chief of General Staff, took part in the unveiling ceremony of a bust of Marshall Antonescu, responsible for deporting and killing tens of thousands of Roma and Jews during the Second World War.” (European Roma Rights Centre, May 10, 2003)

In 2007, Romania, an Eastern European country, was accepted into the European Union with the condition of aligning its projects to ones of the community with respect to the inclusion of minorities in all domains of society. However, Romania still lags behind in terms of ethnic minority integration. With 23.6% of its population living in poverty (Molnar, 2021) and a

dysfunctional system that dates back to the communist period as well as an unclear transition to democracy, the bigger picture quickly becomes clear as to what the main issues are. Distrust in public authorities, lack of integrity in public and judicial institutions, the absence of a clear strategy regarding qualified workforce shortage, school curricula, underdeveloped research and innovation systems as well as regional and interregional differences when accessing education and healthcare. (Molnar, 2021)

Roma inclusion policies have a tendency of coming across as paternalistic in the sense that they represent the minority group ought to be included within the majority and by deduction they are undeveloped and uncivilized therefore the solution is for them to be integrated in the more developed and civilized society. „Roma’ often appear on the radar of the actors of inclusion as marginalized passive masses, a ‘vulnerable population’ that has to be assisted in their inclusion into society” (Rostas, Iulius & Rövid, Márton, p.8). This being said, the research question of this paper is: *„In what way does a Roma inclusion project, through its practices and policies, promotes exclusion?”*

Theoretical framework

Established-Outsider

Norbert Elias and John Scotson theory of the Established – Outsider, where Non-Roma who comprise the majority establishment are bound by inter-community connections and power which is exercised through institutions, while the outsiders, Roma ethnic minority, lack social advantage and are therefore excluded from the political, economic and knowledge structures of the society in which they live (Elias and Scotson, 1994), thus gives this research paper a starting point as it’s main theoretical framework. Roma communities are considered the „outsider” group while the Non-Roma represent the „established”, the ones that have the ability to constrain the outsider group, as their power relies on „group cohesion and group monopolization of vital institutions and organizations.” (Thornton, 2014).

One action taken by both groups in relation to one another is avoidance of interaction. The Non-Roma use it as a mechanism born out of fear of judgement by the rest of the group’s members leading to a potential loss of social status, while the Roma make use of it as a self-defense strategy as a consequence of stigmatization. What can already be inferred here, is that in this association of established-outsider, a mediating factor takes central stage, and that is

power. What Elias and Scotson (1994) found in Winston Parva they defined it as „a universal human theme” (pg. xv) When a group that is stronger, having more power, in this case Non-Roma majority, the immediate consequence is the assumption of superiority, leading to Roma ethnic group stigmatization. I suggest here that contextualizing the prosecution of a cross-frontier group represented in this paper by Roma minority, becomes a key aspect in understanding the balance of power between two groups with implications, in the long term, for development of specific policies of inclusion.

Because Roma as a group, are so diverse in culture, language and customs, cohesion within their community is scarce leading to exclusion by the established group based on social control to „assert their superiority and maintain their identity” (pg. xviii) According to Elias and Scotson this mechanism of social control is enforced through ‚praise-gossip’ for the established group and ‚blame-gossip’ for the outsider group creating the juxtaposition of superiority (group charisma) -inferiority (group disgrace). The result of this contrast is a relation of interdependence between groups based on an uneven balance of power, manifested in secured access to resources and dominance for the Non-Roma in the disadvantage of Roma. (Elias&Scotson, 1994)

Territorial stigmatization

Modern day segregation enforced through forced evictions and blatant separation by way of concrete wall construction to encompass an already marginalized ethnic community only deepens inequality between Non-Roma majority and Roma minority.

What is interesting, and rather specific to Romania, is the procedure through which being Roma or poor becomes relevant when accessing social housing eligibility. The 41 counties and the 6 Bucharest sectors all have their own procedures and criteria which favor people who already either have stable jobs or an education, in detriment of poor and marginalized communities (Roth & Toma, 2014) It becomes evident then, how, in spite „of a law adopted in 2002 in Europe (to combat the marginalization of certain groups and reduce disadvantages for the poor) that stated the obligation of public authorities to offer support, including social housing, benefits, services to the marginalized people in order to fight exclusion” (Roth & Toma, pg.721), forced evictions of Roma communities from internal

perimeter of the city to the outskirts of cities limit, often without basic living conditions, have become a distinctive feature of housing segregation in Roma communities in Romania.

The distribution of power between Roma and Non-Roma within the community and the paternalistic view of seeing Roma as inferior people in need of support in integrating in society through actors part of the majority group, is actively functioning in Romania continuously enforcing territorial stigmatization through the process of ghettoization, a term developed by Wacquant. A ghetto is more than one a social-organizational structure as it bring with it stigma, constraint, spatial limitation, as well as institutional barriers. This only deepens marginalization and social and political subordination of Roma ethnic minority in our case, which can be better understood from the two examples below.

In 2011 in Baia Mare, a city located in the north-west of Romania, the municipality mayor decided to build a concrete wall with only one access way, encompassing Roma community within. The premise for this course of action was the possibility of road accidents involving Roma children happening at any time, however, while this explanation was largely accepted, the reality was far more problematic precisely because the people involved were part of a stereotyped against minority. When fined and ordered to take down the wall, as it represented a symbol of violence through discrimination, the mayor brought art students to paint graffiti all over thus, the wall became an art piece, and in a metaphoric view an art of exclusion, demolishing now being almost impossible.

In Amnesty International, 2013 edition, the case of the forced eviction of Roma families from Craica, a Romani settlement in the north-western city of Baia Mare, the largest informal settlement in the country was presented. „In 2012, the municipality forcibly evicted about 500 people from Craica – almost half of its residents – and demolished their homes.” (Amnesty International, 2013) They were moved to CUPROM a former metallurgical factory. Needless to say that these buildings were not intended for residential use. Despite protests organized in Bucharest and the call of Council of Europe Commissioner for Human rights for an investigation, the mayor was reelected with a withstanding majority of 86% of the vote.

Established territorial boundaries through ghettoization as well as power differentials enforced by constant blame put on Roma's lack of values and potential, deemed appropriate by the majority, I believe, made way for naturalization of actions and events between the established Non-Roma and outsiders Roma in what I regard today as Bonilla Silva expressed „racism without racists” (p.77).

Decolonialism

Decolonialism as well as colonialism are both violent processes, as they involve taking control and exercising power over different populations. Alongside colonialism comes the creation of ‚the other‘ meaning that the group who was colonized by the more powerful one loses the category of a full being. When a group is stronger, having more power, the immediate consequence is the assumption that it is better than the others, leading to group stigmatization. Roma communities are considered the outsider group while Non-Roma represent the established, the ones that have the power to constrain the outsider group, as their power relies on group cohesion and monopolization of central institutions and organizations.

This poses an issue as the view on it is rather paternalistic whereby the responsibility of the state one individual or group is found in is solely their own, disregarding all the agents with influence. This brings into discussion the production of knowledge with regard to, as I mentioned previously, ‚the other‘. In this sense, Said’s Orientalism perspective in Bhabra, points out that, the existing knowledge is very much a product of the West and its actions upon the others. The way to restore the perspective of the others is to interrupt this Western discourse and re-incorporate other narratives in the modern discourse to gain insight into these inheritances. The history of the Roma minority till this day is not taught in schools, making it difficult to relate to the past in order to understand the present situation. The simple answer comes almost naturally and that is that’s how it is or this is who Roma are, through which Roma community is disregarded as an actor with agency while at the same time a separation is created and internalized by both groups.

The question arising then is how do we decolonize knowledge and incorporate Roma minority agency? I would dare say that first and foremost, incorporating the history of their ancestors’ enslavement is the way to acknowledge that the Non-Roma majority’s ancestors contributed highly to perpetrating through centuries the false narrative that they are not deserving to be regarded as equal and worthy. Mignolo’s colonial matrix of power in Bhabra, comes to mind when referring to Roma agency. We cannot talk about modernity without looking into both, progress, development and growth, and poverty, misery and inequality. These have to take central role in the global knowledge, as one did not happen without the other. Bhabra on Quijano (2014), brings to our attention, that it is impossible to make a separation between modernity and coloniality as the central aspect is the European colonial domination over the others and implicitly the process of differentiation from other cultures. Thus, the

understanding is that the knowledge is still given by a relation formed by either an individual or group of individuals and something else.

European projects of inclusion therefore become an example of categorization in which Non-Roma majority enjoying progress, development and growth, condition Roma minority who suffers the effects of poverty, misery and inequality created and maintained by the aforementioned group, to align to the accepted values and culture.

The implementation of European inclusion projects with focus on Roma communities becomes a relevant example of a regime-made disaster, a term introduced by Azoulay (2012). „Regime-made disasters necessarily strike all the governed, even if they do not all pay a price measurable in life and property” (Azoulay, p.34). This type of projects, I advance here, have a double meaning. First it’s framed as kindness fueled by an apparent moral intention by the ruling power and thus becomes a non-disaster which, in this case, refers to making sure that Roma community becomes integrating part of the Non-Roma majority with regard to what is deemed appropriate, at the same time disregarding a whole ethnic group, therefore justifying a purpose. Second, a real disaster for those involved on whom the effects have repercussions. The aftermath of a finalized inclusion project poses no interest for the ruling power to continue working and this can be seen clearly in the way most do not question what the Romanian society gains by maintaining this disaster that ultimately has real consequences for all Roma involved still having to live with the need to justify and hide their ethnicity for fear of judgement and exclusion.

One clear example of this fear of judgement and exclusion comes from August 29, 2002 when Madalin Voicu, one of the most well known Roma politicians in Romania and one of two Roma representatives in the Romanian parliament, made the following statement:

„Our gypsies are stupid. They could at least be crafty, but they aren't. They are just primitives, and they manage to irritate the entire society which is already watching them closely [...] They run through the country and Europe barefoot, slimy and dirty, wearing clothes which are more likely to disgust you than make you feel sorry for them [...] Begging, soliciting and being disorganized will never bring them any advantages.”

Because of the existing social stigma regarding Roma minority, the direct result is that even Roma public personalities adopt the refusal to identify with Roma minority in Romania, leading therefore to:

„The reluctance and, in most cases, refusal of important public personalities of Roma origin to declare their membership or links to Romania's Roma minority. Important Roma members of the Romanian government, writers, professors, doctors, sports celebrities and singers refuse or avoid discussions targeting their origins, afraid of the likely consequences: exclusion from social life, scapegoating or the decline or end of their careers. Even the few Roma politicians elected to represent Roma communities often criticize or insult those communities, in an effort to distance themselves from ordinary Roma and to show the majority that they belong to "high society." (European Roma Rights Centre, May 10, 2003)

Research design and ethics

The completed research design for this paper included qualitative methodologies. Data was gathered throughout fourteen hours of participant observation in two different environments, rural and urban, respectively. The participant observation method, through which a prolonged immersion of the researcher takes place in order to observe the behavior of members and meanings they attribute to their environment in a social setting (Bryman, 2016), aimed to provide a substantial exploration on the relations of Roma community with the workers on field implementing the inclusion projects. As its main objective, descriptions of these interactions became the focal point within this methodological approach, on a subject that has been studied in Europe but understudied in Romania on this particular community.

The first two observations were conducted in a rural area some fifty kilometers away from the city at the center developed by the local priest, while the last two were conducted in the city, first at one of the social centers and the last one in the local park. It is important to make the distinction of rural-urban in view of the fact that the two projects were having the same objective but with a different group of focus. The inclusion project in the rural environment focused on education for children part of impoverished marginalized communities, while the

one in the urban environment was with focus on education of children from one specific Roma community close to the city.

Because this study implied an exploratory research design, my main focus was on possible implications for Roma community as a result of the implementation process of a European inclusion project on the development of future inclusion policies at a local level. This being said, the population of interest was composed of Roma communities from Baia Mare and around Baia Mare for the participatory observation.

Data was gathered through field notes taken during the observation period. Thematic analysis was conducted in order to find central themes. This process was done in two stages: during the first stage, description of field notes took place in order to find meanings and key ideas. During the second stage, information was coded into themes and sub-themes, followed by axial coding to identify connections within and between themes.

Ethical implication had to be taken into account as well. Vulnerability of aforementioned group in public discourse, pushes the need to address tensions, not only when working with Roma groups, but when results are presented as well. Because of the potential risk of causing psychological stress as well as negative feelings, as the researcher was part of the majority population represented by Romanians, participants were verbally informed of the possibility of discontinuing their participation at any time. Participants for this study had to sign three forms: a written informed consent, whereby they agree to take part in the study and a confidentiality agreement in which the researcher consented to keeping every piece of information given, private while keeping the subject's identities anonymous.

The inclusion projects and settings

The inclusion project developed and managed in the rural environment focuses on educational attainment through an after school program of activities and assistance with homework. The population of interest for this project is Non Roma and Roma children alike, part of marginalized communities. The purpose of this specific project is to help children whose social and financial condition is rather unfortunate, keep up with school curricula as well as enjoying a number of entertaining activities such as dancing or playing various group games and develop a sense of belonging. The project's guidelines incorporated the possibility of having volunteers working along representatives of the project. These volunteers were students aged

twenty to twenty-three, who by their maximum capacity did not have enough experience to deal with almost thirty children. One social worker was always present and on Friday the priest's wife, who is a teacher, would attend as well.

The location of the project was at the local center developed by the local priest, situated in the most beautiful scenery surrounded by nature. The center is a gorgeous two-story traditional building which stands across the road from the priest's home. It has no less than ten rooms, of which three are larger rooms to allow for space when recreational activities take place. The center also has three bathrooms with three stalls each and one kitchen. The room we first entered was more like a living room with two couches, a carpet on the floor on which kindergarten children would play, clothes hanger and some furniture containing toys for smaller children. Right next to this room, children would spend the most amount of time doing their homework, and it was just one plain room with two tables and fifteen chairs. It gave a feeling of a classroom compared to the first room which had a more cozy feeling to it. During warmer time, children would spend the recreational time outside either playing with farm animals or volunteers would prepare different games and gather all children in the garden found in the back of the main building.

The second project that I had the chance to observe was taking place in the urban environment. The focus of this project was specifically on Roma children educational gain through recreational activities and facilitated school attendance. This project was rather interesting because only after one and a half years, Roma children were enrolled in schools. This is because the Education Ministry got involved in providing the necessary financial means to support this action. Compared to the project in the rural area, this one did not provide in its guidelines the possibility of having volunteers help, therefore, the task of caring for groups of ten to twelve children became a bit difficult, but nonetheless achievable.

The office where Roma children would gather had multiple rooms, but only one was dedicated to them. This room was similar to the one I have seen in the rural area. A room filled with shelves containing books and school materials that invited one to study in peace. The other rooms were small work offices for representatives implementing the inclusion project. Outside, the office building had a decent garden where during spring and summer Roma children would gather to eat lunch or simply play outside or on the trampoline. This space was directly across the local public park which very much facilitated the amount of time needed to move from one place to the other, before Roma children would have to leave to attend school.

Results

Defining Roma children

Regardless of the language used and practices followed, inclusion projects do have a real impact. Even if the impact of various activities and steps taken towards a more just and inclusive society are limited, still one important task was achieved, and that is attention paid by governments to Roma issues. In Romania, starting from 2001 to present not only recognition grew exponentially but simultaneously Roma minority was scrutinized for everything and anything. This prompted the development of local and national strategies because of pressure from the European Union. It is at this moment in time that the importance of Roma representation in all sectors of society becomes evident, demanding for human rights and minority rights to be enforced.

When guidelines of an inclusion project are established, according to workers on said projects, preliminary assessment of the need is carried out as well as a selection of the individuals who are to be the recipients of the actions and results the projects bring about. Roma participants selection is very much connected to Roma identity or an overemphasized identity and authenticity while at the same time a willingness to take a subordinate position regarding authorities, which in this paper is represented by project workers and investors financially sustaining the good run of the project. According to multiple discussions with those involved in project implementation, Roma authenticity is directly linked to „to being ‘visibly Roma’ i.e. having a darker skin color, having a well-known Romani family name, or knowing Romani. As a result, not fitting the racial and ethnic stereotypes can be disadvantageous in this market.” (Rostas & Rovid, 2015, p.9)

This is exactly what I have been told during the last observation, where a number of twelve Roma children were selected to attend recreational activities. When I asked the representative how they were selected, the first aspect was simply the place where they were coming from (a large settlement of Roma around the city), then physical appearance and last Roma parents willingness to allow their children to participate. A specific number of fifty children had been already set in the guideline for this specific project, therefore the selection was even more restrained and ultimately leading to a limited impact.

When taking into account recreational activities in a public space, according to representatives, they had to choose very carefully the time to take Roma children to the play

area. When asked the reason, they stated that unfortunately Roma children are very loud and do not have enough manners to interact appropriately with the rest of the children and adults present at the same time in the same space, therefore representatives would bring them for around two hours in the morning from ten to twelve. This way they would avoid unpleasant situations, as stated by them, when some adults are accepting and welcoming while others are blatantly disrespectful and discriminatory.

While it is true Roma children are quite energetic, as I have noticed during the last two observations, in no way means they are different from the rest of the children. Roma children simply do not have the same privileged upbringing. Usually the chores would include taking care of their brothers and sisters, cleaning the area they live in which ultimately affects how they behave as parents are not present and most times not prepared to guide them and teach them. This unfortunately, from what I gathered during the course of the observations, is because being Roma and looking slightly different in terms of skin, eye or hair color brings down significantly a Roma adult's chances of finding proper work and providing for the family accordingly.

Othering of Roma children

Romania has a Roma Strategy but according to the Romanian Prime Minister at the time (2014), it was developed because Brussels demanded as a member of the European Union to do so. So the Strategy exists only on paper. What this means for European Union's efforts is that, inclusion through various projects co-exists with exclusionary practices. In the effort to adopt and implement positive change for Roma, a discriminatory rhetoric is still in place which has been adopted by not only citizens but high-profile officials as well.

During the course of the observations this discriminatory rhetoric was all too present but with an element of subtlety found in certain actions and dialogue. Such an example is the first observation, during which the social worker made assumptions that Roma children have more work to do in comparison with the rest of their colleagues. This was emphasized through expressions such as 'especially you', 'you definitely need to do more' 'pay close attention to them, they need more supervision' as if to convey to Roma children and volunteers that indeed Roma are not on the same level. This prompts me to question whether Roma children's great

difficulty in keeping up with simple tasks of reading or writing isn't because of discriminatory rhetoric as opposed to a real need for more assistance during the learning process.

Another instance was when Roma siblings were not attending after-schools activities due to catching lice. Upon learning of this, the social worker was quick on judging the conditions Roma siblings were living in as opposed to what led to the present situation. When I asked for more information on the situation, my knowledge was that the family was rather large, while the living conditions were not meeting the necessary health regulations for basic living. This is very much in line with the paternalistic view on Roma minority, through which a sense of othering was created and maintained.

This situation exemplifies the fact that even if European Union mandates, encourages and financially supports inclusionary efforts for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged populations an exclusionary environment still exists, that unfortunately is reinforced by media and society.

The second time observing, Roma siblings were present but a few other Roma children were not attending due to the weather warming up which meant they had to help the rest of the family with work around the house and the field. What can be understood from this is that, not having the basic living conditions and financial means to sustain everyday life leads to children's inability to gain education and ultimately their development is interrupted or much limited.

What I have determined during the fourteen hours of observation is that the environment, in a small way, dictates the level of acceptance. In the rural environment, because church has a major influence on customs and culture of an area, the local priest being the one involved in the implementation of the inclusion project, gained the respect of the community. This led to parents and children alike building a feeling of trust and assurance to allow for the good run of the project. Which is why the examples provided above, serve as a potential pattern found in Romania, where even if a strategy seemingly exists and community respect and acceptance is present, ingrained stereotypes and set mindset affects the results an inclusion project could bring.

In recent years, the most obvious form of discrimination against the Roma minority was segregated housing. In almost all regions of Romania, Roma settlements can be found on the outskirts of cities and villages. This implies that a level of separation is created, with the

Romanian majority living a privileged life while the Roma minority suffer the consequences of living in an area deprived of basic living conditions. During one of the observations in the rural area, it was brought to my attention that three Roma siblings would not attend both school and after-school programs because of the need their parents had for help around the house and fields with crops. I have to admit that for a moment I was questioning Roma children's parents rather than understanding what led to this particular situation. Because the Roma family lived at the limit of the village border, spatially they were outside the community even if acceptance was present. However, when it comes to needing help with work Roma families stumble upon refusal from the majority to mingle, the only solution being to involve children big enough to help either take care of the younger siblings or take physical work out on the fields alongside their parents. This perpetuates a never ending action of othering, reinforcing the spacial disparity of Roma, while at the same time the stereotypical approach to Roma ethnic minority remains firmly in place.

A representative of these projects made it clear to me during the last observation which took place in an urban setting, specifically the local park, that due to the regrettable area Roma live in, unless a mean of transport is provided, which for this specific project, transport from and to school, activities and back home was, Roma families would not have any means of movement connecting them to the nearby city only walking. Roma, therefore, live enclosed within the walls of their community and practice avoidance of interaction with the Non-Roma majority. The immediate consequence of this is that children do not have access to education and are forced to grow up early on, not being able to have a childhood.

The activities done for the last observation provided Roma children with an environment where they could allow themselves to be children and have fun, yet even this time Roma children's ethnicity had to be taken into account. What was clear with regard to the Non-Roma majority was that during the two hours spent in the park, a begrudging tolerance was practiced, being rather noticeable by the looks people passing by were giving. Representatives stated that the level of acceptance was low when playing with other children and that one factor was that being in the city where the level of judgment was higher. This is one motivation of Roma children's parents not trusting easily when another project begins to allow their children to participate, regardless of what Roma children may gain.

One aspect that stood out from every conversation with representatives was how in spite of so many barriers, Roma children's attendance at school has increased as well as their abilities

to write and speak grammatically correct and altogether behave appropriately when exposed to a social situation. For this reason, European Union efforts to support and encourage Roma inclusion have taken small steps in an environment that presents itself as exclusionary.

Bureaucratic barriers

In order to understand how European projects of inclusion work, first we have to look at the logic behind how they come to be. During the conversations with representatives for the projects what became clear is that in the free neoliberal market responsibility of caring for one state's citizens become the problem of private business and NGO's, promoting the so called out-sourcing of resources needed to conduct said projects of inclusion. This means that funds for the benefit of marginalized population come not from the state rather from private and non-governmental entities dependent as well on these external grants, ultimately leading to challenges faced in implementing positive change for marginalized population due to the ever-changing local policies and political parties. Moreover, when government is expected to contribute with a certain percentage of financial funds for implementation of a project, what can be remarked is that due to a large portion of European Union funds available for member states end up being misused, a number of projects are forced to shut down.

What was noticeable throughout the fourteen hours of observation was that the perspective and actions of the workers were in line with the paternalistic view on Roma minority „a just and civilized society into which passive and marginalized ‘Roma’ have to be integrated.” (Rostas & Rovid, 2015, p.10). I say this because, the way European projects are defined is through the language of social inclusion and by default the policies that follow are supported by quite a limited understanding of the action to civilize and integrate, based very much on personal interpretations fueled by stereotypes and external conditions. Having such structures in place leads to a heavily bureaucratic process, one through which funds are directed to various community organizations that create projects with a limited impact, at the same time giving the impression of positive action.

Therefore, „the primary concern is about creating and maintaining a positive image of their organization/institution. As a result, the organizations/institutions are report-driven and focused on polished project results. Those who know how to produce these receive funds, even

though these ‘experts’ go to the communities more like tourists, take some photos, write some reports and then their work is done, and payment is received.” (Rostas & Rovid, 2015, p.9)

A certain hierarchy of control is in place given by financial means allotted from public funds of the European Union, which establishes constraints and obligations for communities. When discussing this aspect with representatives of these projects it became clear that their role was simply to distribute and follow the money invested while the results, still important, were taking second place. When asked how tracking the evolution of these results takes place after the end of one project, representatives had the same answer. In a period of six to seven months they would go in the community and just observe and have discussions with beneficiaries, in this case Roma families, then immediately after representatives would write and submit reports to European Union project commission. If the results were not the one expected, the blame would be put directly on Roma beneficiaries. A common response among representatives of inclusion projects was that poor life chances combined with dysfunctional social relations, poverty and social exclusion were rooted in the behavior of Roma themselves. Because of Roma’s own free will, a discontinuation of participation in society takes place. This instance very much disregards all the actors and bureaucratic practices involved in establishing Roma’s status of minority.

Private business, local agencies as well as community organizations are the ones that either block or make it difficult for most projects to advance change. This is due to an established balance between a high level of oversight and extensive paperwork. One very simple but important instance was during the first observation when I was told by the representatives that in order to make sure that children had one hot meal for lunch, long debates were taking place, as the local restaurant which was supposed to fulfil this task refused several times, simply because for a few children, they lost money on ingredients needed to prepare the food that otherwise would be priced much higher for one serve. Were it not for the priest, who’s social center was the primarily beneficiary of the financial grant, to intervene through the respect the community had for him, children would not have had one consistent meal, which unfortunately for some was the only nutrient food for the day. "While EU funds offer considerable potential for bolstering Roma inclusion, bottlenecks at national, regional and local levels are limiting their effective use" by member states. (Sobotka, E., & Vermeersch, p.821, 2012) This instance just shows that sometimes, unless various entities have something to gain from being involved in projects, refusal becomes the obvious choice.

Another aspect that affects the impact one inclusion project can have is related to the lack of personnel, or better said, prepared personnel, to tend to children from marginalized communities. Regardless of the environment, rural or urban, during the observation period the conclusion was the same. Even if volunteers were present, they did not have authority over children, therefore a healthy development was questionable.

The social worker present for both observations seemed to know all children as she was living in the village, however it became clear quickly that she simply could not care for all children. She would jump from table to table and try to help with each child's homework, while the volunteers would assist in making sure they behave and are focused on what they have to do. Even when the priest wife, who was a teacher, was present, not much difference could be observed. Because of personnel shortage only a few children would achieve the objective of the inclusion project, to provide children from marginalized communities with the necessary knowledge to succeed, which ultimately leads to a limited impact on the progress that would otherwise certainly have positive outcomes not only for Roma children but for society at large as well.

Conclusions

Since 2001 when Roma minority was included on the European radar of inclusion projects, not many advancements have been done regarding Roma's standing in society. I attribute this to a paternalistic view on Non-Roma intervention in including Roma within the majority deemed acceptable. While these inclusion projects may come across as positive, which they are to a certain degree, at the same time they reinforce structures of oppression in a society that is complicit in upholding a system of Non-Roma supremacy. Non-Roma have been trained to internalize and uphold a narrative that blames Roma for their position in society, completely disregarding responsibility for any action that may provide positive change. This way, Non-Roma benefit from the privilege of being part of a majority that has access to power to constrain the Roma minority to remain within a fixed set of misconceptions and stereotypes.

Denying the fact that inclusion project are benefiting Roma communities would be wrong, but admitting that their impact is very much limited is pertinent. This is because assimilating one minority within a majority one does not need to completely erase culture,

customs and traditions in order to become a just society, but without these actions' inclusion projects only bring more harm to an otherwise perfectly applicable project.

Even if the European Union has provided financial support, derogated guidelines for specific inclusion projects and encouraged national strategy creation with focus on Roma minority, what has not been managed yet is to erase the discriminatory rhetoric based on stereotypes that leads to an imperfect impact. It is true that positive change has emerged through these inclusion projects, but substantial change is still in the works and unless Roma agency is not taken into account what will always be promoted is inclusion generating exclusion.

When guidelines of a project are created what I consider to be a key action is, involvement of Roma as they are the ones who can say what the real needs are and how best to work through them. It has to be taken into account that each nation and each municipality is particular, but Roma minority is part of most, therefore substantial impact cannot be created without the beneficiary of the inclusion projects having a say. Without a clear focus and a national and local strategy to help desegregate, include and educate society and individuals, European Union efforts would remain just limited to helping a few in the detriment of most.

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CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Master thesis: European inclusion projects of Roma communities in Romania: power and inequality.

Name, email of student: Dana Madalina Marut, 604814dm@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Bonnie French, french@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: April 4, 2022 through June 20, 2022

Is the research study conducted within DPAS

YES - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - NO

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - **NO**
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - **NO**
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - **NO**
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants?
Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.). YES - **NO**
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - **NO**
6. Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? **YES** - NO
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - **NO**
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - **NO**
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - **NO**
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - **NO**

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

_____ It is unavoidable because I have to collect data involving respondents own perception on the ethnic origin in order to answer my research questions and reach either a validation or invalidation of the hypothesis

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

_____ Participants will be informed about the study as well as about how and where the results will be presented. They will have the possibility of choosing to participate or not.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

_____ This study could cause negative emotional consequences to participants, part of the minority ethnic group considering that the questions asked have the potential of being rather direct with respect to personal situations and experiences.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

___Data will be collected at the office implementing European inclusion projects as well as on field in two locations where majority of the residents are part of the minority ethnic group. _____

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

___For the observation part the number is unknown but I estimate at least two families residing in each of the two locations

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

_____For the observation part the size is close to five hundred while for the interviews is close to thirty people working in the offices.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

____ Password protected on personal laptop that only I am the only one with access _____

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

____ Myself _____

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

____ Once a week _____

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

____ When coding I will transition to numerical identification and the "metadata" will only be kept by me in a secure place and separate from the anonymised coding. _____

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Dana Madalina Marut

Name (EUR) supervisor: *Bonnie French*

Date: June 19, 2022

Date: June 19, 2022

APPENDIX I: Informed Consent Form (if applicable)

Consent Form

Title: *European inclusion projects of Roma communities in Romania: power and inequality.*

The researcher is Dana Madalina Marut, student enrolled at the Erasmus University in the Department of Sociology for the Social Inequalities Master Programme (604814dm@eur.nl)

The contact details of the EUR data protection officer (privacy@eur.nl)

This research is part of my dissertation paper in which as the researcher my goal is to find out what is the perception that is prevalent among individuals working directly on implementing European projects of Inclusion of Roma communities and what changes do these projects bring about among Roma communities as well as in development of social policies targeting ethnic minorities.

Thank you for reading the information sheet about the research. If you are able to participate then please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

*Please
Initial box:*

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated [.....] and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

I agree for this interview to be audio-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in the paper developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the researcher will be allowed access to the original recording.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in [researcher's home with only the researcher having access to data] until [exam board confirms the results of the researcher's dissertation].

I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for [6 months from the date of the confirmation of the results by the exam board]

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I agree to take part in this interview.

| | | |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Name of participant | Date | Signature |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------|
| <u>Dana Madalina Marut</u> | _____ | _____ |
| Name of researcher | Date | Signature |

Copies: *Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, and the information sheet. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the main project file which must be kept in a secure location.*

APPENDIX II: Confidentiality Agreement Form (if applicable)

Project title *-European inclusion projects of Roma communities in Romania: power and inequality.*

I, Dana Madalina Marut, the Researcher,

I agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).
5. other (specify).

(Date) (Print Name) (Signature)

Researcher(s)

(Date) (Print Name) (Signature)