

EMPOWERING SEGREGATED ROMA COMMUNITIES: LESSONS FROM 'SHACK TO 3E HOUSE' PROJECT

Katarina Smatanova

Institute of Land Use and Urban Planning, Faculty of Architecture, Slovak University of Technology  
Bratislava, katarina.smatanova@stuba.sk

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Access to resources, inequalities in living conditions and housing shortages decades widely recognised as the main challenges for urban planning, especially in developing countries. Since the fall of communism regime, the rapid socio-economic transition caused similar problems also in post-socialist countries, however with different characteristics. In Slovakia, there are more than 800 segregated neighbourhoods, housing 300,000 (10% of Slovak population), predominantly of Roma ethnicity. These settlements suffer from social exclusion, poverty, absence of basic services, socio-pathological phenomena and Government initiatives aiming to integrate and regularise these 'pockets of poverty'. Inefficient and number of these settlements. A recently adopted strategy, unclear responsibilities between national and local governance and traditional planning tools proved to be unsuccessful in addressing multi-dimensional problems concerning these communities.

A pilot project on the basis of partnership between local authorities, community organisations and 'Shack to 3E house', was established in 2012, aiming to improve quality of living conditions in these neighbourhoods, using tools typical for developing countries, such as slum-upgrading and self-help housing provision. In the process of implementation of project ideas into the national strategies.

Proposed paper looks at a process of transfer of knowledge, planning practices and implementation from developing countries into a 'developed country'. Paper also discusses the role of Third Sector in testing experience gained through the project, elaborated project ideas into the governmental sector into the large-scale institutional solution.

## 1. Introduction

After 1989, transition of economic and politic system in Slovakia has brought new urban planning practices and instruments. As before the planners served merely as a conduit for supranational ideologies and economic decisions into the physical fabric of the city (Pavlik and Stanilov, 2009), today they have to face various environmental, economic and social challenges requiring comprehensive solutions. Also, as the 'public involvement' in planning processes was during the former regimes only formal (if any), thus new planning practices must embrace also new approaches and instruments, allowing for people to participate in shaping their environment. Similar to other transitory countries, for planning systems to address these challenges, the transfer of ideas and planning practices from abroad is an important element (Budi, 2001). At the same time, the system change has also brought new forms of social stratification into the society, widening the social and economic gaps between the rich and top and many others on the bottom. Of the most challenging and requiring urban

solutions is the situation of Roma, living in marginalised, segregated settlements in the eastern part of the country. In these settlements, the poverty combined with long-term attempts of assimilation, resulted in social exclusion of many of these communities (UNDP, 2003), while number of people living in these areas has been increasing (UNDP, 2014).

However, the government attempts to address the needs of the communities have failed, resulting in deepening the Roma dependency on the paternalistic state. The stereotyping of Roma community as 'undeserved' (Múinka, 2012a). Even though governmental shift in rhetoric aiming to eventually promote 'empowerment' approach, bringing a positive shift into the mainstream policy making, however, it without a clear strategy. Thus, the NGO local municipality of Rankovce in partnership with ETP and local-based civic association 'Pre Lepšiu budúcnosť' decided to test the possible provision of services to people who needed them most. Based on the tools often used in development, micro-financing schemes and incremental housing strategy - drafted a project through which individual families are provided houses according their needs, vocational education and vocational trainings, as a first steps of the traps in marginalised settlements.

In the first part, paper outlines the current context of situation of Roma communities, approximately 200,000 Roma live in, - using Yiftachel's (2009) concept - 'gray landscapes, in spatially segregated and separated areas, urban and rural ghettos'. This article briefly introduces the planning and state framework that governs addressing Roma communities, with a particular attention to the housing, as this is the focus of the study. In the third part is introduced the project 'From shack to 3E house' where community associations provides alternative housing delivery method, based on micro-financing and incremental housing, developing a missing instruments in state systems. However, in the following part, there are deep differences between government approach to address Roma communities. In this contexts, the role of community-based civic associations is not only in developing alternative ways of service delivery and planning instruments, but also in translating the values of the community and positive role-modelling in current context. The solidarity and empathy among Slovak society is decreasing (Radičová, 2001). In the end, it proposes the question for further research and challenges that needs to be addressed to avoid more harms and negative consequences of new policies.

This article is based on the study of written sources, enrolment in various thematic areas and policy making processes, especially of being a housing programme coordinator in the organisation ETP Slovakia, and interviews with experts and Slovak policy-makers. The study is based on observations and experiences made during number of research and work stays in Roma settlements in Slovakia.

## 2. Segregated Roma communities in Slovakia

### 2.1 Current situation

The most recent territorial mapping of Roma residential patterns published in 2014 (UNDP, 2014) show that 60% of Roma live integrated among the majority of the society. The rest, almost 220,000 people, live in 800 segregated or separated Roma settlements. In urban concentrations (ghettos) or spatially separated and segregated concentrations.

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<sup>1</sup> following methods used by national monitoring of Roma communities, see UNDP 2014. The methodology of the survey is based on the self-declaration of Roma communities. In the survey, the Roma communities are defined as those communities where more than 10% of the population are Roma. The Roma are defined as those people who consider themselves Roma and are considered Roma by their surroundings, as well as those who are considered Roma by themselves to be Roma.

located predominantly in rural areas, commonly called 'Roma settlements' or 'marginalised communities' (as adopted by national strategy 'Long-term Housing Conception' (SRM, 2014)).

The living conditions in these areas, especially on the countryside, display deprivation and social exclusion: poverty, level of unemployment reaching up to 50%, low education level, socio-pathological phenomena (crime, alcohol abuses), and dependence on social help (FiladelfiovÉ et al., 2014). The physical structure of the fabric in these areas is characterised with very low technical status of building stock, reflected also in poor sanitation. Another problem is also the informality of the dwellings and whole areas, and lack of access to basic infrastructure and services. Facilities and amenities are usually missing in parts of the urban structures (UNDP, 2014). Also, most of these areas are located in marginalised and less-thriving regions of eastern Slovakia. Thus, the segregation is supported by marginalisation of the whole region. Radi ovÉ (2001) calls this situation 'spatial marginalisation' and warns that this situation often results into definitive social exclusion of the community from overall economic and social life of major population.

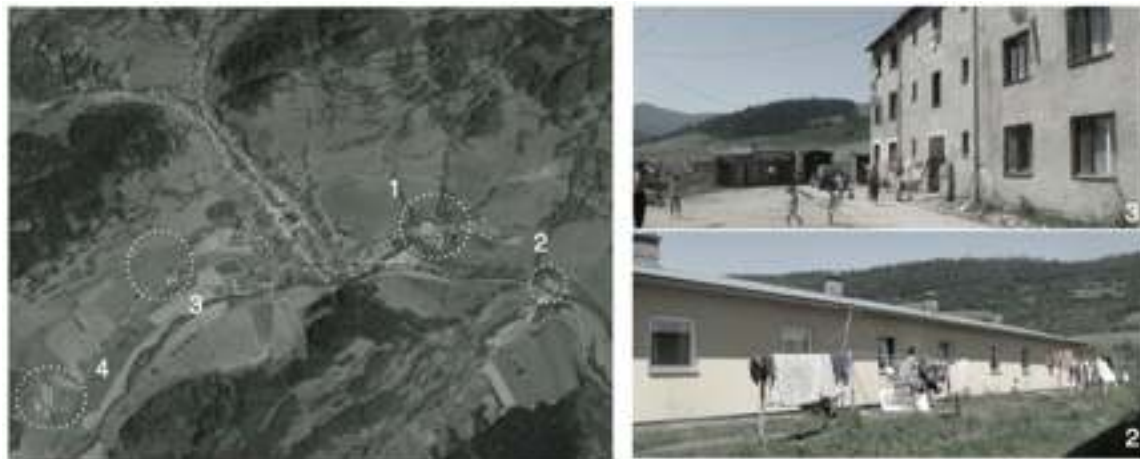


Table 1. Example of municipality NĚlepkovo. In the municipality there are located four forms of Roma concentrations (1) separated on the margins of the village, (2) separated in distance 2 km (3,4), in which the segregation was supported by development of new housing, in socialist period (3), in late 1990s (4), recent disaster planning (1).

Even though there are differences among the settlements, in general, as several studies show (Va e ka et al., 2003, Mu inka and eds., 2012), the residents of these areas are trapped in generational circles of poverty - neighbourhood effect in these areas is so strong that social mobility towards up is in many cases almost impossible.

To put it shortly, Hurrle (2006) depicts the overall environment in the settlement as 'World in the First World'. Also a shift in government rhetorics, replacing 'Roma' with 'socially disadvantaged', is evident (in Scheffel et al., 2004) recognises as an attempt to make Roma 'invisible'. Thus, Yiftachel's concept of 'gray spaces' (Yiftachel, 2004) is more than appropriate when thinking of the situation of Roma communities, as for centuries have Roma population in Slovakia been under constant threat of eviction to the marginal, impoverished, environmentally degraded outskirts of Slovak towns and villages, a spatially segregated location, where their 'otherness' cannot be seen (JurovÉ, 2004).

## 2.2 Government actions

As in many post-socialist countries, planning practice in Slovakia have in recent years experienced deep shifts and transitions. During the communism, the planning system was almost completely centralised. National identity and economic planning was executed on the highest level. The role of the local planners was to 'act as a technical translators' of the superior planning into the physical layout of the individual cities' (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009, p.22). The planning was thus not really meaningfully integrated into the physical environment. There were no spaces for citizen participation. Thus, in practice the most of the planning was passive, distributing the values of communism theories of united citizenry and social justice.

After 1989, transition of political and economic system brought not only new social and environmental challenges, but also requirements for instruments and methods for the integration of all these dimensions and market-based ideology. Thus, pre-occupied with the new system, it was not until 2000s, when Slovak Republic also started to deal with the needs of Roma communities. This was in particular since becoming an EU member state. Slovakia started the preparation for Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015, the situation of Roma communities became also on EU priority list (Muinka, 2012a) and thus under the pressure of the European Commission, several national strategies have been adopted (Hurrle, 2006).

At the same time, increasing body of researches providing insights into processes of social discrimination and poverty of Roma on both, micro- and macro-level (see for instance: Hurrle, 2001, Zoon, 2001, Vašek et al., 2003), emerged. Particularly considerable part of the research the gaps of state disinterest was promoted by the local civic association. A research project of the European Union and the Open Society Foundation identified over 900 projects in years 2000-2005 implemented by NGOs, which had been targeted to Roma (www.osf.sk).

Stemming on both of these streams of academic and practical information, two national strategies occurred. As noted by several studies (Hurrle, 2006), one of the most important is 'Comprehensive Development Programme of Roma settlements' (SR, 2002). Document addresses multiple issues underlying Roma poverty and thus aimed at providing strategies for 'slum-upgradings', particularly of underdeveloped and spatially segregated settlements. The Programme argued for integrated interventions that were supposed to empower and improve living conditions of Roma households, calling for involvement also a non-Roma parts in order to ensure proper development strategies.

However, in reality, due to lack of financing (depended on external fundings and weak political will, unclear departmental responsibilities, and lack of concrete implementation), the programme did not succeed. What have been left are fragmented pieces of projects in social work, employment and housing provision, which are under responsibilities of various departments and did not provide any systematic set of instruments. Since that, government has been developing new conceptions and strategies, re-formulating approach towards interventions for Roma. Again, these national documents have been hardly binding and have not provided concrete instrument and integrated tools for addressing the complex innovative tools for Roma. Addressing problems of marginalised Roma communities have ended up in the response that is dependent on good will and proactive approach, of Local Authorities with own resources (Muinka, 2012b, Smatanov, 2014).

## 3.1 Housing delivery innovation

State-supported housing delivery is one of the few tools that are available for addressing the needs of NGOs to address the bad living conditions of segregated Roma communities. National strategy for housing has been since 1998 covered by "Programme of housing development". With

of this program, Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development provides subsidies for local municipalities for the acquisition of municipal housing. The programme is foremostly aimed to fill in the deficit in public sector social housing restitution processes after 1989, only small percentage of housing stock remains in private administration. 'Long-term housing conception of marginalised society groups' obliged the housing programme to provide also solution for addressing bad housing conditions in Roma settlements.

The programme is now governed by Law no. 443/2010 (SR, 2010) on subsidies for housing development and social housing. The Law adjusts subsidising of construction of social housing apartments, available to local authorities and selected non-governmental organisations. 80% of apartments are delivered - of normal standard (max flat area up to 60m<sup>2</sup>) to the higher construction state financial subsidies (80% of construction costs) targets Roma communities. However, this type is not only lower in floor area, but also mainly simple, unfurnished flats, in the row/apartment houses with a shared support participation processes, the rest 20% of the construction costs are in part covered off by the future Roma tenants of these apartments.

Being undoubtedly appropriate solution for some cases, in relation to segregation of Roma communities the programme have number of critics. Firstly and most important it reinforces the Roma dependency trap and promotes again, paternalistic and control as this tool is available only to LA and limited NGOs. The individual residents do not have accessible tool through which they could improve their situation on their own. The construction does not in fact promotes 'empowerment', as it is not complete without state assistance (SmatanovE, 2014). Also in reality, due to lacking skills, this work is done by professional construction company (SmatanovE, 2010). Also quantitative research shows low effectiveness of such a model. Regarding the scope of a deprived area housing programme seems to be costly and not very time-efficient (MTCRD, 2014). From quantitative evaluation prepared by Milan ime ka Foundation (Hojs k, 2008) almost 92% of new rental housing 'conserved' or deepened spatial segregation. This spatial segregation is closely linked to deepening poverty and overall social exclusion, the question of the purpose of such construction arises. Renting social housing is financial burden for tenants (Ma ĚkovE et al., 2014).

Important to note is also wider societal implications of the program. Direct discrimination contributes to worsening of the general society mood. By majority is this program perceived as favouritism 'because Roma again receive new free apartments', which may have long-term consequences than just short-term improvement of living conditions 'fortification' (see for instance (Mu inka et al., 2012)).

### 3.2 Project 'From Shack to 3E House'

Since the deficiencies in state housing model have become more apparent, the municipalities are involved in delivering alternative services and dealing with disadvantage groups with number of initiatives. One of the most successful in providing social innovation on transfer of knowledge has been a non-profit civic association ETP Slovakia.

ETP Slovakia was established as a direct continuer of Environmental Training Programme for Central and Eastern Europe. This was initiated in 1992 by U.S. Agency for International Development and was implemented until 1998 in six countries of Central and Eastern Europe. ETP Slovakia became an independent entity since 1995. Since its establishment, ETP Slovakia has cooperated with local government and businesses as well as with NGOs in programs that increase capacity for local development and improve the environment as well as provide assistance

individuals and families. Currently ETP has its traditional donor organisation activities, e.g., on international level (Open Society Foundation, Habitat for Humanity Financial Mechanism) as well as local profit-based companies. The background of funding in particular allows to promote the projects that have some idea-background of the world, especially in developing countries. The international funding gives also an accountability, what attracts Slovak professional who were educated in Western countries to provide their voluntary consultancy and knowledge in the activities put forward. It was also the case of the author of this article, who was educated in university and implemented this knowledge as a housing programme coordinator in the analysed project 'From Shack to 3E House'.

The first projects focused on improving living condition of Roma from segregation. ETP promoted ETP with an assistance of international donors in 2000s through micro-finance programmes. One of the most successful proved to be financial tools allowing individuals to 'help themselves' through small micro-mortgages and savings schemes (Bøtø, 2012; Mu inka, 2012b). Since 2004, organisation has provided more than 600 micro-mortgages for amounts of up 1000 euros for housing improvements, or building basic sanitation facilities aimed at disadvantaged households who were not eligible for commercial and bank mortgages. An essential part of this financial assistance was also participation in education programmes, delivered also by the same organisation.

In 2011 was ETP Slovakia asked by LA in Rankovce, a municipality in the eastern part of Slovakia with 300 non-Roma and 700 Roma residents living on the municipality's fringe. ETP provided an assistance with addressing housing shortage and bad living conditions of the Roma community on a larger scale. Due to the commitment and strong sense of care, ETP opted for more holistic approach in addressing needs of local Roma community. With a support of UNDP and partnership with local-based civic association 'Pre Lepšiu budúcnosť', providing community and social work in the community, project 'From Shack to 3E House' (Ecologically and Economically Efficient) was elaborated.

In the first year of the project, number of meetings with all the stakeholders was held to understand the real requirements of the future clients, attitudes of all actors and informal education was provided. The meetings with the clients revealed that the preferred housing is an individual family house standing on its own plot of land (Maľba, 2012). This finding was in contrast to the state-distributed form of row/apartment housing spaces. However, since the standard of individual family house requires more financial resources, model of the 'incremental housing' was adopted. Based on the principle of three-stage construction, as a 'core' is delivered at once, which can later on by the residents easily extended to 100, or 150 m<sup>2</sup> (see Table 2 for further details).

Project does not only envisage empowerment of clients by upgrading them from passive bystanders to active participants in their home construction, but also by helping them to acquire skills and supporting their sense of responsibility. Essential part of the project from the beginning been the involvement in activation programmes. Initiative families through the process of housing provision delivered also informal education, vocational training through activities involving also non-Roma, possibility to extend their informal housing is not limited only on the provision of 'better roof', but also involves their active contribution to the empowerment of the families and help them to step-up from the

Table 2: Operation of micro-financing schemes for housing provision in the project '3E House'

Roma families purchase the land usually with funds accumulated via ETP's Savings Programme. The municipality provided the land for project participants for EUR 3/m<sup>2</sup>. The purchase of land is a very important step since homeowners will gain a sense of responsibility as a taxpayer, and, at the same time, become eligible to state social benefits in case their financial situation does not improve after the project. The main objective of the Savings Programme is to provide the necessary funding to reach a pre-determined goal of the client, which can be for the client's personal development, housing investment, or business activities (any other purpose of land purchase), while teaching basic financial knowledge and skills to willing clients and families, i.e. how to plan realistically achievable targets in the medium-term. Clients can save an amount of approximately EUR 50 per month over a period of 12-24 months. Once the client reaches the pre-determined savings amount in a newly established bank account, as an incentive, he or she gets a bonus representing an equivalent amount (100%) for his or her savings from the donor organisation (Maňáková et al., 2014).

Clients who have successfully participated in the Savings Programme, undertaken financial literacy education courses and demonstrated a strong commitment to change their living conditions are provided with micro-loans up to the amount of EUR 6,000 for the materials and other costs for the construction of 3E house, repayable over a period of 10 years. The interest rate is 3%, which corresponds to the average rate of inflation in Slovakia. The loans are provided within the framework of a specific programme for socially vulnerable families and individuals whose financial situation does not enable them to obtain conventional forms of financing due to the unavailability (mortgages), or very unfavourable conditions (non-bank loans). The support is provided in the form of construction material, tools and re-payment of all costs of the project, including administration, i.e., no cash is provided (ETP Annual Report 2012). Funding for the Savings and Micro-loan Programmes is provided by the American charity organisation Habitat for Humanity Society Foundation and Habitat for Human

Table 3: Construction of new housing units in progress, Rankovce, 2015. Illustration



### 3.3 Results of 'empowerment approach'

The pilot project involved first 6 houses that were build in 2013. The success escalated a snow-ball effect among the rest of Roma families across the region. Due to the financial limitation of the micro-financing revolving fund, the project involved another 12 families in building their houses (for details see Table 3).

As the project has been still evolving, it is difficult to make final evaluation. In September 2014 was executed preliminary monitoring, involving series of semi-structured interviews with several members of the municipality, from both communities. The results depict the changes that have taken place in their life since the project started. They subjectively evaluate the project success. All of the respondents agreed that the project significantly improved the life for the whole community in the positive way (Bøtø et al., 2014). Also, the women from families involved in the project became more active, and with the help of local based community association 'Pre Lepivot' that is run by non-Roma, which focuses on social work in the community, established a micro-business with second-hand clothing. The women have focused on production and sell of 'eco-bricets' ([www.ozplz.sk](http://www.ozplz.sk)). Also, some of the women became a members of the civic association 'Pre Lepivot' are apart from men, and they are being active in addressing the cleanliness and safety in the municipality.

### 4. Transferability hurdles - attempts of institutionalisation

In a way, it can be summarised, the project 'From Shack to 3E House' follows all the ideas set up in 'Comprehensive Development Programme of Roma settlements' (SR, 2002) and thus proves that the ideas set up in national strategies are feasible, effective and successful. However, to set up the missing instruments that the state strategies lacked - incremental housing, as argued Ferguson and Smets (2010), institutional housing finance is in crisis in many countries, and particular schemes of incremental housing and micro-finance schemes are needed to address needs of low/moderate-income families.

Thus, the final aim of the civic associations involved has been to introduce the project into Slovak legislation (national action plans and official strategies) as complementary solutions. Governments representatives from all fields and key bodies (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Inner Affairs, Ministry of Family and Labour) conducted regular site visits and participated in all the 'checkpoints' of the project evaluation reports during 2012–2014, including the presentation of the project in House of Representatives in 2013 (Mašková et al., 2014).

However, until now, the central government in spite of having recognised benefits was not committed to officially acknowledge the likewise alternative solution. Without financial administrative support, even though the 2011 Proposal of Pilot Approach to Housing Infrastructure from Structural Funds of the European Union, which also included projects of building rental apartments for marginalised groups for EUR 18.529 million from Structural Funds between 2013 and 2015, or a National Housing Strategy 2015–2020 (2014), provided good chances for that.

The common problem of implementation of grassroots projects, and thus the 'accountability' of NGO (Kilby, 2006) is in this case not an issue - number of social innovation projects in ETP Slovakia have by legal institution already been implemented (Bøtø et al., 2014). To illustrate this situation, it is useful to adopt the idea of 'conflicting rationalities' (Bøtø et al., 2014).

illustrating how deep are the differences between institutional approach in un-  
'correct way of housing' and the real needs of poor Roma, translated into the  
programme by civic association.

What is mentioned by the relevant government representatives is that such solution  
integrated, multi-departmental approach, what is difficult to accomplish. It is  
the consensus of all the state departments is almost impossible, as each department  
priorities and approaches in addressing Roma problems. Also, there are several  
of the project that government representatives consider as not very appropriate.

The different rationalities causes by step-by-step construction and ownership model  
strategy. What for Roma families symbolises their ability to stand up on their own  
institution has not been recognised. Government programme delivers rental apartments  
idea of 'enabling vertical mobility' (MTCRD, 2014), however in reality, to escape  
requires also accumulation of financial sources. As described already as various  
actually the homeownership that performs a critical economic, as well as  
Homeownership is of key importance in building households wealth and way out of  
low-income to middle-class (Ferguson and Navarrete, 2003).

Another 'clashing rationality' lies behind the incremental approach of the housing  
the process of obtaining housing, including self-help constructions, which is regarded  
as a 'correct method of housing'. Even though this methods have been already by  
as rational, innovative and creative (Turner and Fichter, 1972, Smets, 2006)  
elaborated within valid EU building standards and requirements, from the institutional  
can perceived a mistrust in 'Roma being able to build the house themselves' and  
the long consolidation time. As note Ferguson and Navarrete (2003), such an approach  
the institutional bodies, in many countries all over the world governments and  
the 'paradigm of housing as a product' and spread this model at any costs. In  
'mistrust' can be observed in institutional bodies' seeing a 'risk' in providing  
allowing Roma, who are mostly unemployed and depend on welfare benefits, as due  
shortage of many the repayment is constantly under threat. Saving encourages them  
of their money aside and demonstrates their ability and willingness to make regular  
also proves the 95% repayment rate of micro-financing provided by ETP Slovakia

Last but not least is the non-respecting of Roma specificities, which is anchor  
housing model, providing uniting solutions for everyone. However, this feature  
programmes seems to occur often, as also Liøgeois (1994,p.95) argues that 'so  
house the Roma at any price in the conditions that we regard as appropriate to  
stem on the fundamental perception of 'what is right' and 'for whom'.

## 5. What made the project successful? Role of NGO

The role of community associations in the planning is not new, however, there has  
renewed interest on international level (Choudry, 2013, Banks et al., 2015), as  
parts of Europe (Healey, 2015). In the transitional countries is the role of civil  
even more relevant, not only in promoting democracy (Choudry, 2013), but also as  
basis and values different to these of state and thus being more effective and successful

Since the fall of communism regime, Slovakia has experienced the explosion of civil  
number of Third sector organisations has been continuously growing. According to  
data, the number of registered civic associations exceeds 40,000 (Ministry of Internal  
of persisting weak institutional environment, there is a growing number of new  
involving not only 'laic activist', but also many professionals in the field who

feel strong commitment and responsibility to the local issues and want to participate in the country's future (Bøtø et al., 2012).

These associations in Slovakia, as in many other countries, provide basic functions: (1) representation of the voices of the certain societal groups, as an (1) experimental control of power - watchdogging, (3) alternative service delivery provision, and (4) a source of alternative approaches to public policy. So far, the NGOs were the main force promoting the ideas of 'empowerment' into the real life. These include most notably through providing social services, such as social field workers, Roma advisory assistance, and health assistance for Roma communities (see also (Jarešik, 2003).

In fact, in real every-day activities of Slovak civic association cover all the issues discussed in the case study. Project 'From shack to 3E house' is based on a gap in infrastructure in state housing delivery. Since government instruments are available only to the state, it comes with a provision of instrument available to individual families and thus they can decide about their future. These ideas and practices are based on a general shift from 'state approach' towards the 'empowering approach', using specific tools of micro-entrepreneurship schemes, and incremental housing. However, these tools have also their critique in developing countries. Many of them where in this case however transformed into a form of help, often being criticised for depletion of sources for the poor, is in the case of Roma families their first work, thus it provides also the training for the future opportunities. Important is also to stress that this programme does not aim to be the only option, on the contrary, project aims to be recognised as a complementary to state housing strategies.

Being of special importance in case of addressing ethical issues, such as of Roma and successfulness of civic associations to (5) promote equity and different models of transition from a social structure based on forced equity a developed profit-driven one, influenced general societal moral settings and preferences. As notes also Radi (2001) an overall trend of decreasing of social solidarity among Slovak society. The situation is even sharper when Roma are concerned, as any institutional help provided by majority perceived as unacceptable, unfair and thus left merely on the basis of charity (Hojsk, 2010) of the voluntary-based civic associations. As Friedman (2001) non-governmental organisations/third sector/civil society show hope that an alternative might be possible through the voluntary actions of civil society

Therefore, the role of civic associations, as a value-driven bodies, is in the core of the essentials. The value-basis drives civic associations to pursue public benefit rather than profits or social/political benefits. Kilby (2006,p.953) sees the values of NGOs as a Weltanschauung, a world view, from which derives their motivation to serve for the public. In relation to the case study, it is thus important to look at the underlying moral and ethical problems connected to Roma communities. On the level of national-state rhetoric, Radi (2001) identified two basic principles that underlie these actions. First is the principle of non-discriminatory measures - to level the inequality in chances caused by historical injustices which has resulted in current state of exclusion and marginalisation (see for instance Radi, 2001). This approach is complemented by the knowledge that without an external help, Roma there is no-way-out to get from the poverty traps and state dependent segregated Roma settlements (Radi, 2001, Jarešik, 2003, Marcin in and Marcin, 2003). However, the approach of civic association was based on different basis, such as social development, protect the environment and assist in the development of the social, educational and cultural potential of people, organisations and communities with the aim of problem solving within disadvantaged regions, socially disadvantaged groups

minorities' (Mařková et al., 2014). This approach is not based on promoting the public-led area, but also, promoting development, empowerment and care.

The crucial part of the civic associations activities is then their step-by-step the standard practice and formal procedures. As also Murphy (2014,p.146) argue are community-based planning founded on a new ethic and morality: 'A new world imagined as divorced from charity and based on care. Within this framework, into a gift but the expected response from community members who support one another conclusions and vision for future provides also Friedmann (2011), arguing also step incremental approach in planning practice, no-longer based on ideologies transformative momentum of a more responsible and public-good based societies.

## 6 Further research

This article aimed to open up a discussion that have receive so far only marginal each of the issues presented requires further, deeper elaboration. Firstly, the associations in finding innovative solutions for empowerment of given Roma community model for planning practice in Slovakia on the local level; there is still an absence of state planners on regional and national level to address the marginalisation of Roma and provide a solutions on these scale. If not, any long-term future solutions for non-Roma will not be efficient.

Secondly, the overarching challenge is that of values and attitudes of the society both ready, able and willing to address the issues of Roma marginality? As long as stereotyping among non-Roma in the country persist, shall there be taken any initiative in order to change the attitudes and values of a majority society?

## 6. Conclusions

To sum up, paper looked at the situation of Roma communities living in segregated settlements in Slovakia. For a decades have Roma minority in Slovakia experienced deliberate attempts of assimilation, creating a 'gray spaces' in Slovak landscape, as illustrated on the case of housing, since the fall of communism regime, the government instruments have been also failing in addressing needs of these communities. On the other hand 'From Shack to 3E House' and its unsuccessful attempts of institutionalisation between government approach and perception of Roma needs and the reality. As a result especially in the case of addressing needs of marginalised Roma is the involvement of civic associations vital due to the lack of solidarity and networks within these communities. This study also illustrated the role of civic association in filling the niches of social services in alternative ways and developing innovative approaches, with an alternative to formal, institutionalised planning practice. However, as these issues in Slovakia have not been articulated, further researchers are needed and the values and underlying mechanisms of assistance for Roma in need must be re-thought.

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