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## Treatment Options for the Post-Socialist Poverty Culture – The Case of a Roma Settlement in Hungary

After the change of regime in Hungary from socialism to capitalism, due to the restructured labour market, the demand for underqualified labour force decreased massively. Therefore, the second generation of post-socialist society of undereducated Roma people is growing up with parents who cannot find a job in the primary labour market and in a social environment which is based on surviving conditions of extreme poverty. The culture of poverty significantly reduces their opportunities. The study, based on interviews with residents in a Roma settlement, community workers and social workers, focused on three potential ways to manage the culture of poverty in a segregated area in a city in an East- and Central European post-socialist country.

**Keywords:** culture of poverty, Roma settlement, underprivileged people, extreme poverty, segregated area.

## Možnosti zdravljenja post-socialistične kulture revščine – primer romskega naselja na Madžarskem

*Po spremembi režima na Madžarskem iz socialističnega v kapitalističnega se je zaradi prestrukturiranja trga delovne sile potreba po manj kvalificiranih delavcih močno zmanjšala. Tako zdaj odraža že druga postsocialistična generacija slabše izobraženih Romov s starši, ki si ne morejo najti dela na primarnem trgu delovne sile, in je zato obsojena na družbeno okolje skrajne revščine. Kultura revščine znatno zmanjšuje njihove možnosti za preživetje. Študija, ki temelji na intervjujih s prebivalci romskega naselja in socialnimi delavci v skupnosti, se osredotoča na tri potencialne načine premagovanja kulture revščine v segregiranem okolju mesta v vzhodno oziroma srednjeevropski postsocialistični državi.*

**Ključne besede:** kultura revščine, romsko naselje, družbeno zapostavljeni ljudje, skrajna revščina, segregirano območje.

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## 1. Introduction

Poverty in developed countries means much more than poor financial conditions or ageing without things. It has specific structure, nature and attributions. The lifestyle of poor people is handed down from father to son, helping them to cope with everyday life.

The concept of poverty culture was created by Oscar Lewis, who discussed the situation and lifestyle of poor families living in slums in Mexico City in 1950's. According to his experiences (Lewis 2000, 142), poverty and a low level of income, as well as difficult living conditions, creates a particular culture which differs completely from the culture of the middle-class. This is the culture of poverty which can help poor people survive everyday life, but simultaneously hinder them from escaping from the circumstances of poverty. Thus those who become poor are after a certain time most likely stuck in this situation and will transmit it through family socialisation down the generations (Spéder 2002). As an effect of this transmission, a culture of poverty<sup>1</sup> develops when the poor conditions persist for a long time and not even the children of next generation can escape from this situation, thus generational poverty develops (Lewis 2000, 143; Stenning 2005, 984). Due to their conditions, people living in poverty do not perceive their acts as norm violation but interpret them as a way of survival. They are almost fully excluded from the money-centred world and their disadvantages make escape impossible. Those who acquire a culture of poverty have no property consciousness; this is why they cannot form personal ties to items and thus do not insist on having personal valuables and cannot accumulate, hence money has no true value among them. On the other hand, they have community awareness, but because of this their culture is contrary to the values of the culture accepted by the majority of society (Gecková et al. 2014, 58); it excludes them out from the greater part of the population.

The culture of poverty recognises the relationship between minority existence and poor financial conditions (Jones 1999; Fainstein 1995; Stewart 2002), which are primarily connected to the Roma as the biggest ethnic minority in Hungary. Their integration into the majority society can be very difficult, hampered by the facts that the Roma often live segregated, in difficult social and economic circumstances that perpetuate poverty culture. The level of their employment in the primary labour market, as well as in many cases the level of their presence in the state supported secondary labour market, is very low.

The purpose of the paper is to introduce the set of values, habits of everyday life, hierarchy and community structure of a Roma community living in a segregated settlement in a Hungarian city, based on my empirical research. I exemplify the disadvantages of the people living in Roma settlements originating from the socialisation of poverty culture. Their social and labour market integration opportunities are very narrow since they are almost completely excluded from

the primary labour market and their low amount of work experience and the lack of professional qualification make their chances even more difficult, they thus largely subsist on the social welfare system (Warzywoda-Kruszynska 2000; Emigh et al. 2001).

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The paper also presents the experiences of social integration development projects connected to the investigated community, the aim of which was to increase the social and labour market integration level of these people, who were socialised on the basis of the values of poverty culture. Those projects tried to change their socialized value system with community programmes, social welfare labour programmes and primary labour market workplace programmes. The further goal of the study was to draw recommendations for similar programmes based on the experiences of the above-mentioned projects.

## 2. Post-Socialist Characteristics of the Poverty Culture

Before the regime change in the socialist countries, underqualified people were compelled to get jobs at agricultural or industrial state companies (Sen 1981; Tarkowska 1997). With the new political and economic system, these companies were privatised or ceased to exist. Unskilled people with low educational achievement (Kolarčík et al. 2009; Vašečka-Radičová 2000) were the first to be excluded from the labour market (Kligman 2001) with the emergence of the market economy; thus their income decreased considerably (Bradbury & Jantti 1999). Therefore, poverty increased among the underqualified segment of population (Magyari et al. 2001; Ladányi 2001; Mitev et al. 2001) and its impact still affects all areas of their life, such as education, income, job opportunities, and safety and health (Samman & Santos 2013; Raphael 2002). Nevertheless, without higher education (UNICEF 2007), the children of this population only inherit and reproduce (Emigh et al. 2001) the poverty and social situation of their parents (Liskó 2001).

The labour market integration of underprivileged people is made even more difficult due to their completely different values, norm structure and particular lifestyle. They have no vision of the future and so they do not plan their life, living on a day-by-day basis. The value of knowledge that is obtainable through schooling is very low for Roma people (Harsányi & Radó 1997, 4). They do not participate in the organisation of society, going to school has no importance and a general distrust characterises them, which closes the door for children to move forward in their life and step out of their current situation. These children living in poverty generally acquire the perspective of this subculture and they know the values of the middle-class; however, they do not follow these norms (Lewis 1959).

Their houses lack public utilities such as electricity, running water, piped gas (Kósa et al. 2007, 859) or a bathroom. They are also overcrowded (Evans 2004,

77; Moser 1998, 11; Brooks & Duncan 1997, 67) and are usually located at the end of villages or in segregated areas. Among youngsters, as early as at the age of 10 (Lewis 2000, 145), the early beginning of sexual life with frequent change of partners, violence, aggressive handling of stress and alcohol abuse are typical (Babinská et al. 2014, 25). These families' attitude to time and their flexible schedule make it hard to adapt the timeframe of work for adults and of school for adolescents and children. Thus, their cultural specifics a priori condemns them to inadequate performance in the workplace and school (Forray & Hegedűs 1985). At the level of residential communities, there is a lack of privacy (Moser 1998, 11) caused by overcrowded apartments (Evans 2004, 77). Childhood – as a period requiring protection – is completely absent from family life, that is characterised by neglect of children, competition for love and early onset of sexual interest. The members of these communities get married and have children among themselves (Lewis 2000, 145; Szuhay 1999, 31).

The habits, attitudes and behaviours resulting from the culture of poverty are difficult to change, and even an exit from the situation of poverty does not imply value change. This is the major controversy of poverty culture, since people cannot live without it, but it is precisely this culture that becomes the biggest barrier to escaping poverty. Poverty and social exclusion (Janevic et al. 2010; Kósa et al. 2007; Ladányi & Szelényi, 2001) creates rules, norms and practices which are entirely different from the values of the majority (Virág 2009). The feeling of common fate can characterise the subculture of Roma settlements, but the solidarity felt for each other plays only a minimal role in the lives of the people living there (Solt 2009, 110). Underprivileged people do not perceive some of their acts as a violation of the law, because of their particular socio-cultural background which makes the improvement of their situation much more difficult (HAOS 2004).

The role of family socialization exerts a major effect on personality, which in a natural way spontaneously but significantly influences the social success of children. The norms and habits of children evolve as an outcome of the social and cultural characteristics of family communities. This process is a part of socialisation among people living in segregated areas, whose survival strategy is inherited through reproduction of their social circumstances (Warzywoda-Krisztyńska 2000).

The Roma minority comprises 6-7 per cent of the population of Hungary, and is the poorest and the most vulnerable group of that society (Bernát 2014, 246); in everyday discourse the word Roma is mainly used in the context of crime and poverty (Simonovits-Kézdi 2014, 28). The difference between the Roma and the majority society has been constantly growing since the introduction of capitalism, which is the outcome of the residence segregation and educational separation of the Roma (Bernát 2014, 246). In 2013, 95 per cent of working age Roma people (15-64 ages) were without secondary education, which shows the

Roma deficit in the field of education. The result of underqualification appears in the low presence on the labour market, because just less than the half (42 per cent) of the active age Roma have a job (TÁRKI 2014), thus the risk of poverty is two or three times higher among Roma. This can be seen in their territorial circumstances and residential environment. In sum, in 2010 in Hungary 1,633 Roma settlements were counted where around 300,000 people or 3 per cent of the population of Hungary live (Domokos & Herczeg 2010).

To summarise, in the continuation of the subculture of people living in peripheral areas, the inherited traits during socialisation take a significant part. The norms of underprivileged families living in Roma sites that are formed by poverty culture are completely contrary to the values of the major part of the society. In consequence, those who live in these kind of poor areas have very little chance of integration into the majority.

### 3. Aims and Methodology

The paper deals with the rules and behavioural and socialisation norms of under-privileged people living in a Roma part of a Hungarian town located in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, Szolnok. The research also focused on the components which influence their job-keeping skills and how these factors are connected to the culture of poverty. Of course, in order for the specified people or groups to keep jobs, they first have to find them, which is mostly affected by educational level. Because the school level of people living in the researched site at most is primary education or less, their employment would require jobs which do not need qualification.

The study's purpose is to consider the specific effects of the new economic system on the poor and the impact of the post-socialist poverty culture in practice. Additionally, it indicates the drawbacks and barriers of people living in peripheral urban areas in getting and keeping jobs. The situation is particularly difficult for the Roma that live in territorially segregated areas (settlements) and experience discrimination. Regardless of different policies, measures, programs and activities designed to stimulate their integration and help them find employment in the job market, due their specific situation they often decide (or are forced) to move away.

The main questions of the research:

- Q1. What kind of living and environmental conditions characterise the researched Roma settlement?
- Q2. What kind of values, behavioural norms and rules have emerged in connection with the culture of poverty among the Roma people living in the examined segregated area?
- Q3. What is the social and community structure among the residents of the Roma settlement?

- Q4. What kind of labour market disadvantages do the people living in the segregated settlement have because they were socialised by the values and norm system of the poverty culture and their residence is in a segregated area?
- Q5. What kind of project could be effective in changing the norms and value system of the people living in the investigated Roma settlement?

The research steps of the survey:

1. Direct observation
2. Semi-structured interviews
3. Unstructured interviews
4. Secondary analysis

The research lasted for three months between August and October 2016 and it was self-financed in connection with my PhD research at the Doctoral School of Earth Science at the University of Szeged. The research primarily used empirical data collecting techniques, such as direct observation of the people living in the Roma site, interviews with all heads of households (16 persons), as well as with people connected with the Roma, who provide social and other assistance. During the direct observation, the predetermined viewpoints were the housing and living conditions of the site, and the behaviour patterns of the people living there in relation to the poverty culture. The observation also included the interaction processes between each other and with people from outside of the site.

At the compilation of information sources, the most important aim was to gather data from those people and organisations who are in contact with the people of the site from the administrative, council and social side. Thus, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted, including the head of family support services of the city, social workers and support workers dealing with addiction. Moreover, an interview was conducted with the home guard<sup>2</sup> serving in this area, two semi-structured interviews with community workers, and two with a social worker and a project coordinator. During the semi-structured interviews, the research focused on the behavioural norms in connection with the culture of poverty, the rules and structure of hierarchy of the community living in the Roma settlement and the legal and illegal money-making and livelihood opportunities of the residents. These interviews were also extended to the relationships inside the community and the links with the residents of the adjacent streets. Additionally, the research examined the socialisation of the children growing up at this location and the diversity of the relationship between children and parents, but also investigated addiction, particularly the presence of drug use in the Roma site. With the help of professionals and based on accomplished practices and programmes, the research considered training



opportunities, labour market barriers and possibilities for work. This information was complemented with data from conversations and unstructured interviews with resident heads of households during the direct observation.

Apart from the interviews, the secondary analyses of former research results provided for the information sources about the past and history of the segregated area, so the residential and social composition of the population formed in the last 31 years since the construction of the site could be shown and the connection with its environment in detail.

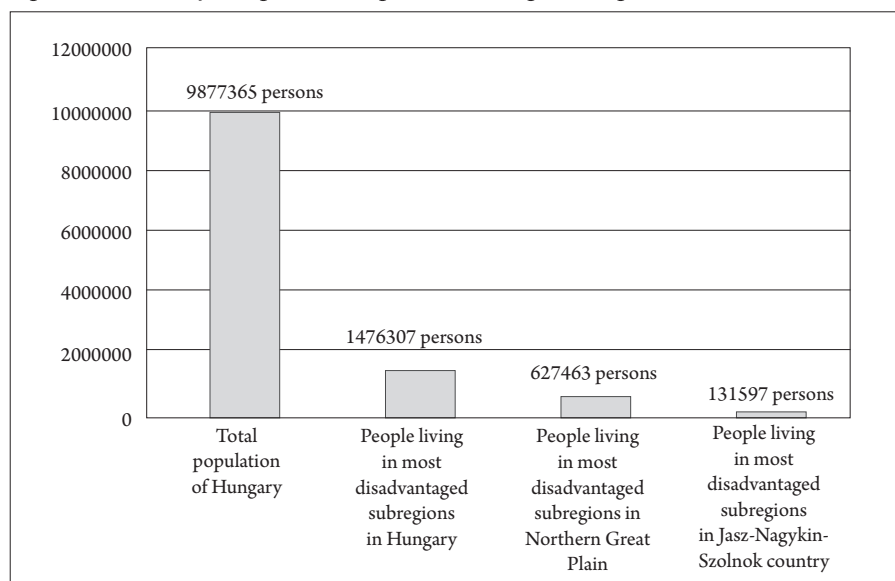
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## 4. Results – The Situation of the Investigated Area and the Possible Ways out from the Marginal Living Conditions

### 4.1 The Case Study Area

#### 4.1.1 Region of Northern Great Plain

*Figure 1: Number of Hungarians living in disadvantaged subregions, 2014*



Source: Magyarország Kormányának 2014, 74–81.

After the end of the socialist system in Hungary, the depreciation of real estate located in peripheral settlements made it impossible for underprivileged people – most of them worked in mines, factories and collective farms in the socialist

period which were eliminated and these employees became unemployed – to move away to more prosperous areas (Valuch 2014, 112). In the periphery, distance from cities determines social status of individuals (Sykora 2009) and their chances of social promotion (Virág 2010, 71). In 2014, 15 per cent of the Hungarian population (1,476,307 persons) lived in the most disadvantaged subregions, of which 42,5 per cent (627,463 persons) lived in the region of Northern Great Plain, while at county level, 8.9 per cent of them (131,597 persons) lived in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county (Magyarország Kormányának 2014). This is the highest proportion in Hungary and it is among the twenty poorest regions in Europe within Northern Hungary, the South Great Plain and South Transdanubium (Eurostat 2011, 2). These areas have the worst economic and employment indicators in Hungary, and people's educational level is significantly lower, which means that the residents of this region need higher social allowances than anywhere else in Hungary (MOPA 2011, 33).

#### **4.1.2 Szolnok and the District of Southern Industrial Area – the Living and Environmental Conditions of the Researched Roma Settlement's Residents (Q1)**

Szolnok is one of the biggest settlement in the Northern Great Plain region; it is also an economic, vehicular, military, cultural, educational and health centre. In the region, the Roma represent the majority of underprivileged in some districts. The reasons are geographic, economic and social factors from the past; communist party state decisions also influenced this process. In the period of erasing of Roma sites in peripheral areas of the city, the Roma were resettled into poor social housing on the outskirts of Szolnok. These apartments were called reduced value homes. The territorial rearrangement caused by forced industrialisation in the 1950's and the creation of industrial areas launched a significant migration process towards the peripheral and industrial areas of Szolnok which offered workplaces required unqualified labour. This process had a positive impact on residents of these areas and their ethnic and social relations (COSZCC 2014). The most significant wave of moving to the city started in the early 1970's and lasted until the late 1980's (Szarvák 2007, 8; COSZCC 2013, 5; Thékes 2016, 26). The Southern Industrial Area is bound by railway lines on three sides and to the east the River Tisza. This district's occupancy and capacity utilisations are at a low level, but the internal infrastructure of its industrial park has been built up which strengthens its appeal to enterprises. The demographical condition and social status of the Southern Industrial Area are the least favourable in Szolnok, its residents' age structure is characterised by youth, but the educational level is the lowest here compared to other districts. The proportion of people with at most primary education is twice the average and the rate of



locals with a tertiary degree is just one third of the city's average (Szarvák 2007). The residents of this area have the highest proportion of demand for change of residence, which shows the dissatisfaction with the living environment (Szarvák 2007; COSZCC 2013).

The houses of the segregated area were built after the restoration of this site in autumn of 1986 without utilities (internal toilet, running water and piped gas) precisely for underprivileged people, where the tenants were appointed by the council. The settlers migrated from – at that time – even more devastated parts of the city. The houses of this site were constructed on a marshland, so they are steadily sinking. At the beginning, the external latrines were used improperly by many of the residents – for instance, some of them kept animals inside (HAOS 2004, 6).

Generally, two families formed by different generations dwell in a single house and 8-10 persons live together in two rooms with an average 45-52 square meters. Nevertheless, grandparents and their children are often quite close in age: for instance, a 27-year old grandmother with a 14-year old daughter, who is also a mother – because of childbirth at a young age. This segregated area has the lowest average house size in the city (Szarvák 2007; COSZCC 2013). Electricity was installed in these uncared-for houses but the power company turned the services off in some houses because of unpaid bills. The houses cannot be connected to the public utility infrastructure – piped water, gas supply and sewers – even though it is available in this area. The water supply is provided by drinking fountain which means, in the absence of running water, that the people are unable to satisfy the basic hygiene conditions and norms of housekeeping (TITRI 2011, 3). The outdoor lavatories are dilapidated and there are houses without toilets. Instead of latrines, they use the uninhabited, semi-destroyed houses or public land. Doors and windows are missing in several houses, and leaking and soaked walls are common problems after rainy weather. Fifty-nine percent of the people living in this area reported soaked walls and poor insulation, because these houses were built from adobe (Szarvák 2007, 11; HAOS 2004, 7). Due to the lack of regular maintenance, every second roof is leaking (COSZCC 2013).

This segregated area is neglected and it has an environment contaminated by the residents. The rainwater ditches are full of rubbish, so they do not drain away water. Rodents and insects have also proliferated, posing a serious health risk. Stray dogs are also common, which poses a threat to the people living this area (HAOS 2004, 7). The solution to these problems is currently unclear, because neither the residents nor the council have money for utility grid connection and the utility companies do not wish to connect these houses to the services, because the locals cannot afford to have them.

## 4.2 Introduction of the Values, Norms and Rules of People Living in the Segregated Settlement Related to Culture of Poverty and the Structure of their Social and Community Relations (Q2, Q3)

There are continuous tensions among people in the neighbourhood who originate from the different Roma ethnicities. Most are the Hungarian Roma (romungrók, magyar cigányok); however, some are Vlach Roma (oláh cigányok). This means there are differences in their values and cultures. Diversity can be observed between them based on sub-ethnicity too. The subgroups thus show differences in their languages, specific ways of life and cultures (Kádár 1993, 66).

The internal hierarchy of the site's community is determined by wealth and degree of physical strength. Single men who have no roots there, formerly imprisoned, and those who accumulated a significant debt are at the lowest level of the hierarchy (HAOS 2004, 8). These people are received by a prominent family of this site in exchange for housing, so they are forced to do humiliating work. According to the slang of the site, they are the dogsbodies.

The Roma settlement is under two families' control; one is a usurious lender to residents, and the other one provides security duties. These families cooperate with each other and their criminal activities extend outside of the segregated area. If the debtors cannot pay back the loans taken with interest rates of 200 to 300 per cent, they kidnap or force into prostitution the family members of the debtors. The social benefits are taken by the usurers immediately, and in case of eviction, these families negotiate with the authorities (HAOS 2004, 8). According to the interviewees, the relationship between Roma and their children living in this area is characterised by two extremes: they control and dominate the children completely, or they do not care about them at all and let them act freely. They are unable to establish an optimal middle ground for children during their upbringing. Thus in one case, the children grow up enclosed in families that do everything together. For instance the parents go to the pub with their children when the family allowance is paid.

The children are stuck to the window, because they are not allowed to go the playground but when the family support arrives, the whole family are in the pub /.../ so or they go somewhere together or they do not go anywhere (Interviewee 1).

The other extreme is a very weak bond among parents and children, as a result of which the children adopt the attributes of poverty culture; hence they cruise the streets at a young age, consume drugs and avoid school.

The fundamental problem can be found in education; the school has to deal with their upbringing /.../. But they are not socialized for that /.../ the children see that their mother does nothing at home, and everybody around them does nothing, and it is

better than going to school /.../ so the children go to school as they can, and when they arrive home, they do not know what is at home /.../ their mother just left to get some money somehow, because their credit card was taken due to usury or drugs or something else (Interviewee 2).

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However, children can influence their parents and become carriers of change in the long-term. Upbringing and education of children are key factors in this process. If the youngsters can be kept in school, then the adults are more likely to go back to study, finish their primary education or obtain a profession.

### **4.3 The Labour Market Disadvantages of the Roma Settlement's Residents Caused by the Value and Norm System of Poverty Culture and the Segregated Circumstances (Q4)**

The people living in this segregated area clearly understand that the lack of job opportunities and qualifications is caused by their low educational level. Usually, courses and trainings offered to unemployed require completed primary school. "Nobody asks them how many primary school classes they did, or what kind of qualifications they have /.../ anybody can sweep the street" (Interviewee 3).

Some local companies discriminate against these people based on their residence; this is shown by Examples of people living there, who are different in appearance from other Roma people who were rejected when they divulged their address confirm that there is a territorial stigma for people living in the site. "If they tell the employer that they live in the site, it is an extra stigma /.../ so they can only generally participate in social welfare labour employment" (Interviewee 3).

These people do not want to move away from the site because there are well accustomed rules and conditions. All of them are related to each other by family ties, which also play a role in their stay. On the other hand, families that live in the neighbourhood and rule over them also impede their movement to outside of the settlement. Under these circumstances, the mentioned families can sell them drugs, loan money at usury rates and control their finances because of their debts<sup>3</sup>. There are some districts in the city, for instance the Chemical Works Housing, which is called Chicago by the citizens, where it is well known in which houses these drug dealers and usurers live. There are fewer men living in the site than women. As consequences of business with drugs and usury, the debt of some amounted to 200,000–300,000 HUF (650–970 Euros). The sanctions for drug dealers and usurers are 2-3 years prison sentences. Following the end of their sentence, they reappear for similar causes after a few weeks. There are no preventive activities by the police. "There is nothing here that the police do not know about" (Interviewee 4).

However, the biggest problem is that the people living in this segregated area do not want to change their situation and take responsibility for these cir-

cumstances. “But the essential problem is that they do not want to change, thus there is no responsibility on them, therefore it is much easier for them” (Interviewee 5).

The opportunities on the labour market for these residents are scarce, so they are basically stuck with social welfare system allowances. Their poverty and poor living conditions hamper also their capacity to self-organize for the improvement of their condition and better employability.

According to a case-control study of this area,

the majority of people living on this site represent a deviant subculture, their lifestyles adapted to social circumstances of extreme poverty. The minors growing up here live in a moral and ethical hazard zone, which favours the handing down of poverty and supports the forming of a criminal new generation (TITRI 2011, 4).

Since the end of socialism, only a few working-age people from the site could find a job for more than six months, which means that the people living here are excluded from the primary labour market. Their employment opportunities are further reduced due to the lack of professional qualifications and experiences. Some occasional employers in the black market offer the Roma seasonal black labour or casual work for salaries higher than minimal wages in social welfare labour programmes and, thereby, increase the problem and make it more complex. The Roma are tempted to take these illegal offers, although they do not ensure social and health security. Those who could get a job were working in factories as production line workers, but since they could not fit in their contracts were terminated usually within 1-3 months. Consequently, the Roma remain dependent on social and unemployment benefits.

The social and economic problems of the Roma site are the results of the low educational level, unemployment, poverty and poor living conditions. The Roma are often inactive and give up job seeking. Trapped in poverty cycle and lacking income, families living in extreme poverty have no vision of the future. Addiction, family conflicts and abuse are frequent among the residents of the site. These circumstances almost completely match with the culture of poverty defined above, which form the full part of everyday life of people living in this segregated area.

#### **4.4 Alternatives to the Current Marginal Situation of the Population in Roma Settlements in Hungary – the Projects that Could be Effective Among People Who Were Socialised Based on the Norms and Values (Q5)**

Programmes offering possibilities for altering the culture of the poverty-related set of values of the people living in the researched Roma site are important

for the better inclusion and integration of the Roma. The interviews with the community workers, the coordinator of a development project of this site and the social workers working on this area presented experiences of the programmes and their effects on the people there.

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#### 4.4.1 Altering the Set of Values of People Living in Roma Site with Community Programmes

Based on the experiences of a house renovation programme undertaken on this site, these kinds of activities teach residents solidarity with each other. If neighbours help renovate your house, you are obliged to help them renovating their houses. This programme required people letting each other into their homes, which was not general practice. Prior to this, principally just children were let into the houses to play with each other, but adults at most met in yards or most often at the drinking fountain or on the street. "We started to educate them and they began to trust us /.../ in a few months they were socialized to do something /.../ at the beginning of this programme there was a chance of a very positive change" (Interviewee 6).

In order to achieve change, instructors and professionals have to offer an example. This requires continuous and complementary long-term settlement-based projects. However, the current EU tender system that plans the programmes for a shorter period – around 2 years – and usually excludes underprivileged who were participants in earlier similar projects ignores this reality and needs. The residents of this site primarily live on welfare benefits and it is really hard to activate them for these programmes. In four years only three people from the Roma site have been involved in the free personal development training organised by community workers of the development office working near to the site. These people need help to adapt to a working environment because of their completely different socialisation values, but after a period of adjustment, they can achieve an appropriate level and they will be able for work in accordance with expectations. However, firstly they need to learn how to think in the world of work and understand the obligations of workplaces. They could get support and help from community and social workers, which cover housing, child protection, school representation and more complex assistance. Where there is a demand, these services can actively appear in the life of people living in poverty.

They reach a certain level here, we try to make them suitable for work in order to be able to think in the system of work, for example they have to get here at eight o'clock /.../ if they can understand the things around them and they can keep the rules, we have to motivate them that it is time to complete high-school because they have to understand that it is the next level and they have to forget the social welfare labour programme (Interviewee 7).

Those kinds of programmes can change the learnt values of poverty culture, such as the youth club organised by community workers where the parents also actively participated. These handicrafts and musical workshops and activities were held in a room on the site without heating and its fixtures were voluntarily brought there every time. This project was successful for a long time but the room was burgled and the clothes – brought by the community workers and stored there – were stolen, which meant the end of the programme. “As a community worker I can highlight the opportunity, then they can take it or not” (Interviewee 3).

#### 4.4.2 Altering the Set of Values of People Living at a Roma Site through Social Welfare Labour Programme

The community development office employs social welfare workers, among them two persons from the segregated area. Social welfare workers can learn and experience that they can achieve more than their current circumstances, so a kind of demand to move away begins to evolve after a time. “They nicely develop here and they understand that they are no longer at the same level as the others in the site, and then they demand an apartment elsewhere” (Interviewee 3).

The community workers support these people’s move but unfortunately, because of their learnt rules and norms of socialisation and as a result of their habitual lifestyle, most of those who move wish to get back to the segregated settlement, which proves the deep roots of poverty culture in their lives. The improvement of their financial situation does not appear to change their set of values, so this culture becomes the greatest barrier to escape from conditions of poverty. “They may be physically living there – at the new place – but in spirit they are still in the site /.../ and they cannot or do not want to get rid of it /.../ they cannot fit into the new environment” (Interviewee 5).

There are positive examples of working people with better living standards because of their higher income in this Roma settlement who decide to stay in their settlement. Many of those that moved away, adults and even children, often look for reasons and excuses to revisit the site. For instance, a relocated family who did not register their new apartment so they could visit their former residence every month to collect social benefits.

#### 4.4.3 Altering the Set of Values through a Primary Labour Market Workplace Programme

The community workers could get jobs for three people in the city foundry but they soon left this workplace because they were frightened at the sight of unknown machines and the responsibilities of the job. “We sent three people there but they were not there even for a week because there were machines which frightened them /.../ they had not seen such things and they did not know what they were” (Interviewee 5).



Another example similarly demonstrates their situation: a training institute held a professional course for them which was linked with employment after the training. The training was held in a sewing factory which produces seat covers. The arrangement was that the company would have employed them, because they struggle with labour shortages. The residents of the site would have got full time contracts. During the course, the institute provided the theoretical education and the company the practical training and knowledge of the machines with which the future employees would have worked. There were three training groups with many of the residents but only two persons stayed there for work. According to the training participants, firstly they could not reconcile their children's education with the workplace schedule and secondly, transport difficulties hindered them from going to work in time. Lacking public transport, they had to walk to the company. A third reason was a prohibition by husbands who did not allow their wives to work because of their cultural traditions, which said that wives must not be unattended. The fourth and fifth causes were the lack of taking responsibility and inability to improve their performance. They got the living allowance as social welfare benefit during the training, while the requirements and expectations of the workplace were not too high. However, once employed infractions were sanctioned. If they were late or did not go to work, they were fired or got less money, which caused them to lose their motivation for work.

## 5. Summary and Discussion

The post-socialist countries' poverty rate drastically increased after the transition to a capitalist market economy, but the countries involved were not sufficiently prepared. The social inheritance has a key role for the survival of the subculture among the people living in a segregated settlement. Another major reason for its persistence is that the social welfare system and social projects usually do not manage the situation in the complex framework in Hungary. Thus the social welfare systems and integration projects partly contributed to the transmission of poverty culture through the generations and the staying in place of underprivileged. The learned norms and values of the researched Roma community are clearly connected to the culture of poverty, which play a significant role in their wish to break out of their marginal situation.

The social welfare labour programme is only meant to provide a job for them, but it does not address those circumstances which conserve the situations of the people at the Roma site. In the long run, only those programmes can succeed – that address, in addition to labour market difficulties, the children and education, socialisation difficulties, housing and health condition. However, the first, the most important is to establish trust and include the Roma in those programmes and projects. The people living in the Roma settlement have a demand for work,

but without training do not satisfy the conditions expected by employers. These kind of programmes need to be uninterrupted and long-term, because the trust of underprivileged people is hard to gain and between two parts of a programme a loss of trust may occur, which reduces the chance of success.

Some people living in the segregated area would like to work and because of the labour shortage, the employers would give them jobs but their skills are not appropriate. For this reason, training is indispensable for their social and labour market integration. One solution is training in stages that manages to stimulate and include the Roma, increases their expectations and improves their performance. Additionally, public transport or company busses should enable the commuting from the Roma site to the workplace. However, even in such cases, results can only be expected in the long-term, because the required time for attitude change can be measured in generations. A suitable tool to support these people to get into the primary labour market would be the common communication and search for solutions with large companies in the city's industrial park. This is what community workers try to accomplish. During the negotiation between community workers and employers, it is revealed that the underprivileged people living in the Roma settlement, even if they already have primary education certificate, usually cannot complete the competency test required for getting a job. That is why it would be best to start job skills training for those who would like work for companies which decided to employ underprivileged people. In this case, it must be taken into consideration that they are less used to thinking in line with the most widespread systems, so it is more difficult to solve this problem as it is among the population which learned the culture of majority and were socialised based on its norms.

The culture of poverty formed by the residents of the Roma settlement and the related problems are well illustrated by the reaction of husbands to their wives working. Husbands prohibit their women to work, not because of jealousy, but because they do not want their wives to learn new values which could awaken desires in them. As well as cleaning, cooking and feeding the children, other abilities become acknowledged as the effects of the new experiences and the feeling of success, their life opens and they can learn new lifestyles, so they would like to live their life based on new patterns. This is why men do not support women who want to go to school or work; the culture of poverty can protect and maintain itself in this way.

So, in both the short and the long term, the solution could originate from education. Planning for different periods requires distinct and diverse training approaches and methods. In the short term, the preparatory courses for trained work and competency tests of underqualified people lead to partial results, but in long term, we must think of the next generation. Education, as the primary solution is very complex because we cannot expect the most disadvantaged children to perform at the same level as their middle class peers in the first few years of primary school. These underprivileged children encounter tasks, rules,

tools and even more importantly a language that they never know before in their family, or community environment, so they are not prepared to receive them. Unfortunately, the Hungarian teacher training system is not prepared and not equipped with proper tools for the education of these children. Thus, they experience continuous failure and the school becomes a disliked place, while the negative feeling is strengthened by family members based on their former school experiences. The teacher training system thus needs to be improved in a way that helps prepare the primary school teachers to receive and teach children who were socialised by the rules of poverty culture, basic norms, values and a language that are completely different from the patterns of the majority society.

## Interviews

- Interviewee 1 – female social worker 1
- Interviewee 2 – head of family support services
- Interviewee 3 – female community worker 1
- Interviewee 4 – male home guard
- Interviewee 5 – female community worker 2
- Interviewee 6 – male project coordinator
- Interviewee 7 – female social worker 2

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The culture of poverty can be described by the following characteristics: a constant struggle for subsistence; unemployment; odd jobs not requiring any qualification or education; child labour; complete lack of savings; food shortage; money lending at usury rates; crowded homes; alcoholism; frequent violence; wife beating; early sex life; temporary partnership relations; concubines; life without plans (Townsend 1979, 66).
- <sup>2</sup> Home guard is a member of a social organization, whose aim is the maintenance of public order and safety, and the enhancement of the role of the residents in crime prevention.
- <sup>3</sup> Before the social benefits and allowances were given by bank transfers, on specified days the users waited in front of the post office while the recipients got the subsidies and could thus take it from them immediately.