“We used to live like bears in the forest”

The waterworld of Roma in Dolenjska, Slovenia

Thesis for MA Cultural Anthropology & Development Sociology: Environment and Development at University Leiden, the Netherlands

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Nimam doma, ne očetnjave,
Vojak sem brez orožja,
Nisem vezan na sveta dobrine,
Pota vodijo me v daljine sive.

(I have no home, no fatherland,
I am a soldier with no weapons,
No worldly goods can tie me down,
My paths lead me into distances grey.)

From: 'Očetnjava' by DiRicchardi Diricchardi Muzga

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This master thesis is generated from the research I conducted in Dolenjska, Southeast Slovenia, in January, February and March of 2013, focusing on the problematic issues concerning the access to water and the associated consequences for the Roma population in this area. During this research I have encountered many people who eventually were involved as respondents in my research: employees of municipalities, police, professors, social workers and of course my main respondents; the Roma living in the settlements I visited during these three months. I am sincerely thankful for their willingness to participate as respondents in my research, and doing so wholeheartedly. We share the hope that this thesis will be one of the steps that have to be taken to resolve pressing issues.
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Figure 1: Conducting fieldwork in Hudeje, Trebnje

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The waterworld of Roma

Water is the most important source for daily life all over the globe. Subsequently, water is valued as a basic human right to be equitably distributed among all peoples of the world according to need (Orlove & Caton 2010: 409). This status of water as a human right entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use (AI 2011: 42). However, the worldwide need to provide adequate supplies of clean water to all people becomes more challenging, amongst others due to global environmental degradation (Orlove & Caton 2010: 401). The scarcity of water causes conflicts to emerge, and the management of water networks to be increasingly complicated. Water, though, is not merely a natural resource, but also a substance that connects many realms in social life and marks the boundaries of groups and communities, defined by their shared involvement with water (*op. cit.*: 401, 404). This connection and marking of boundaries was referred to by Roma[1] respondents, when differentiating between themselves and, what they call, 'normal people', i.e. non-Roma[2] people having access to water and other amenities. Their lives were analysed with reference to those of the majority population, often perceiving themselves to be treated as less important or even as animals. One Roma woman said: "We obtained access to water only recently. Before, we used to live like bears in the forest". The totality of connections that water may have in a given society is captured in the concept 'waterworld' (Hastrup 2009).

The focus of my research was on the waterworld of Roma for the Roma population in Dolenjska, Southeast Slovenia. The Roma as an ethnic group are often trapped in a cycle of marginalisation and poverty, despite several efforts of European states to improve their position in society (AI 2011: 4; ENAR & ERIO 2011: 2; Kuhelj 2011: 280). Throughout history, they continually have been evicted from countries they lived in, and therefore were never able to settle themselves in a certain place (Fonseca 1996: 178). This has increased differentiation of local populations, and therewith gave rise to discrimination.

[1] It should be noted that other terms are also utilized to refer to the Romani population of Slovenia. The term Cigani (Gypsy) is utilized by many people, including some Roma respondents, to identify the ethnic group from Romani origin. However, some of my respondents considered this term to be offensive, because it is often utilized in a negatively enhanced way by non-Roma. Therefore, I chose to solely utilize the term Rom/Roma, which is the official and polite noun to refer to the group my respondents were part of (Fonseca 1996: 228). Sinti aim to be recognized as an independent entity and not just an extension to the Romani ethnic minority; both groups are of Indian descent, but throughout time they – in sociological, anthropological and linguistic terms – evolved in different ways (DiRicchardi 2013: 14, 16). Because in Dolenjska the population is largely Roma and not Sinti, I stuck to utilizing the term Roma.

[2] In the academic literature and throughout interviews conducted in Dolenjska, several terms are utilized to refer to people in Slovenia who are not from Romani origin. Though 'non-Roma' literally means 'not man' and therewith does not seem to be an appropriate concept, it is the term utilized by the majority of my Roma respondents and therefore I also adopted this term. Roma utilize the term 'gadje' to refer to non-Roma Slovenians as a collective.

Though marginalisation occurs in every country in which Roma reside, the situation in Eastern Europe differs from that in Western Europe, due to different political circumstances. Eastern Europe, including Slovenia, has quite recently been involved in a transition from a communist to a democratic political system. This process is often accompanied by strong feelings of nationalism; people differing from the majority population are often excluded and perceived to be a threat to nationalism and the emerging of a new state (Fonseca 1996: 142; Kuhelj 2011: 278). The fate of the majority population was seen as much more important during this transition as that of the Roma minority group (Fonseca 1996: 143). Slovenia was simultaneously involved in the dismantling of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, from 1991 onwards, which still defines the internal developments in the countries of the former SFRY. Roma have been living in what is now Slovenia ever since before the fifteenth century, but their ethnicity has been denied and Tito, the president of the SFRY, wanted them to be just Yugoslavs (*op. cit.*: 109, 111). Slovenia is a particularly interesting case, because it was the first and most homogeneous part of former Yugoslavia that became an independent state. Because approximately 90% of the inhabitants were Slovenes, nationalism was easy to accomplish and soon a form of xenophobic nationalism arose (Kuhelj 2011: 278, 280). Though approximately ten thousand Roma live in Slovenia, they became a marginalized minority group, amongst others due to this xenophobic nationalism.

Within this context, my research focused on the ways the access to water was connected to the position of Roma in society, and how these connections were expressed in the claims directed to various actors in the Slovenian society, concerning obtaining access to water in Romani settlements. The main research question was stated: *How do Roma in Dolenjska, southeast Slovenia, utilize discourses of citizenship and human rights in their claims to gain access to water?* Therewith, the focus was both on the impact of (lacking) the access to water as a substance for daily needs, and how it is connected to the concepts and experiences of citizenship and human rights. In a broader sense, my research focused on the political economy of the environment: how people control and, periodically, struggle for control over the institutions and organizations that produce and regulate the flows of materials that sustain people (Rudel 2011: 222). In Slovenia, municipalities are the controlling institutions that regulate the flow of water as a natural material, but they operate within a broader political and regulatory context (Orlove & Caton 2010: 406).

Though Roma people in Slovenia have the legal status of Slovenian citizens with additional rights concerning the maintenance of their language and culture, most of them are still stuck in a cycle of marginalisation (Kuhelj 2011: 280). This is proven by the lack of access to amenities in at least one third of the Romani settlements in Slovenia, of which the lack of access to water is a very urgent one (AI 2011: 41). This situation has caused even more concern because Slovenia is perceived to be a highly developed country with a high

rating on the human development index (*op. cit.*: 7; Kuhelj 2011: 281). It is stated that Slovenia has the expertise, experience and resources to ensure that Romani communities enjoy their human rights, of which water is one. The lack thereof is thus perceived as the violation of basic human rights for Roma (AI 2011: 40). The president of the Romani Union of Slovenia states: "The Slovenian government presents Europe with the image of, or takes delegates on visits to, settlements where legalization has succeeded and everything is in order and in good condition, but 95% of settlements are not like this and here they do not have even basic living conditions, which is – especially in the 21st century – criminal." The living conditions of Roma are poorest in the Dolenjska region, the southeastern part of Slovenia (Stropnik 2011: 5). To investigate the claims made concerning obtaining access to water, this specific region in Slovenia therefore seemed to be most appropriate.

The Slovenian government has already implemented several programs, but concrete actions are required to translate the government's political and legal commitments into a reality. International actors have stated that the Slovenian state has failed to put in place adequate monitoring and regulatory frameworks to ensure that municipalities comply with international human right standards concerning the Roma populations in their area (AI 2011: 5, 62). Due to the concept of self-governing[3], municipalities have much freedom of movement, which might be both beneficial and detrimental for local Roma populations, as they are subject to the general attitude and efforts of municipalities concerning Roma. Often, the Roma side of the story is simply not investigated (Kuhelj 2011: 281), a structure I attempted to disrupt with this research.

1.2. Citizenship and human rights: a conceptual discussion

The concepts 'citizenship' and 'human rights' are central concepts in my research question, as stated above. Also, the contents of these concepts and the discussions on these are interwoven with my research data, and are thus to be read between the lines of this thesis. In this paragraph I will briefly outline the academic debates on both citizenship and human rights and explain the ways in which these are in an ambiguous relationship with one another.

Citizenship is usually defined as a form of membership in a political and geographic community (Somers & Roberts 2008: 412). It is also broader defined as the claim to be accepted as full members of the society (Marshall 1950: 8). The conceptualization of what it actually means to be a citizen differs among various social groups (Petrovičová et al. 2012: 335-336). There are, though, four overarching concepts of citizenship. Firstly, as related to the legal dimension, i.e. the legal status of people in a certain society. Secondly, as

[3] In Slovenia there is an emphasis on the self-governing of municipalities, which provides those with a lot of space to act. At the state level legal structures are provided, but there are no general approaches for specific situations, such as so-called Roma problematics. See also paragraph 5.2.

emphasizing various rights. Thirdly, emphasizing the notion of responsibilities and duties of citizens. And last, citizenship as a personal dimension, described in terms of moral and emotional bonds (*op. cit.*: 339-340). Comparable with the analysis of Petrovičova et al., other authors disaggregate the concept of citizenship in four dimensions: legal status, rights, participation in society, and a sense of belonging (Bloemraad et al. 2008: 154). These dimensions are described separately, but they are perceived to be rather interconnected (Petrovičová et al. 2012: 341): citizenship rights and legal status promote participation and a sense of belonging, which in turn facilitate cohesion and common political projects (Bloemraad et al. 2008: 157). These dimensions are derived from the book of Marshall (1950) on citizenship, who describes these as a linear progression: legal status leads to rights, rights enable participation, and a sense of belonging is derived from participation.

Other authors, though, show that citizenship also entails a tension between inclusion and exclusion (Bloemraad et al. 2008: 155). Exclusion takes many forms, but it is frequently based on ethnicity or perceived race (Cahn 2012: 298). Citizenship at heart can thus be defined as membership in a political community, meanwhile recognizing that it is soft on the inside, i.e. internally universal, and hard on the outside, i.e. externally exclusionary (Somers & Roberts 2008: 412). This thus means that citizens of a certain state prefer a certain level of homogeneity among people holding the same legal status, and therefore rather exclude people with a different ethnicity. Minority groups, such as the Roma in Slovenia, are often experiencing the consequences of the, at least informal, externally exclusionary policy. *De jure* citizenship is defined as a basic human right. Therefore, according to the doctrine of the genuine and effective link, a person should be eligible to receive citizenship from states with which he or she has a substantial connection or a genuine and effective link (Weissbrodt & Collins 2006: 276). Though Roma are in principle citizens of the Slovenian state and thus not *de jure* stateless; their exclusion has been formalized in such a way that they are in danger of becoming stateless (Cahn 2012: 308). Statelessness does not have a single definition in academic literature, but at least a clear distinction is to be made between *de jure* statelessness and *de facto* statelessness. *De jure* statelessness is a purely legal description, encompassing solely the lack of an official nationality for a person. *De facto* statelessness, though, includes the characteristics and value of a particular person's nationality as it is realized in his or her particular home state. Persons who are *de facto* stateless often have a nationality according to the law, but this nationality is not effective or they cannot prove or verify their nationality (Weissbrodt & Collins 2006: 251-252). Statelessness is often perceived to be a large and critical problem, because many states only allow their own nationals to exercise full civil, political, economic, and social rights within their territories (*op. cit.*: 248). Statelessness also occurs when states are dissolved; after the dissolution of Yugoslavia states sought to redefine citizenship requirements. The Slovenian government committed

what is known as administrative ethnic cleansing or erasure: removing the files of non-Slovene Roma from the registers of the permanent residents of Slovenia (*op. cit.*: 261, 264). Apparently this process was executed in order to preclude non-Slovene Roma from being numbered among the original group of nationals of the newly created Slovenian state. The resulting group, the 'erased', was a result of a long-standing internal hostility on the part of the majority national group towards minorities who have found themselves as a result of an unexpected political reality in the position of being an ally or enemy of political changes (Kuhelj 2011: 278; Weissbrodt & Collins 2006: 264).

The threat for exclusion increases due to the fact that Roma do not have a 'mother state' to take care of their rights, amongst others the right to be a citizen of a certain state (Liegeois & Gheorghe 1995: 13). This perceived danger is based on an understanding of citizenship related to ethnic nationalism, i.e. associated with belonging to a nation rooted in descent. On the other hand citizenship can be understood in relation to civic nationalism, which ties belonging to rights and a universalist, voluntary political membership, which arguably offers immigrants a greater chance of inclusion (Bloemraad et al. 2008: 158). There are said to be two possible ways of perceiving one's position in society: citizenship as something given and as something taken. Citizenship as given refers to the notion that it is owned by everyone and provides one with equal opportunities. In contrast, citizenship as taken denotes the awareness of inequality, where certain groups cannot access opportunities and resources accessed by others (Petrovičová et al. 2012: 342).

Align with these opposite ways of understanding citizenship, there are opposite ways of thinking about citizenship as a structure or as agency. There is discussion on the extent to which citizenship should be understood primarily, or even at all, as a structure in relation to the nation-state. Marshall, an important theorist of citizenship, also did not mention the state in his classical definition of citizenship as 'full membership of the community, with all its rights and responsibilities' (Marshall 1950; Yuval-Davis 2006: 206). Citizenship is closely related to belonging. Though it might be perceived as a stable, contested or transient way of identification; belonging is said to be always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199). Belonging, then, can be an act of self-identification or identification by others, thus requiring agency (*ibid.*). Therefore, it is increasingly asserted that we should perceive citizenship not merely as a formal structure, but also in regard to meaning, practices, communication and identities, described by the term 'civic agency' (Dahlgren 2006: 267).This term stresses the importance of processes whereby humans become social members, creating themselves and their cultural patterns and being shaped by them, particularly with regards to public life (*op. cit.*: 272). So-called civic competence is said to be unable to derive exclusively from the political society; it emerges from the overall

development of the subject and therewith it is, in part, a question of learning by doing (*op. cit.*: 273). The practicing of this type of agency is not conducted along one power axis of difference, although official statistics and politics, as is the case in the Constitution of the Slovenian state, often tend to construct it this way (Yuval-Davis 2006: 200). Autochthonous Roma, i.e. Roma who have been residing in Slovenia for decades, have better chances to practice their civic agency, because they have better assets to do so. They also seem to have a better understanding of the things that must be actively taken in daily life, instead of waiting for these things to be given to them by governmental actors (Petrovičová et al. 2012: 343). Civic engagement for Roma is therefore understood as actively overcoming stereotypes about Roma and helping others form their community in the society (*op. cit.*: 342). The practicing of civic agency also increases when it is practiced as a group or a community. As will be discussed later, Roma often do not act as a community and on the local level do rather not present themselves as such. However, organizations that represent Roma in the Slovenian society and internationally do focus on the collective of Roma and on the ways they can fight discrimination and inequality in the society, thus striving for enabling the practicing of civic agency to increase the sense of belonging of Roma to the Slovenian society, therewith increasing their position as a social member of it, and emphasize both their *de jure* ánd *de facto* citizenship.

There is not so much discussion on the definition of human rights, as there is on the relationship between citizenship and human rights. Unlike natural rights, which find their source in God or nature, human rights discourse founds itself on humanity: people have human rights simply because they are human. The ideal analytic view of human rights, then, is that these are equal, inalienable and universal (Somers & Roberts 2008: 390). The inclusion of human rights in the concept of citizenship is therefore questioned; rights are rooted in political membership, but are also said to be necessary public goods (*op. cit.*: 414). There is a significant difference between universal and particularistic views on rights. Universal conventions assume that all human beings are the same and therefore should have the same rights. In contrast, particularistic conventions refer to historical, cultural and social differences, which cause colored discussions on rights (Yuval-Davis 2006: 207). When the implementation of human rights emerges solely through inclusion in a political community, which seems to be often the case, people formally or informally excluded from society will not be recognized by others as fellow rights bearers (Somers & Roberts 2008: 395, 413). At the nexus of human rights and citizenship rights, therefore, the public good of a “right to have rights” is identified, which expresses the institutional, social, and moral preconditions for human recognition and inclusions (*op. cit.*: 385). Institutions concerned with human rights call for states to extend membership rights based on personhood, instead of based on official membership in a political unit (Bloemraad et al. 2008: 165).

The world community might intervene when states fail to satisfy certain conditions for their people, therewith causing human rights to become an increasingly elaborate international practice (Beitz 2009: 13, 32). Political cosmopolitanism therefore argues that rights ought to transcend national boundaries, whereas liberal nationalism argues that individual rights are best guaranteed within the context of the nation-state (Bloemraad et al. 2008: 164). Although states matter, they are increasingly constrained by international law and human rights, making a narrow state-defined citizenship increasingly illegitimate (*op. cit.*: 165), therewith increasing chances for everyone to be recognized as bearers of human rights. Overall, though, the conclusion is that globalization might be changing certain aspects of citizenship, nation-states still continue to hold substantial power over the formal rules and the rights of citizenship (*op. cit.*: 154). This causes frictions between actors on the international, national and local scale. Because they have varying understandings of citizenship as a structure, as agency or a combination of both, their approaches and subsequent actions concerning Roma in Slovenia also differ. As long as there is no united vision of citizenship and how it is related to human rights, the dependency of human rights upon citizenship seems to be continued at least partly.

1.3. Outline of thesis

This thesis is structured according to building towards answering the main research question of my research, which was stated: *How do Roma in Dolenjska, southeast Slovenia, utilize discourses of citizenship and human rights in their claims to gain access to water?*
Having introduced the primary subject of this thesis and the conceptual model concerning citizenship and human rights, I turn to explaining the methodology of my research in the next chapter; focusing on the respondents that were included in my research, the mixture of methods utilized and the validity of the sample of my research. The following three chapters before the conclusions are the core of my thesis, describing the specific and general conclusions generated through data analysis.

In chapter three, first, the focus is on the right to water as defined by international organizations. Thereafter, I will present and discuss my findings on the practical issue concerning the ways Roma access water in nineteen Romani settlements in five different municipalities in Dolenjska and explain the heterogeneity in access to water. In the last paragraph of the third chapter the access to water will be connected to the quality of the relationships Roma have with municipalities, the local majority population and other Roma.

The subsequent chapter first focuses on the ways the concept citizenship and civic agency complement each other when analysing the specific situation of Roma in Dolenjska. Also, several structures prolonging the marginalized position of Roma will be discussed. Next, the participation of Roma in the Slovenian society by means of education and

employment will be addressed, therewith focusing on two important issues in which Roma have the chance to practice their agency in society. The last paragraph analyses the legal status of Roma in Slovenia in connection to their sense of belonging to the Slovenian society, or lack thereof, which emerges from the discourses utilized by my Roma respondents.

In the fifth chapter the explicit discourses utilized in claiming access to water are the central issue. Firstly, the focus is on the politics of scale, which are at stake when analysing the utilized discourses that vary according to the scale on which the actor the claims are directed to is active. The last paragraph of this chapter will discuss the influence of the political structure of Slovenia on the discourses of claiming utilized by Roma.

The structure of this thesis, thus, is building up from the practical issue of Romani settlements having or lacking access to water, via the influences this has on the lives of the Roma population in Dolenjska, towards the conclusions on the research question concerning the contents of the discourses utilized by Roma in their claim to obtain, maintain or improve their access to water. Therewith, this thesis tries to picture the totality of connections that water has for Roma in the Slovenian society, thus focusing on their waterworld in Dolenjska.

2. FIELDWORK IN DOLENJSKA

Since the 1980s there has been a trend among anthropologists to focus on a particular theme and from thereon focus on how this theme is related to many social realms in a certain society (Clifford 1983: 125). The type of fieldwork conducted for this thesis follows this trend. Also, it is comparable to the British fieldwork tradition, which is characterized by intensity, the mentioning of context and methods, and the researcher being involved and detached at the same time (Sluka & Robben 2012: 12-13). My fieldwork is conducted in a short time period of three months, and therefore characterized by intensity. Anthropologists provide a qualitative account of the cultural 'web of meaning' shaping the society and the lives of its members. Because such an account is thought to reflect the researcher as well as those studied, it is important to reflect on the influence of oneself in conducting research (Salzman 2008: 366). Therefore, this chapter will critically examine the methodology of my fieldwork as a framework of understanding the ways my data was generated. As will be apparent throughout my thesis and especially in the discussion in paragraph 6.2., my position as a researcher was characterized by involvement and detachment at the same time. The provision of both an emic and etic view[4] is often found in anthropological research and is also the strength of this type of research.

2.1. Respondents

Initially, the aim was to include three Romani settlements in Dolenjska in my research. When entering the field, though, I learned that some initial assumptions appeared to be false. It was incorrect to think that it would take much time to get introduced into Romani settlements. The most significant deceptive conjecture was that municipalities in Dolenjska contained just one Romani settlement, while there were three till six in every municipality I visited. These settlements often were clearly separated from each other, both geographically and socially.

Eventually, time and finances made it possible to include Romani people living in nineteen different settlements across south eastern Slovenia in my research. Also, I included respondents who were directly involved in the central issues of my research, but were not all from Romani origin. Those respondents were representatives of the municipalities of Grosuplje, Kočevje, Novo Mesto and Trebnje; the Roma councillors of Kočevje, Novo Mesto and Trebnje; the police of Grosuplje and Novo Mesto; the local priest of Grosuplje; the NGOs Roma Pomlad[5] and Romi Gredo Naprej[6]; and the Romski Informacijski Centre Anglinepu in Ljubljana.

[4] An etic perspective is one which is based on criteria from outside a particular culture, whereas an emic perspective refers to one which explains the ideology or behaviour of members of a culture according to 'indigenous' definitions (Barnard 2008: 180).
[5] Literally meaning: Roma Spring.
[6] Literally meaning: Roma go forward.

During my fieldwork in Slovenia I visited all four Romani settlements (Oaza, Ponova Vas, Pri Nikotu and Smrekec) in the municipality Grosuplje; six settlements in Kočevje (Cigani Blok, Marof, Mestni Log, Trata Betonarni, Trata Jezero and Željne); short visits to two (Gotna Vas and Ruperč Vrh) and extended visits to three settlements (Brezje, Šmihel and Žabjek) in Novo Mesto. Eventually I expanded my research by visiting three settlements (Goriča Vas, Lepovce and Otavice) in Ribnica and one (Hudeje) in Trebnje[7]. Ribnica and Trebnje were municipalities chosen for expansion, because these can be seen as examples of respectively 'bad practice' and 'good practice', which will be discussed later on.

2.2. Methodology

In order to optimize the outcomes of my research and to provide both an etic and an emic perspective on the waterworld of Roma in Dolenjska, I chose to utilize a mixture of several general and anthropological methods. Prior to my fieldwork in Slovenia, I conducted discourse analysis of several official documents and reports published by institutions and organizations which have analysed the situation previously. This analysis focused on the connections between the order of communication, knowledge and power and reflected the position of the authors concerning the situation mentioned (Lindstrom 2008: 162). This analysis for example made clear that NGOs and international development organizations portray the Romani population as victims of the situation, whereas official institutions in Slovenia rather portray them as active agents in the situation. Eventually, I included an indirect discourse analysis of my interviews as well, focusing on the ways the concepts of citizenship and human rights were utilized and the way Roma were portrayed or the ways they portrayed themselves[8].

During my fieldwork I was assisted by three Slovenian students from the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Ljubljana University. They were selected by their affinity with conducting research, their knowledge of and contacts with local Roma communities, and especially by their capacity of translating interviews from English to Slovene and vice versa. Though they did not conduct research independently, I still preferred to account for the influence they might have in my research, for example by the discourse they utilized or by prejudices (Berreman 2012: 161). Therefore I conducted open interviews with each of them prior to our joined field trips. It was helpful to not only introduce myself and the proposed direction of my research, but to also gain insights into their knowledge, discourse and personal experiences concerning Roma in Slovenia (*op. cit.*: 211).

[7] The names of some of these settlements vary in the literature. I chose to use the names most frequently mentioned by the Roma themselves and by non-Roma people working with the municipalities.
[8] Results of this indirect discourse analysis are to be found in subsequent paragraphs, especially centred in paragraph 4.1 and 5.2.

Though two of them had negative experiences in the past, or were close to people that held a grudge against Roma in general, they were all eager to learn about the Romani perspective on the current situation in Slovenia and did so open-mindedly. As a result, fortunately, there were no negative responses to their presence.

The leading method utilized to gather data from respondents was conducting semi-open interviews. These interviews consisted of a structured part focusing on quantitative data concerning general living conditions, the ways of accessing water and participation in the Slovenian society, and a semi-structured part focusing on qualitative data providing insights in personal opinions, relationships, actions and discourses[9]. The semi-informal sphere in which these interviews occurred enabled respondents to also add personal or historical details and to share anecdotes.

Though I aimed to conduct interviews with heads of households in Romani settlements, this turned out to be impossible in the given setting. When our presence was noticed, people went outside or invited us inside to have a conversation. Commonly, more people soon joined respondents and sometimes added information to his or her answers. Also, children were often present during the conversations[10]. It would most likely have caused suspicion and the decline of openness if I would have tried to separate one person from the group to conduct an interview individually. Eventually, I labelled this type of interviews 'household interviews', meanwhile focusing on the advantages of having multiple respondents in a single conversation. Using households as the unit of analysis even has a rationale with regard to the Roma lifestyle. Roma households are usually larger and broader than are majority households, both because of the number of children and the living together of siblings. The decisions regarding their daily lives are very much influenced by the interaction among adult household members (Milcher & Zigová 2005: 58).

Observation was an important supplement to the interviews, whilst it added information and guided me to asking additional questions. Some respondents for example told me about the lack of electricity, but I discovered platters for television on some roofs. When asking them, they told me about the use of aggregates and the influence this had on their monthly budget, which led to a discussion on the amount of social support, etcetera. Though unexpected, I had two opportunities for participating observation in an after-school program of the Centre za Socialno Delo[11] in the Romani settlements of Brezje in Novo Mesto and Smrekec in Grosuplje. It was interesting to observe the ways the children participated in this program, the ways they talked about the situation at home and how they interacted with

[9] See also appendix 7.2 for the outline of the interviews.
[10] The presence of children, though, did not change the contents of the conversations. There was openness in discussing living conditions and general problems with children present. Emotions, too, were not hidden from them.
[11] This can be translated as the Centre of Social Work, to be found in every major city in Slovenia.

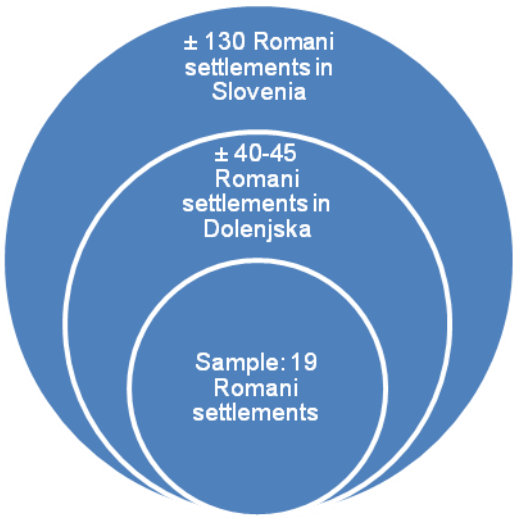
the - generally non-Roma – leaders, after having conducted interviews with several people mentioning or participating in this program. Furthermore, participant observation did not play a major role in my research, because of the lack of time to fully integrate into multiple Roma communities. Instead, my research focused on generating an overall perspective of Romani settlements in Dolenjska.

2.3. Sample and its validity

Estimations are that up to ten thousand Roma live in Slovenia (AI 2011: 7; Baluh 2006: 1; Stropnik 2011: 5). It was impossible to include all of them as respondents in my research, most importantly due to the lack of time, which obliged me to draw a sample (Baarda & De Goede 2006: 148). According to the current legislation regarding the protection of personal data, ministries, government departments or relevant institutions do not keep specific records of persons based on ethnicity or nationality (LdV project 2012: 5). Therefore I was unable to derive a sample from lists of units of analysis (Bernard 2006: 149). Instead, I utilized snowball sampling, a network sampling method for populations that cannot be approached via official lists (*op. cit.*: 192). Networking is a very common method in Slovenia: its population is relatively small with two million people and people often have extensive personal networks all over the country. My respondents often automatically gave recommendations for possible future respondents (*op. cit.*: 193).

There are approximately one hundred thirty Romani settlements in Slovenia (Stropnik 2011: 7). One third of these are said to be located in Dolenjska; approximately forty-free settlements. Because of visiting nineteen of those, I approximately 'covered' 45% of all Romani settlements in Dolenjska, and approximately 15% of all settlements in Slovenia. Because of these percentages and my efforts to account for internal heterogeneity, I stated that the conclusions drawn from this sample are valid. The sample is visualized in figure 2.

Figure 2: Research sample



However, I did not conduct interviews with representatives of every household in each settlement mentioned. In this context, it is important to mention that approximately two third of the population of each settlements consisted of children aged under fifteen. Also, some settlements were internally quite homogeneous – i.e. the living conditions of the inhabitants were comparable[12] - so that less household interviews were required to consider the data collected through interviews to represent the whole of the settlement.

[12] Decided with the help of official sources, data collected previously and my own observations.

3. ACCESS TO WATER

Internationally, water is recognized as a basic human right which should be available to all people in the world. Though the Slovenian state is said to be able to provide all its citizens with access to water; it was lacking for multiple Romani settlements included in my research (AI 2011: 40). The varying levels of accessing water for Roma can be explained by several factors, amongst others by distinctions made by political actors, 'bad practice' and 'good practice' of municipalities, and the practicing of agency by Roma themselves. The heterogeneity in access also causes heterogeneity in the quality of relationships between Roma and municipalities, between Roma and the majority population, and those among Roma. Though these relationships are all exemplified by tensions every now and then, the relationship between Roma and municipalities is particularly influenced by the availability or lack of access to water.

3.1. The human right to water

Previously, the importance of water as a resource for daily life was stressed and the subsequent valuating of water as a basic human right (Orlove & Caton 2010: 401, 409). It was stated that when the implementation of human rights - in spite of international efforts - emerges solely through inclusion in a political community, Roma are often implicitly not recognized by others as fellow rights bearers (Somers & Roberts 2008: 395, 413). Therefore, the public good of a 'right to have rights' is recognized, expressing therewith preconditions for human recognition and inclusion, apart from being based on legal structures of citizenship (*op. cit.*: 385). As a result, the human right to water should be available independently of the legal citizenship and the practicing of civic agency by Roma in the Slovenian society (De Gaay Fortman 2011: 285), leaving human rights to be in theory universal, independent, natural, inalienable, non-forfeitable and imprescriptible (Beitz 2009: 49; Somers & Roberts 2008: 390).

Because water is not merely a material substance, but also a resource that connects different actors in society with each other, and a culturally and experientially meaningful substance (Orlove & Caton 2010: 404), 'The Right to Water' – as defined by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – includes not only the physical access to water, but also additional criteria concerning the full enjoyment of the right to water. The first criterion is *availability*: the water supply for each person must be sufficient and continuous for personal and domestic uses. The second is *quality*: the water required for each individual's personal and domestic use must be safe, therefore free from microorganisms, chemical substances and radiological hazards that constitute a threat to health. Furthermore, there is a focus on *accessibility*: water and water facilities and services should be accessible to everyone without discrimination. This includes physical accessibility,

economic accessibility, non-discrimination and information accessibility. Sufficient, safe and acceptable water should be physically accessible within or in the immediate vicinity of each household, including permanent, semi-permanent as well as temporary dwellings. The economic accessibility means that water, and water facilities and services, must be affordable for all. Also both the direct and indirect costs and charges with securing water must be affordable. There should be no discrimination in this accessibility; accessibility should include the most vulnerable or marginalized sections of the population. There should be no discrimination in both law and practice. Information accessibility includes the right to seek, receive and impart information concerning water issues ('The Right to Water' – UN 2002).

The Slovenian state has determined that access to a piped water network connection is conditional upon having a building permit, a condition that cannot be met by Roma, because their settlements are often built on land that is labelled unsuitable for building, which prevents them from acquiring a building permit (AI 2011: 44). However, according to 'The Right to Water', water should also be physically accessible within or in the immediate vicinity of semi-permanent and temporary dwellings. Therefore, the national government and municipalities are blamed for violating the human right to water when not providing Romani settlements with access to water. Though the Slovenian state did demonstrate several efforts to improve the living conditions of Roma, they are also blamed for lacking adequate monitoring and regulatory frameworks to ensure that international human rights are met (*op. cit.*: 5). Thereby, it is said that the Slovenian legislator did not take into account the heterogeneity and various sociological, anthropological and linguistic evolutions of the descendants of the Indian groups within the Romani communities which settled in Europe (DiRicchardi 2013: 16).

Municipalities are responsible of local water networks, but while these operate within a broader political and regulatory context, the national government – as it is the main actor of legislation – should also be taken into account when focusing on the fulfilment of the right of access to water (Orlove & Caton 2010: 405). Also formally, states are responsible for satisfying certain conditions for all its citizens, but the world community is entitled to intervene when state governments fail this task. This institutionalization of human rights, characterized by elaborate international practices, has been perceived a constraint on states' actions (Beitz 2009: 13, 32; Bloemraad et al. 2008: 165). The intervention of the world's largest human rights organization Amnesty International – which has published a report in which the Slovenian state is publicly blamed for neglecting its responsibility of providing infrastructure for Romani settlements – has for example put a constraint on the actions of the Slovenian state to support the establishing of Romani settlements solely on legal land. After the report of Amnesty International was published in 2010, the Slovenian government had to defend

itself at the international level and prove they would take adequate measures to resolve the situation, therewith limiting the free implementation of its own actions. Still, states are preferably the actors required to take active steps to ensure that everyone can enjoy the right to water. The European Court of Human rights is placed above the national government of Slovenia, but it has itself limited powers to challenge directly the discrimination of Roma by Slovenian national and local governments (Cahn 2012: 315). According to the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma (2010), then, the role of international organizations should be first and foremost to support and assist the efforts carried out at national, regional and especially local level, because situations differ, also in Slovenia, from municipality to municipality. The role remaining for international organizations is to monitor whether states move as expeditiously and effectively as possible towards securing the right to water in taking positive measures to assist individuals and communities to enjoy this right (General comment 15 – UN 2002).

The Slovenian government is, in theory, capable of providing all its citizens with access to water without international help. This is proven by the fact that nearly 100% of the total Slovenian population has access to safe drinking water and 92% is connected to the public water supply system (Stropnik 2011: 12). This includes access to water for other minority groups that have mixed with the majority population. Roma, though, often live separated from the majority population in settlements that are almost solely inhabited by Roma (*op. cit.*: 7). Because Roma are the only minority group as a whole struggling with obtaining access to water, their differentiation from the non-Roma population of Slovenia is reinforced and increased. Water is thus said to be a priority for Roma to get included in the Slovenian society (LdV project 2012: 7; Stropnik 2011: 33; VRS 2010: 7).

3.2. Having and lacking access

In this paragraph the variety of ways in which several Romani settlements access water in five different municipalities in Dolenjska will be discussed. ‘Access to water’ refers to water which is utilized for all purposes in daily life. Most often mentioned by Roma are the purposes of consumption, washing of clothes and dishes, bathing, cleaning and cooking. Sanitation is not included in this list of purposes, whilst this is seldom provided by municipalities. The lack of sanitation, though, reinforces the perspective of Roma respondents that they live in deplorable conditions which can be compared to the living circumstances of animals. Sanitation seems to be provided only when included in building projects initiated by national or local governments, for example in the Romani settlement Brezje in Novo Mesto. Elsewhere, sanitation is hand-made, mostly only recently - i.e. in the last decade - depending on the overall development of Romani settlements. Generally, older settlements are more likely to be legalized and inhabitants of those have had more time to save money and collect materials to provide self-made sanitation. Still, in many cases, people used nature closest to

settlements as sanitation. Several non-Roma respondents considered this to be a hazard to the health of the inhabitants of Romani settlement, because it increases the chances for an epidemic.

The heterogeneity in ways of accessing water in different Romani settlements, that will follow from the descriptions below, can be explained by historical and recent factors of influence. First, the national government maintains a much debated distinction between 'autochthonous' and 'non-autochthonous' Roma in its legislation (Spreizer 2004: 4). Though the concept 'autochthonous' is never clearly defined by the Slovenian government, it refers to those Roma in a long-lasting, permanent and recognized settlement in a specific territory, which is the case in twenty municipalities only[13] (AI 2011: 7-8; Kuhelj 2011: 275). Settlements recognized as autochthonous have better chances to obtain infrastructure than non-autochthonous settlements. Furthermore, differences are due to 'bad practice' and 'good practice', referring to various levels of efforts and investments of municipalities[14]. And thirdly, differences are due to the investments of the inhabitants of Romani settlements themselves[15]. These investments are financially as well as practically, such as providing self-made - though therewith illegal - connections to water.

Also, there are spatial differences, which are mainly connected to the lands settlements are located on. Almost all Romani settlements visited during my fieldwork were built on land which was owned by the municipality. There were two exceptions: in Grosuplje one settlement is built on private land and in Novo Mesto one is built on land formerly owned by the Yugoslavian army. A building permit is required to enable a Romani settlement to be categorized as legal. However, acquiring a building permit is only possible once land is labelled as 'suitable for building'. Most Romani settlements, though, are built on publicly owned land which is labelled unsuitable for building, therewith preventing the inhabitants from obtaining legal infrastructure, amongst others connections to local water networks. Another spatial factor of influence is the availability of a water source in the vicinity of a Romani settlement or the lack thereof. When there is one or more, it is more likely that water connections are illegally made from these sources to the settlements, therewith providing at least one possible way of accessing water.

Grosuplje

Of the five municipalities visited, Grosuplje is closes to the capital city of Slovenia, Ljubljana. It has approximately 19.300 inhabitants. The municipality contains four different Romani

[13] The municipalities Grosuplje, Kočevje, Novo Mesto and Trebnje are all included in this group. The municipality Ribnica is the only one included in my research which, according to this categorization of the Slovenian state, does not have an autochthonous Roma population.
[14] This will be discussed in greater detail in paragraph 5.2. on the governmental structure of Slovenia.
[15] The issue of Roma agency will be discussed further in paragraph 4.1. on legal structures and individual agency.

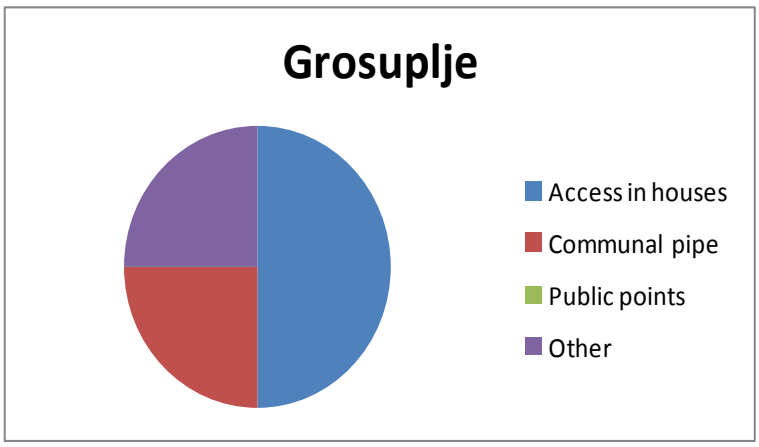
settlements: Oaza, Ponova Vas, Pri Nikotu and Smrekec. Though Grosuplje is one of the twenty municipalities with an autochthonous Roma population, the local government generally has an indifferent attitude concerning the improvement the local Romani settlements. Also, it has planned the demolishment of Ponova Vas to be executed this year.

In figure 3 the access to water for Romani settlements in Grosuplje is visualized. In Oaza and Smrekec people have access to water in their houses, though the duration of access differs per household. In Oaza people have had access to water for fifteen years; in Smrekec it ranges from six till eleven years. In both cases access is provided by the municipality and not self-made. There is no solid solution of explaining the difference in duration of access. The head of environmental issues in the municipality Grosuplje showed me a satellite map of Smrekec and pinpointed three points in the settlement where water could be accessed via communal pipes. The differences of duration in access in Smrekec, then, might be due to the individual financial resources of households: as soon as the water connection is made from communal pipes to the inside of the houses, the bills need to be paid per household.

In a third settlement, Pri Nikotu, access to water is provided with a communal pipe. There is a self-made connection from this pipe to the inside of two houses, a connection which is shared with the other inhabitants of this settlement. The practical knowledge to make such connections is not uncommon among Roma people. An inhabitant of Pri Nikotu stated that such practical knowledge originates from the struggle for survival.

The last of four settlements, Ponova Vas, is categorized 'other': the inhabitants of this Romani settlement access water via a small stream that is flooding at the entrance of this settlement. This stream is also for canalization of four villages nearby. Observation led to the conclusion that the water was polluted with garbage, amongst others with rusted metals. The inhabitants of Ponova Vas sometimes also collect water from public points, amongst others from the local graveyard. The small stream, though, is their main source of water.

Figure 3: Access to water in Grosuplje



Kočevje

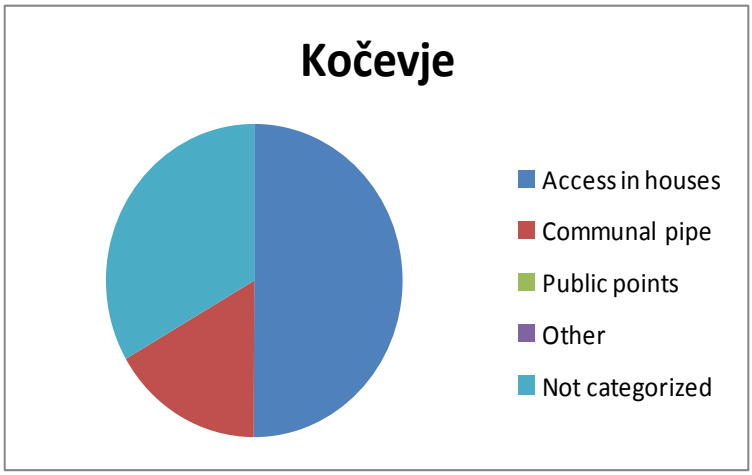
Kočevje is a medium sized municipality with approximately 17.000 inhabitants. There are seven Romani settlements located within the territory of Kočevje, most of these in the village Kočevje itself. It is an interesting case, because the municipality is actively seeking for solutions to move several Romani settlements that are now located on land that is labelled unsuitable for building to legal land where they could settle permanently. There seems to be a lack of transparent communication, though, which prevents local Roma from recognizing the efforts of the municipality.

Figure 4 visualizes the access to water for the six settlements I was able to visit. In Cigani Blok[16], Marof and Željne the Roma have access to water in their houses. Here the duration of access to water varies also: in Cigani Blok and in Željne the inhabitants have had access to water since the settlements were located in the current spots. In Marof the settlement can be roughly divided in two parts; one part having access to water for over twenty-five years, the other part having it for less than a year. It is not clear whether the connections to water in the latter part are legal. There is one house in this part that is connected to water and electricity. These connections are extended to other houses.

Another Romani settlement, which is located in the woods and near the industrial zone of Kočevje, is home to a family of nine siblings, each having his or her own household. There is one communal pipe for all. The settlements Mestni Log and Trata Jezero are categorized 'other', because of the considerable internal heterogeneity, preventing placing them in one category. Mestni Log can be roughly divided in two parts, each part consisting of family members. The first part, which is located closer to the main road, has had access to water inside the houses for approximately ten years. This, however, is a self-made and thus illegal connection. In the other part access to water is lacking and people collect water at public points, often from the graveyard which is next to this Romani settlement, and from houses of non-Roma people living in Kočevje. There is an unofficial, but geographically slightly visible 'border' between those two parts of Mestni Log. One of my respondents in this settlement who lived on this 'border' collected water through a water pipe located in the barn of the first part. In Trata Jezero elderly people access water in their houses. The municipality has provided this connection approximately ten years ago. According to a male respondent it was arranged after he in despair stole water from a public trench to take care of his horses. In another part of this settlement, located closer to the local industries, water is accessed with a communal pipe.

[16] 'Cigani Blok' is the name the local non-Roma population has given to an apartment building in the centre of Kočevje in which four Romani families live. There is no specific official name.

Figure 4: Access to water in Kočevje



Novo Mesto

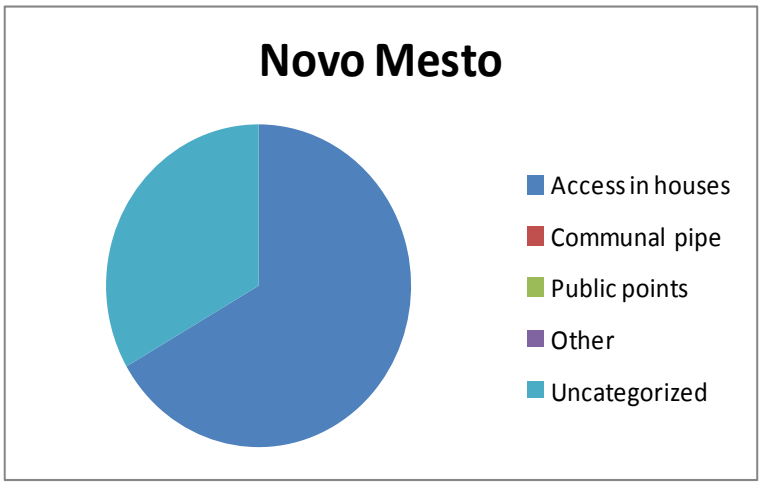
Novo Mesto is the urban centre of Dolenjska and has approximately 35.900 inhabitants. The Roma population is quite large here with approximately thousand people, spread over seven Romani settlements. Novo Mesto is one of very few municipalities with two settlements consisting of several hundred inhabitants. Settlements are often smaller, containing only family members. The case of this municipality is especially telling because of the huge differences in between its seven Romani settlements. In almost all literature it is stated that eight Romani settlements are located in Novo Mesto; this discrepancy is due to the recent clearance of the settlement Graben-Ragovo. Though I had short visits in six Romani settlements, I have only conducted multiple interviews in three of these, which is why I only categorized those in figure 5.

In Brezje and Šmihel the inhabitants access water in their houses. Brezje is a Romani settlement with over two hundred inhabitants. It is a legalized settlement, built on land owned by the municipality. The houses were provided with a building project over a decade ago, but according to the Roma councillor of Novo Mesto, the houses are not suitable for todays' way of living. They do have access to amenities, though. There is a certain level of homogeneity, and internal differences, may they be, are not very obvious. Šmihel is a smaller Romani settlement, consisting of twenty-six houses, located closest to the centre of Novo Mesto. Almost all its inhabitants have access to water and electricity, though it is not certain that all have legal connections. As is often done, when one family has a connection to water or electricity, this connection is extended with a self-made connection to other houses in the settlement.

Žabjek is said to be the most problematic Romani settlement in Novo Mesto. It is home to approximately three hundred people and therewith it is the largest Romani settlement in Novo Mesto. Unfortunately, significant internal heterogeneity prevented

depicting the access to water for all inhabitants, which is why it is categorized as 'other'. Only some households are connected to the public water network, but generally, the inhabitants of Žabjek lack access to water in their houses. Communal pipes are not provided by the municipality, because this settlement is illegally built on land formerly owned by the Yugoslavian army. Because it is perceived to be impossible to move all its inhabitants to other places, there is a process of legalization proceeding, which took another step while conducting fieldwork in February 2013, when an agreement was reached to transfer the land from the Defence Ministry to the municipality. Water is often obtained from public points and from illegal connections that are brought from Brezje – a Romani settlement mentioned before – which is located on the other side of the road.

Figure 5: Access to water in Novo Mesto



Ribnica

The municipality Ribnica was not included in my initial sample of three municipalities, but time and finances enabled me to expand my research. Ribnica is an example of so-called 'bad practice', therefore it was an interesting case to include in my research. 'Bad practice' refers amongst others to the conditions of the Romani settlements in Ribnica: all three settlements visited lacked access to water, electricity and sanitation. The local mayor supports the opinion of the local majority population, which strongly opposes the Roma population. This municipality is the only one included in my sample that does not have a so-called autochthonous Roma population. As a result, there is no Roma representative in the municipal council, which is a factor contributing to the lack of structural communication between the municipality and local Romani settlements.

Ribnica is a relatively small municipality with approximately 3.600 inhabitants. The local Roma population consists of approximately one hundred eighty people, and is spread over four settlements, of which I was able to visit three[17]. All three settlements lacked access to water. The inhabitants of the Romani settlements Goriča Vas, Lepovce and Otavice collect water at a spring that is five or six kilometres away. They do so by car, all having their own materials to collect water with. One family, for example, showed me the keg they fill each day at the water spring, which is eventually used for all daily activities requiring water.

Trebnje

The second municipality I expanded my research to, is Trebnje. Opposed to Ribnica, this is an example of 'good practice'. Communication between the local Roma population and the municipality has improved and the cooperation between the local mayor and the Roma councillor has resulted in several efforts made to improve the general living conditions and the access to amenities of the Roma in the settlement of Hudeje, which is home to approximately two hundred fifty people. Hudeje therewith is the largest and an almost entirely legalized Romani settlement in Trebnje, and also the only one specifically focused on by the municipality. There are two or three families living outside Hudeje and it is likely that they lack access to amenities, because of the lack of efforts outside Hudeje. Also, the employee of the municipality Trebnje, included as respondent in my research, was not very willing to talk about other Roma, not living in Hudeje[18]. The process of the legalization of Hudeje is currently nearly finished. Access to water is now provided within the houses of the inhabitants of Hudeje. There are some differences in the duration of access; the process of providing access started approximately six years ago when the current mayor was appointed and has been ongoing since then.

Access to water: revisited

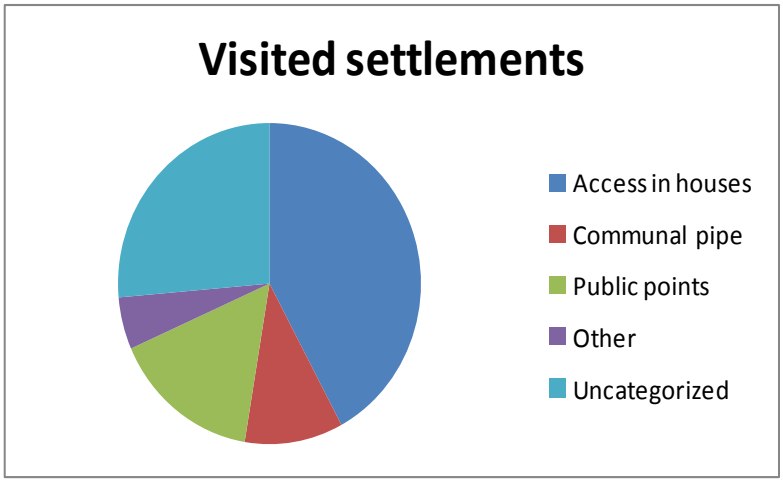
In figure 6 the access to water for all visited settlements is visualized in one diagram. Over 40% had access to water inside the houses. Approximately 10% accessed water with a communal pipe. Another 15% collected water at public points, such as gas stations or graveyards. 5% is categorized other and refers for example to accessing water via a water spring or a water stream in the vicinity of Romani settlements. Unfortunately, almost a quarter is uncategorized, because of the huge internal heterogeneity of settlements, which made it

[17] Though it was said that there were four Romani settlements in Ribnica, the fourth and unvisited settlement referred to a single household.

[18] Fortunately, I was told before that multiple Romani settlements were located in the municipality of Trebnje. Non-Roma employees of the municipality would have easily made me believe that Hudeje was the only Romani settlement in Trebnje. Therewith they could constitute their own image as good practitioners, which they indeed were in regards to Hudeje, but it is doubtful whether they also are in regards to Romani settlements outside Hudeje. My respondents were not willing to talk about those.

impossible for me to categorize them in one of the other existing categories. Generally, the majority of the inhabitants of these uncategorized settlements lacked access to water in their houses.

Figure 6: Access to water in visited settlements



It should be mentioned that accessing water within the house or with a communal pipe in the community does not automatically mean that the quality of water is good. As explained by the head of environmental issues in Grosuplje, measures are taken to ensure that the water quality is good when distributed to the inhabitants of the municipality. He added, though, that when people do not take care of these connections and plugs get dirty, the water quality might still be good when provided, but drops when water is tapped from these plugs.

3.3. Influence on relationships

Several non-Roma respondents, amongst others an employee of the NGO Romi Gredo Naprej, stated that Roma often have tensioned relationships with each other and with the local population in Grosuplje, Kočevje, Novo Mesto, Ribnica and Trebnje. Employees of municipalities generally know that they are not favoured by Roma, but perceive themselves to be actors actively and sincerely seeking to resolve problematic issues at the local level. Of course, the quality of relationships between Roma and the local non-Roma population, and between Roma and municipalities are subject to several factors, such as the general attitude of the majority population and the efforts made by municipalities. While analysing the data I found that the ways in which Roma accessed water also influenced these relationships. The quality of these relationships varies align with the internal heterogeneity in Romani settlements. Generally, Roma who are connected to local water networks are more positive about their relationships with the municipality they are residing in, than are Roma lacking this connection. The provision of infrastructure to Romani settlements is perceived by Roma to be the fulfilment of the moral task of municipalities.

Also, living conditions improve due to the provision of infrastructure, which has a severe calming influence on the otherwise often tense relationships between Roma and local non-Roma populations.

Relationships Roma - Municipality

The relationship between Roma and municipalities is generally subject to several factors. Firstly, it is subject to the historical presence of a Roma population in a certain municipality or the lack thereof. In Grosuplje, Kočevje, Novo Mesto and Trebnje the Roma population is considered to be 'autochthonous', whereas in Ribnica it is not. Generally, autochthonous Roma are more likely to have structural communication with the municipality, because of the presence of a Roma councillor who represents them at the municipal council.

Another factor influencing the relationship between Roma and municipalities is the amount of help Roma have received from the municipality, especially concerning basic living conditions, thus including access to water. The general attitude of the municipality is connected to this factor. In Trebnje, for example, the municipality shows an attitude that ignoring so-called Roma problematics will not improve the current situation for both Roma and non-Roma. Therefore, investments have been made to improve the largest settlement Hudeje by providing access to water, electricity, sewage and asphalt roads. In Ribnica, as a counter-example, the municipality is said to be indifferent and lacks efforts to improve the living conditions of the local Roma population, which are now said to be easily compared to those in the Third World (ERTF Charter on the Rights of the Roma). The attitude of the municipality, though, might change over time. The leader of a Romani settlement in Novo Mesto stated that from 2006 till 2010 there were good relationships between Roma and the municipality and all problems could be solved. But then, a 'bad factor' in the municipality spread his negative opinions which cut the communication between Roma, the municipality and the police, resulting in these now being perceived as the main enemy of the Roma in Novo Mesto. Therefore, structural communication seems to be an important factor in this relationship. This though is not merely structural, but also mutual communication, in which both Roma and non-Roma have a voice. There are cases to mention, amongst others in Kočevje, in which the municipality did have plans to improve the situation of the local Roma population. However, local Roma were not satisfied with the municipality, due to the lack of communication about the plans made. This lack of transparency generates a lack of efficiency in improving the current situation in Kočevje.

Generally speaking, the conclusion is that Roma lacking access to water have more tensioned relationships with municipalities than have Roma in settlements in which the municipality has invested, both financially and socially. Respondents in settlements lacking access to water described their relationship with the municipality with strong words like

‘dramatic’ or ‘crisis’. The reason mentioned is that municipalities are not willing to listen to their claims to obtain access to water and other amenities. The lack of transparency was also mentioned: municipalities receive money from the Slovenian state to invest in improving the living conditions of local Roma populations, but Roma blame municipalities for using this money for their own purposes, instead of providing infrastructure for Romani settlements. Furthermore, respondents repeatedly mentioned that municipalities seem to be picky: “They only help people who already have some money. To some people they give and to others they do not. But we (i.e. without money and assets) need them more.”

Wherever the municipality openly invests in Romani settlements, the relationships with Roma are described much more positive. As visualized and described in the previous paragraph, the access to water for Roma in Kočevje varies. One settlement in Kočevje has been established for decades, has been legalized in the 2000s and has access to all amenities. The relationship with the municipality was described as ‘excellent’ by its inhabitants. In another settlement opinions varied. In one part of the settlement, the respondents had access to water and other amenities, whereas in the other part they lacked access. The respondents having access, provided by the municipality, described the relationship with the municipality Kočevje as good and stabile, while the respondents lacking access had a severe grudge against the municipality. This tendency was discovered in every municipality.

Relationship Roma – Local non-Roma

According to a professor of geography, the progression of settlements in the process of integration into the Slovenian society differs. This variation is due to the fact that, generally, Romani settlements that have been established in a certain place for decades are more intertwined with the municipality in which it is located than are other, relatively new settlements. The Romani settlement Željne in Kočevje, for example, has been in this village ever since before the Second World War and is therefore more intertwined with the local population than, for example, Lepovce in Ribnica, which is relatively new.

In contrast to the relationship with the municipality, Roma respondents often stated that there were no problems between them and the local non-Roma population. They strengthened their argument by mentioning examples of local non-Roma allowing them to bring water from public points and water springs, or by helping them in providing wood, as was the case in Ribnica. Only few Roma respondents mentioned the existence of conflicts with the local population. In Grosuplje, a Roma woman said: “Sometimes there are conflicts, but these are not worth mentioning, because those are not about important stuff, just regular conflicts.” There is a discrepancy concerning non-Roma stating that often there are continually conflicts between Roma and non-Roma populations, and Roma stating that there

are no conflicts or problems. This might be explained by the meaning Roma attach to the term conflict. Some things might not be seen as a conflict by them, but non-Roma might perceive it as such. When visiting Žabjek in Novo Mesto, for example, people were burning plastic, probably to get rid of the garbage which is not collected by the municipality in this Romani settlement. The smoke and associated smell of burning plastic is considered to be a problem for non-Roma neighbours, which is a factor contributing to their negative opinion about Roma. The discrepancy between the opinions of Roma and non-Roma concerning their relationship is also proven by their answers to the question whether or not they have acquaintances or friends among the other group, as was asked with a questionnaire in Trebnje (Pfajfar et al. 2010). When asking non-Roma, 64% said not to have acquaintances or friends among Roma. However, when asking Roma 83% said they had friends among non-Roma (*op. cit.*: 102, 209). There are two ways of explaining this discrepancy; either Roma and non-Roma have other definitions of friendship or one of these 'groups' is selective in speaking the truth.

Very few Roma respondents openly talked about the essence of conflicts with their neighbours, while non-Roma respondents rather mentioned specific points of concern, such as experiencing hindrance from barking dogs, shooting and illegal burning. In Ribnica, though, one Roma man told me about their troubles with the non-Roma neighbours. He said: "They are trying to find something we do wrong and then present it in meetings at the municipality." The questionnaire conducted in Trebnje (Pfajfar et al. 2010) shows that 46% of the Roma respondents said that both Roma and non-Roma were responsible for the conflicts, but another 31% said that 'civili', i.e. non-Roma, were the main responsible actors for these conflicts. Only 8% stated that Roma were the main culprits (*op.cit.*: 145). It seems to be, then, that Roma seldom accuse themselves from having a part in conflicts or causing trouble for others. Or, as one Roma respondent in Ribnica stated; "We are just fair people, trying to survive". By non-Roma this is seen as maintaining a victim role, which should be discarded in order to improve the relationship with non-Roma, but also the living conditions of Roma in general.

The police in Grosuplje stated that non-Roma generally try to avoid conflicts with Roma. Conflicts that need their assistance in solving are therefore mainly inside Romani settlements. Whenever there are conflicts between Roma and non-Roma, these are treated as normal police processes, no matter who is involved. The police in Novo Mesto argued that conflicts occur when non-Roma become victims of things Roma do, such as the example of burning plastic. Also, according to an employee of the police in Novo Mesto, conflicts occur because non-Roma feel disadvantaged by the social difference; while they have to work for making a living, Roma are dependent on social support, provided by the Slovenian welfare system, which, indirectly, non-Roma have to pay.

Relationships among Roma

A representative of NGO Romi Gredo Naprej told me that there are problems in every Romani settlement, but when the community functions well, these problems are hidden from outsiders. An employee on Roma problematics in Novo Mesto stated somewhat stronger: “Roma sometimes even hate each other. That is their mentality, their way of life.” The social and geographical separation of Romani settlements is supposed to be due to such family conflicts. Roma respondents often said that they have no problems with other Romani settlements in the same municipality, but they also do not have relationships with Roma from these other settlements. According to the police in Novo Mesto family conflicts of Roma are very aggressive and usually all members get involved, which has severe results. It is therefore their way of life and culture that not all Roma live together in one settlement in a municipality. Generally, smaller settlements are functioning better than bigger settlements and the inhabitants are more cooperative. This is because it is more likely that multiple families live together in bigger settlements, whereas small settlements often consist of family members only.

Again, there is a discrepancy between the opinions of Roma and non-Roma when talking about the relationships among Roma. What is remarkable is that a Roma leader of a settlement in Novo Mesto also stated: “In reality, their problems are worse than what is shown to foreigners. People try to make it look much better.”

4. LEGAL STRUCTURES AND ROMA CIVIC AGENCY

The availability or lack of access to water for Romani settlements is not an independent factor, but it is subject to both structures in the Slovenian society and the practicing of agency by Roma and non-Roma actors. It is clear that structure and agency are not mutually exclusive, but intertwined and supplementing each other in the analysis of the specific context of my research. Though some structures continue influencing the situation of Roma, these were initially shaped by agency. Agency is also required from all actors when the aim is to break structures that negatively influence both Roma and non-Roma in Dolenjska.

In this chapter I will discuss the structures that are involved in shaping and maintaining the situation of Roma as it is now, supplemented with a discussion on the practicing of civic agency of Roma. In the second paragraph the focus is explicitly on the participation of Roma in the Slovenian society, an indicator of both their perception of citizenship – as participation is one of the four dimensions of the definition of citizenship – and the practicing of their agency. The legal status of Roma and their sense of belonging are two other dimensions of citizenship, which will be discussed in the third paragraph. Though these are closely connected to the dimension of participation, there are other factors influencing the character of these dimensions for Roma in the Slovenian society.

4.1. Structures and individual agency

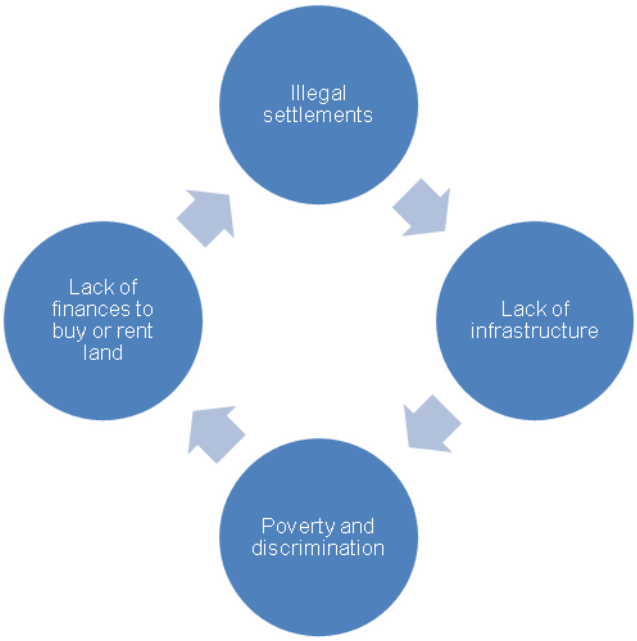
In the conceptual model on citizenship and human rights I already discussed the debates revolving around these concepts. It became clear that citizenship is no longer solely understood as a formal structure, but as supplemented with civic agency (Dahlgren 2006: 267). Roma respondents often combined defining citizenship as a structure and as agency. On the one hand, the aim to become equal players in society, accessing opportunities and resources parallel with the majority population was emphasized (Petrovičová et al. 2012: 342), therewith focusing on the dimensions of citizenship in its traditional definition: equal legal status, rights, participation and a subsequent sense of belonging. On the other hand, though, Roma emphasize the importance of practicing their agency. They point to structures of lacking support of local governments, and the level of agency that is required from Roma themselves to solve their daily problems, when the municipality does not. Non-Roma perceive such statements of Roma to be signifying the ‘victim role’ they entitled to themselves, and therewith emphasize the lack of practicing civic agency by Roma.

Predominantly, Roma respondents utilized only specific parts of the public discourses on citizenship. The dimension of participation and the sense of belonging were much more emphasized than were the dimensions of legal status and rights. In contrast, non-Roma respondents rather focused on the latter two dimensions. It then follows that Roma emphasize the two dimensions of citizenship which seem to require agency, but in fact rather

focus on the structures that withhold them from practicing this agency. On the other hand, non-Roma respondents emphasize the structures of legal status and the accompanying rights, but in daily life blame the lack of agency of Roma to enable other, destructive structures to remain.

An example of such a destructive structure in the Slovenian society, which seems to be a result of the lack of agency of both Roma and non-Roma, is the so-called 'magic circle' of marginalisation and poverty. This structure is visualized in figure 7.

Figure 7: The 'magic circle'



In the 1960s Slovenia, being an autonomic part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, ordered all Roma to cease travelling and settle. They settled mostly on land which was either owned by the municipality or privately by non-Roma Slovenes. Settling here was illegal, because the land was labelled 'unsuitable for building' and no building permits could be distributed. This caused municipalities to be unable to provide legal infrastructure – roads, water, electricity and canalization – without violating the law. The lack of infrastructure, in turn, negatively influences the living conditions of Roma and increases poverty, differentiation from the majority population and eventually discrimination expressed towards Roma by the local non-Roma population. The combination of poverty and discrimination maintains the lack of finances and possibilities for Roma to buy or rent land that is labelled 'suitable for building' on which they would be able to build permanent dwellings. As a result, they will most likely continue living in illegal settlements, a supposed fact that takes us back to the start of the circle. To breach this circle, agency is required from

several parties involved in so-called Roma problematics[19]. Several professionals who conducted research among Roma in Slovenia in the past strongly suggest to legalize Romani settlements, which will enable municipalities to provide legal basic infrastructure for Romani settlements, therewith improving the general living conditions and decreasing poverty and marginalisation of Roma. Other 'solutions' emphasize the civic agency of Roma themselves more explicitly, often focusing on the role of employment in order to develop financial resources, which will enable Roma to buy or rent land which is 'suitable for building'.

Other structures in the Slovenian society are also blamed for the maintenance of the 'magic circle'. An employee on Roma problematics in Novo Mesto stated that the introduction of the social welfare system after the independence of Slovenia in 1991 was a severe mistake of the national government. Former attempts striving to integrate Roma in the Slovenian society were destroyed by the introduction of social support. According to him, this provided Roma with the idea that the government should help them, therewith denying their own agency and remaining in a victim role. Also, the head of the Department of Environmental Issues in Grosuplje recognized this dependence of Roma on governmental support, both on the local and national level. He stated that Roma should fix things by themselves, but if they do not the government provides those. The leader of a Romani settlement in Novo Mesto stated that some Roma are lying and indeed only asking for the help of municipalities, therewith claiming money from the government. Approximately twenty years after the introduction of the welfare system, many politicians are tired of providing things for Roma while not actually changing the structure of Roma continually claiming help.

The inclusion and exclusion of Roma in the Slovenian society is thus based on both legal and informal structures and the supposed lack of civic agency of Roma. The vice mayor of Kočevje emphasizes the need for this agency as she stated that Roma should commence fixing their own problems, but they lack the recognition that the initiative should be theirs. An employee on Roma problematics in Novo Mesto agreed, but stated that the Roma need someone to give them a hand and push them towards undertaking action to change their lives. However, a high-ranked police officer involved in prevention programs in Romani settlements, emphasized that you cannot change Roma by force, so you have to work with them in order to change the current situation for both Roma and their non-Roma neighbours. Though there thus seems to be disagreement on which agent should take the initiative, it is widely recognized that agency is required from Roma in order to make programs and projects effective (Klopčič 2007: 236). A professor of geography strongly supporting the legalization of Romani settlements stated that perceptions of Roma should always be taken

[19] 'Roma problematics' is a concept utilized by Slovenian municipalities to refer to the work conducted by several employees, which focuses on resolving (problematic) issues concerning local Roma populations.

into account when focusing on the development of their situation. For example, better houses could be built for them, but you cannot build settlements in a Slovenian style, therewith overlooking the fact that Roma ways of living differ from Slovenian living styles, i.e. houses of Roma are situated close to each other and not aligned alongside a main road. In changing national and local structures it seems that both Roma and non-Roma wait for national institutions to take care of local problems, while practicing their civic agency might contribute to change.

It seems to be not the lack of awareness which keeps Roma out of the process of development, but the lack of communication and cooperation, thus stated an employee of the Romski Informacijski Centre in Ljubljana. Multiple Roma respondents stated that they wanted transparency of current issues at the municipality level and concerning what is done with the money provided by the national government to support municipalities to improve the living conditions of the local Roma populations. Awareness is a first step to practicing agency, but it is not enough to actually make changes. According to the same employee of the RIC, Roma need to be equipped with the knowledge and experience to be included in the process. That would give them the right and the capability to be actor of their own lives and practice their agency.

The practicing of agency might be hindered by the often 'individualistic' style of living of Roma. A police officer in Grosuplje stated that Roma work as individuals, not as a group or community. This is recognized by multiple non-Roma respondents. Some stated that internal conflicts prevent Roma from constituting a community. Supposedly as a result, families often live socially and spatially segregated lives. A Roma man in Kočevje explained that it is better to live on your own, in this way avoiding to be blamed as a community for something done by an individual Roma person. There is a wide tendency for the image of Roma to be based on people who are negatively enhanced within the Roma population (Ohlsson 2003: 33). Some others also explicitly stated that they were trying to avoid being victimized by stereotypes pressed on them by non-Roma. This 'individualistic living style' is illustrated by the case of a Romani settlement in Ribnica, a settlement lacking access to water and other amenities. One house, somewhat separated from the others, was built of stronger material and had access to all amenities. Though the owner was related to the other inhabitants of this settlement, he was not committed to helping them. Because I recognized these patterns throughout my fieldwork, I chose to replace the concept 'community' with the concept 'settlement', utilizing the geographical term to refer to the places where Roma families live rather than the social term. In contrast with this observation is the recognition that in some smaller settlements there was a tendency to help each other, which is not only typical for ethnic minorities, but also for Slovenia as a whole, as it is a former socialistic country. In such settlements, people tried to share the connection of water or provided hand-made connections from communal

pipes to houses – now not discussing the legal aspects of this kind of cooperation.

There thus is a tension between a supposed victim role of Roma, only focusing on legal structures which need to be changed, and the practicing of individual and collective agency by Roma in Dolenjska. A Roma man in Ribnica stated that it should go hand in hand: the municipality should provide the basic things, such as land and infrastructure and after that Roma would make themselves a living with these amenities. Few Roma in Dolenjska acknowledge that operating as a community could strengthen their position and their claims as an ethnic minority group in Slovenia. Non-Roma respondents often stated that if Roma would cooperate with each other, there would be fewer problems, and internal heterogeneity would decrease. We should remember, though, that structures consciously and unconsciously maintained by local and national governments, and the variety in approaches of municipalities, might severely influence the space available for practicing civic agency.

4.2. Participation: education and employment

Because Roma de jure have the same rights as the majority population, participation in the society is enabled, according to the perception of citizenship as a linear process (Marshall 1950). However, during my fieldwork it again became clear that legal structures have to be supplemented with civic agency. An important way for Roma to practice their agency in daily life is by participating in the Slovenian society. Education and employment are two specific areas often mentioned as the main focus points for national and local programs, implemented by local actors and NGOs. Roma often live separate from the majority population, therewith unconsciously preventing their lives from becoming mingled with that of non-Roma (Stropnik 2011: 7). Education and employment are two key areas which force Roma and non-Roma to come across each other in the Slovenian society. These areas are also identified as focus areas because education increases chances for employment and employment increases chances to breach the ‘magic circle’ of poverty and marginalisation, as described in the previous paragraph. To measure the participation of Roma in Dolenjska in the Slovenian society, I initially aimed to concentrate on their participation in three realms in society, namely education, employment and involvement in politics, therewith covering items from the social, economic and political realms in the Slovenian state. During my fieldwork I was able to generate data about my respondents’ past and current participation in education and employment, but it was largely impossible to collect valid data about their involvement in politics. Often, Roma have a negative opinion about politics and perceive politicians to be people making empty promises without actually improving the general living conditions. Few Roma respondents were active in politics themselves, and if so by working as a Roma representative for the municipal council or with a non-governmental organization. One respondent was actively involved in international politics as a member of the European Roma

and Traveller Forum. Because Slovenia is a relatively small country and the Roma population only makes up for 0,5% of the total population, the networks are often dense[20]. My respondents often knew other people that were involved in politics, especially the local Roma councillor, whom they themselves elected, and people working with local or regional non-governmental organizations. Eventually, though, when referring to participation in the Slovenian society, they themselves referred to education and employment only, which was also the main concern of employees of municipalities.

Education

The participation of Roma children in education is important not only because it is part of the socialization and integration process, but also because it is closely connected to their future chances in society. However, the segregation of Romani settlements causes it to be more difficult for Roma children to regularly attend and complete education compared with the way the majority population does. Consequently, they later in life encounter constraints on the labour market (Milcher & Zigová 2005: 51). It also works the other way around: mainly, Roma live in less developed areas where unemployment is more pronounced and dependency on social contributions or irregular jobs is present. This causes disincentives of parents to invest in education for children. This situation leads to a vicious circle of increased poverty that in turn further impedes access to quality education (*ibid*.: 52, 54, 67).

Whereas pessimistic conclusions were made in articles written in the last ten years, according to my respondents it seems that nowadays an increasing number of children are enrolled in education. The discrepancy between literature and data is not explicitly due to changes in the attitude of Roma, but most likely it is due to recently implemented legislations. The state government has required Roma children to be enrolled at least in primary education in order for their parents to maintain the financial support they gain from the country's welfare system. Next I will provide some general conclusions drawn in regard to the participation of Roma respondents in education.

People aged over thirty generally did not complete primary education. Most of them completely lack education. Only some were enrolled in primary school, but dropped out after a few grades. Predominantly, this pattern was due to the lack of encouragement of their parents, amongst others caused by the character of the Romani community in the twentieth century, when most of them were still travellers. Travelling prevented the children from regularly attending school, and even when they did, they often dropped out early because the children were also required to support the family by help gaining income. As mentioned, only in the 1960s and 1970s orders were given that the Roma should get settled.

[20] This is not opposed to the 'individualistic living style' mentioned in the previous paragraph. Knowing each other does not automatically mean cooperation.

The people who are young adults now, aged roughly between eighteen and thirty, almost all have completed at least a few grades of primary education and some have finished it. The drop-out rate for them was mainly due to discrimination and bullying by both teachers and fellow schoolmates. Younger children are often currently enrolled in primary and some even in secondary education. When not experiencing much discrimination, they are often motivated to go to school, and also their parents seem to be more supportive, because – so it was stated - they want their children to have better lives than they had themselves and increase their chances for the future. Still I found that people with relatively bad living conditions often had pessimistic perspectives on the future, although they certainly expressed the hope that the lives of their children would be different from theirs.

Though many people told me that their children were currently enrolled in education, the children were often around when conducting interviews in Romani settlements. When asking about this, it was often stated that the children had a day off or something had occurred that prevented them from going to school that particular day. This either must have happened often, because I encountered children almost during every field trip, or my respondents were being selective in speaking the truth. Asking why people lie may lead to important insights into personal, social, and cultural aspects of their lives (Bleek 1987: 314). Therefore I indirectly asked my respondents why their answers were in contrast with my observations. After a while I discovered that my respondents might have been afraid that I would report that their children were not regularly attending school, which in theory could cause them to lose their social support, while they often depend on the welfare system for their daily income. Some respondents, though, bluntly stated that their children were experiencing discrimination at school, causing the children to be discouraged to attend it. Several problems still cause a relatively high drop-out rate of children prior to their graduation of primary school, or at least cause children to not regularly attend school.

Discrimination is the main factor. It was said that some teachers are not willing to work actively with Roma children and are not concerned about their developments in education. Roma children are often also bullied by their fellow schoolmates, who are calling them names (‘Cigani’[21]) and gossip about their smell. Another problem is the supposed lack of discipline of the parents of Roma children. Non-Roma often state that Roma do not see the value of education, because they lack hope that discrimination will decrease and therewith enable their children to get employed. Additional values of education, such as socialization and integration, are also neglected. The Roma councillor of Trebnje said that some parents postpone sending their children to school, which causes an increased differentiation of Roma children from the majority, because they will stand out more when

[21] Only part of the Roma respondents experienced the Slovenian term for ‘Gypsy’ to be offensive. Others only emphasized that the children were thus depicted as being different.

starting attending school at a much older age than is the average.

Due to the combination of these problems, Roma children sometimes have to attend schools for children with special needs. Learning problems often occur at regular schools, especially in the first grades of primary education when Roma children sometimes lack the ability to speak the Slovenian language. Though Roma parents speak Slovene, the Romani language is the main language spoken at home. According to the Roma councillor of Novo Mesto kindergartens are an important factor in bridging the language gap, because children are taught the Slovenian language prior to commencing primary education. She also stated that it is beneficial to have a kindergarten within Romani settlements, so that the first socialization process of children takes place within their own environment, at the same time avoiding the problem that Roma parents often refuse taking their children to Slovenian kindergartens.

Parents lacking access to water, or at least lacking a connection inside the houses, multiple times made a direct connection between lacking access to water and the enrolment of their children in education: their children are bullied because they cannot bath and their clothes are not washed. This link might strengthen the claim to obtain access to water, especially when uttered towards actors which obligate them to send their children to school. Parents perceive sending children to school clean a priority. A Roma woman in Kočevje who lacked access to water told me that she tried to make her children look clean and well-dressed, in order for them to stand out less in school. Pointing to the mud on the ground, a result of melting snow, she stated that this was not always easy though, but her efforts were appreciated by the teacher of her children. Another family living in the same conditions rather emphasized the structure of lacking access to amenities which kept their children from attending school, instead of practicing their agency with efforts to clean the children anyway, like the other woman did.

Employment

Employment is logically connected to education, as chances for employment are decreased with the lack of sufficient education. The national government of Slovenia states that employability is a basic issue of the social integration of Roma, not only a prerequisite for ensuring basic living conditions, but also an essential condition for improving their overall socio-economic status (VRS 2010: 19). Therefore, unemployment amongst the Roma population of Slovenia is considered to be one of the main problems of this minority group, listed alongside the general living conditions, the lack of education and general discrimination. The unemployment rate for Roma reaches high values: the percentage of unemployed Roma in Dolenjska is approximately 98% (Stropnik 2011: 10; VRS 2010: 19). Only 2% of the Roma is employed, most frequently through public works and usually there is

no transition into regular employment (Stropnik 2011: 10). Some elderly respondents told me that they had a job during the time that Slovenia was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Tito, the president of the SFRY, avoided distinguishing on basis of ethnicity and the socialist system tried to employ each person. Roma were often employed in foresting and factories. Multiple times it was stated that Roma had better living conditions in the former SFRY, because the Yugoslavian law protected them from discrimination on basis of ethnicity.

The economic crisis strikes hard for the whole population of Slovenia and the unemployment rate has risen. In Novo Mesto jobs are still available, but these are not provided for Roma, which illustrates differentiation between Roma and non-Roma employees. In other municipalities, such as Kočevje, there is a declining number of jobs and there certainly will not be any left for Roma. A Roma adolescent in Ribnica stated that if employers have the choice between a Roma and non-Roma employee, they will certainly pick the non-Roma person. None of the Roma respondents had an officially registered job. Income usually is almost entirely generated from financial support through the social welfare system. Roma are often engaged in the grey economy (*ibid.*), such as collecting old metals or paper and repairing cars. These activities are not registered and therewith officially illegal. Roma often choose to not register these jobs, because registering will decrease their amount of social support. Illegally generated income is also the explanation for an obvious discrepancy in my research: heterogeneity within Romani settlements. Heterogeneity is especially exposed in the state of the houses and the access to amenities. The households which are engaged in the grey economy have more money available to build houses and provide infrastructure for themselves, while others have barely enough to survive another month, because they totally rely on governmental support. In Mestni Log in Kočevje, one part of the households had access to water, while the other part lacked it. The first part had better houses and their water connection was self-made.

Despite these additional incomes, respondents depend on social support and additional child support. Some elderly people gain pension, generated from employment in the former SFRY. Many Roma respondents emphasized that they could barely survive on the small amount of money generated from social support, when they also have to pay the bills for water and electricity. Several people showed their papers for social support to support this opinion. The money is in the first place needed for paying the bills of access to amenities and after that for survival. Mainly, there is no money left to save for buying or renting land which is labelled suitable for building.

Non-Roma people, though, often state that social money is one of the main reasons for the tense relationships between non-Roma and Roma, because many non-Roma feel disadvantaged, stating that “the Roma get everything for free, while we have to work hard for it”. In general, the salaries in Slovenia are relatively low compared to other countries in the

European Union. Non-working Roma families are blamed for receiving more money than a working Slovenian family on a low budget. This supposed fact also brought into existence the sentence 'Making babies is making money'[22], referring to the additional child support generated through the social welfare system. Because the total of social benefits frequently exceeds the amount that the Roma could earn in the labour market, social assistance from the state also acts as a disincentive for employment (Stropnik 2011: 10). The vice-mayor of Kočevje stated that Roma have unrealistic expectations of employment, searching for jobs that require education and skills that Roma often lack, meanwhile expecting relatively high salaries. The extreme poor educational structure of Roma is a significant problem in relation to unemployment: 98,2% of unemployed Roma in Dolenjska have not completed elementary schooling (VRS 2010: 19). The irregular participation of Roma children in education in the past has thus resulted in (semi) illiteracy and lacking skills and qualifications for the Slovenian labour market (Stropnik 2011: 10). Some Roma respondents told me that they were willing to get employed, as long as they could get a job. It was stated by a prevention worker in Romani settlements that the lack of recognition that Roma are willing to be employed is due to the lack of structural communication between Roma and non-Roma. However, a Roma man in Grosuplje indeed told me that he was not planning to accept a job which will not pay him at least thousand euros a month, a salary which is quite high according to the Slovenian average salaries. Because this impedes the circle of unemployment, an employee on Roma problematics in Novo Mesto suggests that Roma need to see the non-financial reasons that employment is beneficial for them. Social money may be beneficial for survival, but it is also seen as an obstacle to the participation of Roma in society and it keeps the cycle of marginalisation going. Therefore, he suggests the foundation of a social company, paid by the state and employing Roma people to do jobs that do not require much education or specific skills, such as clearing forests and collect garbage.

4.3. Legal status and sense of belonging

In the linear perception of citizenship, as portrayed by Marshall, an important theorist on citizenship, a sense of belonging is derived from participation. The structural restricted participation of Roma indeed influences the sense of belonging of Roma in the Slovenian society. However, as stated earlier, citizenship is not a linear process. Therefore, also other factors that cause inclusion and exclusion of persons should be taken into account when focusing on citizenship and a sense of belonging.

Nowadays, almost all Roma in Slovenia have the legal status of citizens of the Slovenian state. The Roma as a collective are recognized as an ethnic minority by the

[22] Roma families are (stereotypically) known for the amount of children, which often exceeds five per household, which is a high amount compared to Slovenian families.

constitution and granted special protection by law: they have additional rights concerning the maintenance of their language and culture and are therewith positively discriminated (Stropnik 2011: 4). This status was first recognized in 1989, when Slovenia was still part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Baluh 2006: 1). The Romani community is not defined as a national minority, though they seem to match with the definition of national minorities. A national minority is supposed to be a group of people in a country which lives on its territory and are its citizens; maintain long-term and permanent ties with this country; show particular ethnic, cultural or linguistic characteristics; are sufficiently representative, despite being smaller in number than the majority population; and they are motivated by their concern to conserve that which defines their common identity (DiRicchardi 2013: 8). However, only the Italian and Hungarian minority have the status of a national minority within the Slovenian state. The lack of this status prevents Roma for example from having a representative in the parliament at the national level. Quite recently there is an adequate framework provided by regulation, which promotes the social inclusion of Roma. This is done specifically in 2007 by adopting the Roma Community Act, which systematically regulates the responsibility of communities on state and local level regarding the exercising of the special rights for Roma, and provides for organization of the Roma community (Stropnik 2011: 4).

Roma respondents hardly mentioned the dimension of the legal status. This was a discrepancy between my expectations and the data, which might be explained by the fact that over the past decades almost all Roma acquired a status as legal citizen of the Slovenian state. They are thus not de jure stateless. However, it is said that their exclusion has been formalized in such a way that they are in danger of becoming stateless (Cahn 2012: 308). Roma do have a nationality according to the law, but this nationality is not effective in all realms in the Slovenian society, for example illustrated by the general discrimination they are experiencing (Weissbrodt & Collins 2006: 251-252). The national government for example is blamed for violating the principles of equality, human dignity and equal choices, because it distinguishes between so-called autochthonous and non-autochthonous Roma, a distinction referring to Roma that have been settled at a certain place for centuries and those that have been settled there quite recently (AI 2011: 7-8), whereby autochthonous Roma have higher chances for governmental support and improved living conditions than non-autochthonous Roma. This is for example reflected in the fact that the Slovenian government recognizes only few Romani associations, which are autochthonous and other organizations do not have any say in the decision-making or have any rights to bring information to the public regarding the situation of the so-called non-autochthonous Roma (Tahirović 2011).

Though Roma in Slovenia thus generally have the legal status of citizens of the Slovenian state, the focus has been increasingly on the participatory aspect of citizenship:

being perceived as full and equal members in the society. The full and legitimate belonging as a result of the participatory character of citizenship has become the focus of the political struggles of many marginalized and excluded groupings (Yuval-Davis 2006: 206). The central question is then what is required from a specific person to be entitled to belong, to be considered as belonging, to the collectivity, which here means the majority population of Slovenia (*op. cit.*: 209). It is stated that belonging to a (national) minority is a matter of personal choice and not a shortcoming that may have arisen as a result of practising this personal choice (DiRicchardi 2013: 9). A sense of belonging, then, is not derived solely from a legal status, but it is also about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' and about feeling 'safe'. A sense of belonging tends to be naturalized and becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). My respondents also showed awareness of the politics of belonging, which focus on the boundaries that separate the Slovenian population into 'us' and 'them' (*op. cit.*: 204). The sense of belonging is the hardest dimension of citizenship to 'measure' with respondents, as constructions of belonging are not merely cognitive stories, but reflect emotional investments and a desire for attachment (*op. cit.*: 202). Because the emotional components of people's constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and the less secure they feel, I had to be cautious not to prompt answers for my respondents with a certain formulation of my questions. In the outline of my interviews[23] I stated a few indicators to measure the sense of belonging of my Roma respondents to the Slovenian society: the way of describing the Romani settlement they were inhabitants of, the relationships with the local population and the municipality and eventually the blunt questions how they felt about being Roma and whether they felt part of the Slovenian society or an outsider to it. Respondents referred to their legal status when asking about their sense of belonging, instead of talking about their personal opinions and emotions about being part of a marginalized group in society. However, analysing the discourse they utilized during the conversation, and especially when speaking about their position in the Slovenian society, it became clear that Roma in Dolenjska often do not consider themselves to be equal actors in the Slovenian society, distinguishing between 'us' (i.e. Roma) and 'them' (i.e. non-Roma Slovenes). In such distinctions the 'us' is never really imagined as homogeneous and the ways the 'them' is imagined are even more differential and varying (*op. cit.*: 204-205).
The explanation for the marginalisation of Roma in the Slovenian society is to be found in the relationships between Roma and non-Roma in Dolenjska. The most elementary forms of social life develop mutual dependency and constitute the basis for the existence and formation of a society (Ohlsson 2003: 32-33).

[23] To be found as an appendix in paragraph 7.2.

The image of Roma as ‘other’ or ‘outsiders’ in the Slovenian society is – aligned with the major tendency – based on the people within the Roma population that are negatively enhanced (*op. cit.*: 33). Exclusion and inclusion as well as the discourses of marginalisation, then, relate to space and the way the majority population has defined the boundaries of normality. These boundaries are usually either social, spatial, or symbolic, or a mix of all (*op. cit.*: 34). In Dolenjska the boundaries of normality seem to be a mixture of social and spatial aspects. Non-Roma respondents referred to Romani settlements as chaotic, dirty and bad-looking. Social aspects are the lack of participation of Roma in the Slovenian society and their dependence upon social support, whereas most non-Roma Slovenes have to generate incomes through employment.

Being Roma in Slovenia is often not associated with feelings of forming a collective, but rather with the feeling of being different and the reflection of being treated as non-humans. I was told that some Roma try to hide their ethnic background, for example when working with the media. Hiding their ethnicity is also a form of civic agency, choosing to avoid being labelled as part of a – to some extent imagined – community, which has a negative connotation in the Slovenian society. It is done because of negative individual experiences and because of the fear to be excluded on the basis of their ethnicity. This was also the case when Slovenia became an independent state in 1991; Roma wanted a Slovenian identity, without the connotation of being Roma. A questionnaire conducted in the Romani settlement Hudeje in Trebnje, though, showed a different picture when people were directly asked how proud they were to be Roma. Over 75% said to be proud or very proud to be Roma (Pfaljfar et al. 2010: 95). Hiding their ethnicity, then, seems to be not the result of shame, but a result of the fear of discrimination.

Roma respondents strongly oppose discrimination experienced from their fellow inhabitants of Slovenia. Though they themselves utilize an ‘us vs. them’ discourse, they do also emphasize that they are not different from non-Roma people in Slovenia. A Roma man in Kočevje stated that when he would cut his wrist, you would find the same blood underneath. Also, an employee of the Romski Informacijski Centre said that they are also Slovenian people: “We did not fly from space, but we were the first ones living on this territory”. He also stated that ‘normal people’, referring to non-Roma Slovenes, have stereotypes: of course there are good and bad Roma, just like there are amongst non-Roma, but stereotypes are unfair. Multiple respondents stated that they were treated as non-humans, as animals which are not full persons, missing the soul. Bad living conditions are an indicator for humanly treatment, as was illustrated by a statement of a Roma woman in Hudeje in Trebnje. She told me that they were living ‘like bears in the forest’ before obtaining access to amenities. This corresponds with statements that life without water and electricity is not a (human) life.

5. DISCOURSES OF CLAIMING

Discourses involve the communication of meaning. During a so-called speech event, people experience and produce their culture, roles and personalities (Lindstrom 2008: 162).Because discourses would reflect the meaning for Roma to be part of the Slovenian society, I explicitly focused on the discourses utilized by my respondents when interviewing them about accessing water in Romani settlements in Dolenjska. Public discourses constitute the meaning of concepts, such as those of citizenship and human rights. These public discourses are connected to personal discourses. What people largely do is to pick and choose from an available marketplace of prefabricated ideas (Dahlgren 2006: 281); they borrow certain parts of public discourses and mix those with personal opinions and feelings. The analysis of the personal discourse of my respondents concerning their claims of access to water was important in providing a way of understanding the claims themselves and the framework in which these were made.

As mentioned, water is considered to be a human right (AI 2011: 44). Roma lacking access to water turn this right into specific claims and direct those towards various actors operating on different levels in the Slovenian society (Somers & Roberts 2008: 387). In the first paragraph of this chapter I will focus on the politics of scale, connected to the variety in claims made by Roma. In the subsequent paragraph the influence of the Slovenian governmental structure on the contents of the discourses of claiming will be discussed.

5.1. The politics of scale

The past chapters already revealed some parts of the discourses utilized Roma for claiming access to water. The contents of these discourses tend to differ according to the scale on which the actor the claim is addressed to is active. Though initially the aim was to investigate specifically the parts of public discourses of citizenship and human rights interwoven in the claims of Roma respondents, in practice the discourses of claiming appeared to be quite different. This discrepancy between initial planning and eventual outcomes was due to the false assumption that Roma in Dolenjska would claim water collectively, utilizing parts of the public discourses on citizenship and human rights in order to gain national and international support. However, as mentioned, Roma usually do not act as a community. A community is traditionally identified via four key qualities: a smallness of the social scale, a homogeneity of activities and states of mind of members, a consciousness of distinctiveness, and a self-sufficiency across a broad range of needs and through time (Rapport 2008: 114). Though Roma indeed form a small group on the social scale of Slovenia and though there is a consciousness of distinctiveness, there is heterogeneity in both their activities and states of minds and they are often dependent on the provision of governmental actors concerning their

daily needs. Thus, instead of utilizing the concept 'community' when referring to the living places of my respondents, I utilized the geographical concept 'settlement'.

On the local scale, at the level of the municipality, claims are thus often made individually. The discourses of these claims are specifically centred around the daily needs of Roma. Though claimed individually, these discourses often contain references to other Roma living in the same settlement. This is amongst others due to family relations, which are usually at stake within Romani settlements. There is no specific use of a rights discourse, though references to this discourse are made. Claiming access to water, therefore, is practically done with references to their personal wishes to be equally treated with the non-Roma population, despite them living on illegal land. Roma in almost all settlements in Dolenjska told me that the municipality should help them, but that they are not doing so currently. When explicitly asking why the municipality is the actor that should provide access – therewith implicitly asking on what grounds their claims are made – respondents often just stared at me, not knowing what to say. They often pointed to the settlement in which the interview was conducted: "Look around, living without water and electricity is no life". Only two Romani respondents, both in Kočevje, explicitly stated that they as human beings should have the right to have access to amenities. Some respondents stated that they were living as animals instead of human beings and treated as being such by the majority population. They argued that it would be only human to provide access to water: "Everyone has access to water, why shouldn't we have it too?" When asking respondents what would change if they would obtain access to water, some considered this dreaming about something that was not going to happen in the near future. Others explicitly stated that it would enable chances to get along with education and employment, and that it would decrease general discrimination. A Roma man in Grosuplje strongly argued: "We would be born again, and be able to start a new and better life".

On the national scale, directing claims toward the government of the Slovenian state, the discourse is slightly different. Also, emphasis is laid upon the daily needs of Roma in Slovenia, stating that improving the living conditions is a priority when the aim is for Roma to get included in the Slovenian society (Stropnik 2011: 33). The most significant difference with claims on the local scale is that the discourse of claims directed towards the national government enhances the situation of the collective of Roma in Slovenia, although mentioning the differences between Roma in Prekmurje, a province in the northeast of Slovenia, and Dolenjska. Another difference is that claims at the national level are not made individually, but through both Romani and non-Romani organizations, such as the Romani Union of Slovenia. Often, emphasis is laid on the discrimination of Roma in the Slovenian society, therewith focusing on the inequality between the majority population and the Roma minority group.

On the international scale, claims are less specific and solely based on the collective of the Roma population in Slovenia. In the Charter on the Rights of the Roma, published by the European Roma and Traveller Forum, emphasis is laid upon the rights of Roma to be equally treated with the majority populations of the countries they reside in. By stating to act like a collective, Roma appear to be a highly cooperative group in Europe. The Charter for example utilizes a discourse of Roma as a collective, starting each statement with the words "We, Roma…" This discourse suggests that Roma are a community, opposed to my findings in the field. Such a suggestion is based on an abstract sense of imagined simultaneity (Yuval-Davis 2006: 204). At the international level, Romani organizations seem to bury their internal differences and strengthen their claim by cooperation. It, then, re-emphasizes the individual agency of Roma to explicitly oppose the idea of forming a community at the local level. Rights are explicitly mentioned in the discourses of claiming at the international level. Tahirović, president of the Romani Union of Slovenia, for example, explicitly stated in his published comments on the protection of national minorities in Slovenia: 'Where do human rights play a role here? On every step of the way, these rights are being violated, especially when it comes to the Roma issue' (Tahirović 2011).

Though now clearly distinguishing between discourses of claiming at the local, national and international scale, it is argued that we cannot perceive the public space as a nested hierarchy of scales from global to local. Instead, the connectivity between those supposed scales should be emphasized (MacKinnon 2010: 22). Scale is often not per se the prime object of contestations between social actors, but rather specific processes and institutionalized practices that are themselves differently scaled (*op. cit.*: 23). Though claims differ according to the scale on which they are made, there is continuity in the discourses utilized. Individual claims made on the local scale are bound together at the national level to make claims as a collective. Because the contents of claims are recognized by Roma living elsewhere in Europe in comparable conditions, claims might change becoming directed towards international actors in which a shared identity of Roma is acknowledged to strengthen the position of Roma in Europe. Claims concerning obtaining access to water made by Roma individually often cannot be directed to governments on higher levels. They are often not able to practice so-called scale jumping; moving to higher levels of activity in pursuit of their interests (*op. cit.*: 24). Therefore, it is said that cooperation is required amongst the Roma in Slovenia to be able to make stronger claims on higher levels, therewith enlarging their chances for gaining more support in their claims, which would increase the pressure on local actors who are both responsible for and capable of the fulfilment of the claims. For, as will be elaborated on in the following paragraph, municipalities in Slovenia have much power and individual Roma often have negative experiences with making claims at the local level, which is why they need broader support. Stronger claims at the local level

can amongst others be made by the Roma councillor. Because of the special status of Roma in Slovenia, they have the right to have a representative in the municipal council of twenty municipalities where Roma have been historically present (AI 2011: 8). Because the Roma councillor represents the whole Roma population in a certain municipality, he or she is in theory able to make stronger claims, because of representing the collective per municipality. However, there is no Roma representative in the national government, which causes claims to be made more often only at the local level. Also, the distrust of Roma concerning politics prevents them from scale-jumping and making claims directly at the state level.

There is a discrepancy between the Slovenian government at the state level and governments at the municipality level. A Roma employee of the Romski Informacijski Centre in Ljubljana said that the governments on both scales have their own interests and do not work on the same level. Local authorities often lack plans, which prevent them from undertaking action for Romani settlements. Also, there is no explicit link between planning and implementation. He argued that there is even a clash between the state level and the local level, and he had the impression that better work is done at the state level. However, because local governments have much influence, it is possible that there is a gap between legislation by the national government and implementation at the local level.

5.2. Self-governing: legislation and implementation

To understand the politics of scale which are influencing the discourses of claiming of Roma in Dolenjska, it is appropriate to also at least have a shallow understanding of the governmental structure of Slovenia. There are probably discrepancies between legislation and implementation in each political structure. This is amongst others due to legislation being provided at multiple scales and the agency of actors that are responsible for the implementation of it. International legislation, such as the legislation on human rights, is to be implemented at the international, national and local scale, but most likely the implementation will in practice differ according to various scales. This is even more likely in Slovenia, which only quite recently changed from a socialist to a democratic political system. Though Slovenia is widely seen as a ‘success story’ concerning this transition, sometimes there is still political pluralism, which might impede the implementation of legislation (Deželan 2012: 413, 416).

In figure 8 I attempted to visualize the actors that are involved in legislation and the subsequent implementation concerning Roma in Dolenjska. The European Union is an international actor whose legislation on the Roma as a European minority should also be implemented in the Slovenian state, as it is a member of this cooperation. At the national level, the Slovenian state is the actor of legislation. An employee of the municipality Trebnje briefly explained the structure of self-government in Slovenia: the government on the local

scale has much influence on the actual implementation of legislation made on a national or international scale. Within each municipality there are self-governing parts which are based on specific subjects, such as water management or foresting. She explicitly stated that it would be beneficial for anyone if Hudeje, the largest Romani settlement in Trebnje, would be recognized as a thematic actor and thus be a self-governing part within the municipality Trebnje.

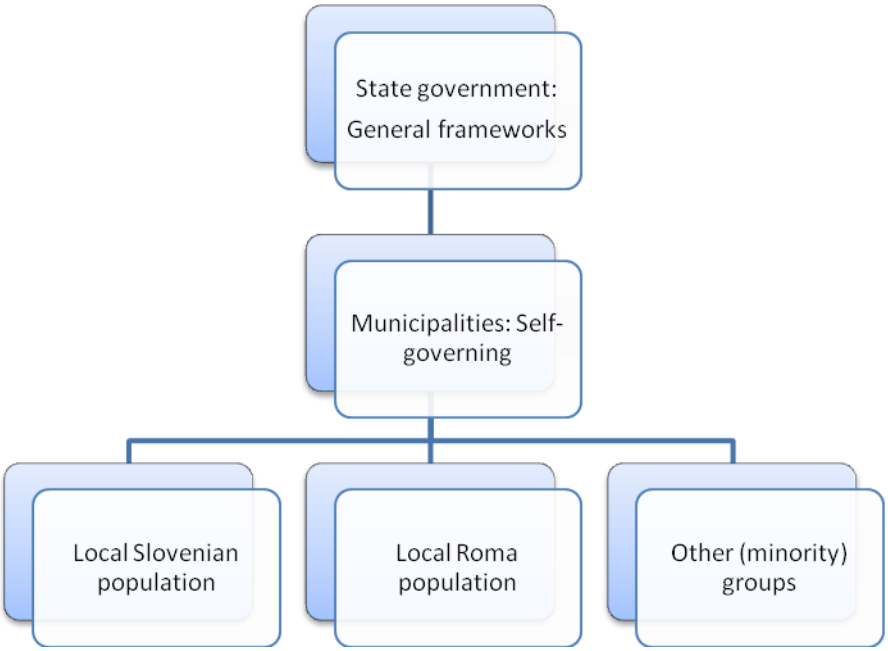
Figure 8: Governing structure of Slovenia

Because of the emphasis on self-governing and thematic actors, there are no executive instructions provided for municipalities to deal with issues concerning local Roma populations. Though claims directed towards national and international actors appear to be strengthened by the emphasis on the collective and by Roma organizations practicing 'scale jumping', claims made towards local actors are more likely to have direct changes in the living conditions of Roma. Nationally and internationally scaled claims focus more explicitly on desired change of legislation, while this will not secure the implementation at the local level, because the self-governing municipalities might have other ways to avoid certain investments in the local Roma population that they are not willing to make. It should also be mentioned that claims focusing on legislation might take more time to gain efficiency, than claims at the local level concerning changes in living conditions.

When legislation concerning so-called Roma problematics is implemented, this is not without consequences for other groups in the Slovenian society. This is visualized in figure 9: the general frameworks provided by the state government influence the legislation at the municipality level. The legislation provided by the local government - or the implementation of the legislation provided by actors on higher levels - influences the entire population living

within each municipality. It influences the local Roma population, but also the majority Slovenian population and other groups in the local society.

Figure 9: The implementation of legislation in Slovenia



This structure can be illustrated with the example of kindergarten programs in Slovenia. Children are not obligated to attend pre-school programs, but many children do as part of the first socialization process in the Slovenian society. Parents need to pay a fee for the enrolment of their children in these programs. As mentioned earlier, Roma children, usually, do not attend Slovenian kindergartens both because of the fear of their parents to experience discrimination and because of the lack of financial resources. The absence of Roma children in pre-school programs and the subsequent problems they encounter in primary education are often considered to be a problem, especially by national and international actors. By implementing legislation which decreases the financial burden for Roma parents - therewith eliminating an important factor preventing the enrolment of Roma children in Slovenian kindergartens – the national government hoped to increase the enrolment of Roma children in kindergarten programs and in primary education in the years to come. The poorest Roma families do not have to pay a fee at all. It is still to be investigated whether this legislation indeed increased the opportunities of Roma children within the educational structure of Slovenia. Up to now, non-Roma respondents working with municipalities or NGOs did not detect major changes. The decreased financial burden does support Roma parents who are able to send their children to kindergartens within Romani settlements, as is the case in Brezje in Novo Mesto, and which used to be the case in Hudeje in Trebnje. However, the implementation of this legislation caused other groups in the Slovenian society to react,

mostly in a counter-enthusiastic way. Though the positive discrimination of Roma did not explicitly change the situation for the majority population – i.e. they still have to pay the same fees – they did often react angry. According to an employee of the municipality Novo Mesto, it confirmed them in the opinion that Roma get everything for free in society, while they should work and pay for it like everybody does.

As mentioned, there is often a discrepancy between legislation and implementation, too, which can be illustrated by the example of the legislation on Roma councillors. In 2002 the Slovenian state government ordered that in twenty municipalities where Roma have been historically present, Roma enjoy the special right to elect a representative to the municipal council (VRS 2010: 9). Though this was ordered back in 2002, the municipality Grosuplje was unwilling to implement this legislation at the local level. Because the self-governing structure gave them much influence at the local level, they were able to postpone the implementation until 2010, when the state government intervened and organized elections for a Roma councillor, which is the task of the municipality. In January 2010 a Roma representative was elected and appointed to the municipal council. The ignorance of legislation by self-governing municipalities in some cases is beneficial for local Roma populations: though the national government has set conditions that should be met prior to connecting Romani settlements to local water networks, several municipalities have ignored these and provided access anyway (AI 2011: 44).

Municipalities, thus, have a severe influence and sometimes seem to be even the determining factor regarding the situation of local Roma populations. Within municipalities, mayors are referred to as persons holding positions of power. This is illustrated by comparing the municipalities of Ribnica and Trebnje. The mayor of Ribnica is not working in favour of the local Roma population, due to both his political background[24] and the unsupportive opinions of the local majority population. Due to his lack of efforts - in combination with the the lack of a Roma councillor representing Roma demands in the municipal council – the living conditions of the Roma population in Ribnica have remained poor throughout the past decades: all three settlements visited lacked access to amenities. In contrast to Ribnica, the mayor of Trebnje is actively involved in the process of improving the living conditions of local Roma, in close cooperation with the local Roma councillor. His efforts in the past six years resulted in the rapid improvement of the settlement Hudeje which obtained access to water, electricity, sanitation and even asphalt roads. The influence of local mayors is not an independent factor, though, for it is connected to the perspectives of the local majority population on Roma. In order to maintain his or her position, the mayor depends on the votes

[24] He supports the political party Slovenska Demokratska Stranka with Janez Janša, who was raised in Grosuplje, which for him resulted in a negative attitude towards Roma, which is reflected in his public statements.

of the local population, which causes it to be very likely that mayors partly act upon the reactions of those people concerning the Roma population.

The discrepancies between legislation by (inter)national actors and the implementation thereof by local actors might also be one of the sources of differences in the discourses of claiming of Roma. The contents of these discourses seem to correspond with those of the actors to whom the claims are directed, varying according specific processes and institutionalized practices that are differently scaled (MacKinnon 2010: 23). At the international level legislation focuses on the fulfilment of human rights for Roma in all European countries they reside in. The focus is on the broader structure that follows when these rights are denied by national governments. Amnesty International, the world's largest human rights organization, for example states that the denial of the rights of Romani communities to adequate housing, water and sanitation negatively impacts their rights to education, work and health, and feeds into a cycle of poverty and marginalisation (AI 2011: 4). Roma organizations which make claims at the international level, for example the International Romani Union, also explicitly focus on human rights. The emphasis is on the collective of the Roma minority throughout Europe, and therewith claims are non-specific. The Charter on the Rights of the Roma for example states: 'We, Roma, have the right to a nationality and citizenship' and 'States shall, in collaboration with Roma institutions, develop effective solutions for the improvement of the living conditions of Roma' (CORR: article 7, 16).

At the national level, the Slovenian state government focuses more explicitly on the situation of Roma in Slovenia and how to make improvements within the governing structure of the Slovenian society. Emphasis is laid upon improving the living conditions, educational structure, employment, preservation of culture and language and on combatting general discrimination in Slovenia. The protective role of the Slovenian government is emphasized, but also the need for agency from Roma themselves in actively participating in programs. Claims of Roma directed towards the state government focus especially on the ways the implementation of such programs should be monitored, therewith hoping to prevent that programs will end up non-practiced.

At the local level, the focus is on practical issues concerning local Roma populations. A police officer in Novo Mesto, for example, emphasized the tense relationships between Roma and non-Roma in Novo Mesto, resulting from illegal activities of Roma which directly involve the neighbouring local populations, such as burning plastic or making illegal electricity connections. Seemingly subsequently, local Roma, when not united in organizations, direct their claims to the municipality without explicitly utilizing discourses on citizenship and human rights, and even without putting practical needs in a broader perspective.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. The waterworld of Roma in Dolenjska

In spite of its constitutional declaration to protect the rights of minorities, Slovenia still seems to be seeking to retain a politically and culturally homogeneous nation state (Kuhelj 2011: 281). This is amongst others reflected in the general lack of adequate monitoring and regulatory frameworks to ensure that legislation concerning the fulfilment of the so-called right to water is implemented for Roma at the local level (AI 2011: 5). It is therefore that – though improvements are made – part of the Romani settlements I visited in Dolenjska still lack sufficient access to water. It is said that rights take the form of claims (Somers & Roberts 2008: 387). The human right to water is turned into a specific claim of local Roma, uttered towards several actors in the Slovenian society. The discourses of these claims were the focus of my research, attempting to answer the main question as stated in the introduction: *How do Roma in Dolenjska, southeast Slovenia, utilize discourses of citizenship and human rights in their claim to gain access to water?*

Throughout this thesis I aimed to build up to answering this question by taking three steps. First, I identified the ways in which Roma in five municipalities in Dolenjska practically access water. Thereafter, I have focused on the totality of connections water has for Roma in the Slovenian society, especially focusing on the dimensions of citizenship; their legal status, rights, participation in society and their sense of belonging. Finally, I have focused explicitly on the contents of the discourses utilized both directly and indirectly by Roma.

Though the access to water for Roma in Dolenjska is slowly improving compared to research conducted in 2010 by Amnesty International, the inhabitants of several Romani settlements which were included in my research are still daily struggling with collecting a sufficient amount of water to accomplish their daily needs. Approximately 50% of the Romani settlements I visited had access to water within their houses or with a communal pipe, with which the 'The Right to Water' is met, which requires access to water for all peoples, also in semi-permanent and temporary dwellings, within the immediate vicinity of their houses (UN 2002). That, though, leaves another 50% of the settlements in which at least several households lack connection to a water network.

The lack of sufficient access to water is severely influencing the daily lives of Roma in Dolenjska, amongst others because of the efforts that have to be made daily to collect the required amount of water. However, because water is not merely a natural resource, but also a substance that connects many realms in social life and marks the boundaries of groups and communities defined by their shared involvement with water (Orlove & Caton 2010: 401, 404), lacking access to water is also impacting other realms of Roma lives. Despite of other factors influencing the relationships of Roma with the municipality and the local majority population, deplorable living conditions are a massive source for tension in these

relationships. This is especially true for the relationships between Roma and municipalities, as Roma perceive municipalities to be the actors responsible for improving their living conditions, based on the principle of equality in society. Participation of Roma in the Slovenian society is almost entirely lacking. Romani settlements are geographically located separately from the majority population (Stropnik 2011: 7). Furthermore, their active participation in education and employment has been restricted in the past and still is limited. This is mainly due to general discrimination based on ethnicity, but as stated before, this discrimination is enhanced when differentiation of Roma increases. Therefore, a Roma woman in Ribnica argued that obtaining access to water would enable chances for them to be enrolled in education and employment, therewith increasing their participation in society and decreasing differentiation from the majority population.

When assessing the status of Roma in Slovenia, the picture is considerable distorted if only measurable indicators - such as adapted legislation, funds and promises of governments – are taken into account. The actual attitude within the country is only seen if also the non-measurable is taken into account, i.e. emotive attitudes of non-Roma citizens towards Slovenian Roma (Kuhelj 2011: 281). The legal status of Roma is therefore not the main factor when analysing their sense of belonging to the Slovenian society. Though Roma do refer to their de jure citizenship of the Slovenian state when asking about their sense of belonging, almost all respondents implicitly also stated that they de facto experience that their citizenship is not as effective in all realms in the Slovenian society as that of the majority population. This is proven by their discourse, distinguishing between themselves and 'normal people', i.e. non-Roma people accessing resources and opportunities in a far less complicated way. When lacking access to water, Roma sometimes compare their lives in Slovenia with that of animals, trying to survive in nature. Citizenship, then, is by Roma not merely perceived as a legal structure, but also as an area in which agency has to be practiced – by both Roma and non-Roma - because citizenship is understood in regard to meaning, practices, communication and identities (Dahlgren 2006: 267). A legal status is considered far less important than the lack of communication with non-Roma and the discriminatory practices of non-Roma, pressing upon perceiving their identity as less and as unequal actors in comparison with the majority population.

The lack of access to water, supplemented with its connections to other realms in social life, is turned into specific claims, expressed towards actors in the Slovenian society that are perceived to be capable of improving the living conditions of Roma. The specific contents of these discourses vary according to the scaling of processes in which the actors the claims are directed to are involved. On the local scale claims are often made individually, because Roma generally do not live and act as a collective or a community, as is imagined by international actors, such as the human rights organization Amnesty International.

Discourses directed to the municipality are centred around the daily needs of local Roma, referring specifically to improving the living conditions by providing infrastructure: access to water, electricity, sanitation and roads. On the national scale, claims are made by both Roma and non-Roma organizations representing local Roma populations. Emphasis is laid upon perceiving the improvement of living conditions - of which access to water is considered to be an urgent one - as a priority for Roma to get included and to be equal players in the Slovenian society. At the international level claims are made by major Roma organizations or by international non-Roma actors. The claims are less specific and solely based on the collective Roma population, emphasizing the right of Roma to have citizenship of the countries they reside in, to be equally treated in these and the necessity of the fulfilment of human rights for Roma in Slovenia and elsewhere in Europe.

The discourses vary according to scale, but are also adapted to the discourses of the actors the claims are directed to. This causes claims expressed towards international actors to have the same rights-centred approach as these, generally focusing on the fulfilment of human rights for Roma in Europe. The focus of the national government is on providing legislation to make programs possible which are amongst others meant to ensure the improvement of living conditions for Roma. Claims directed towards national actors focus especially on equal treatment as suggested in legislation to become visible at the local level, therewith also emphasizing the need for a monitoring role of the national government. Municipalities focus on practical issues concerning so-called Roma problematics, such as resolving tensions between Roma and non-Roma populations. Claims made towards local actors, which are most often individually made, focus on daily needs only, as municipalities are perceived to be the actors who have the resources and opportunities to improve the conditions of local Romani settlements.

Though discourses of citizenship and human rights are often not explicitly utilized by Roma in Dolenjska, references are made to the totality of connections water has in their lives. Access to water is first and foremost perceived to be an indicator of the quality of life, and as an essential part of perceiving oneself as a human being and full citizen of the Slovenian society. Therewith, Roma also recognize access to water to be a priority to get included in the society. However, the agency that is required to breach the ‘magic circle’ of marginalisation and poverty is still very much unpractised, because both Roma and non-Roma in Dolenjska seem to wait upon national actors to take care of local problems, whereas the self-governing municipalities actually are the main actors for the implementation of national and international legislation.

6.2. Discussion

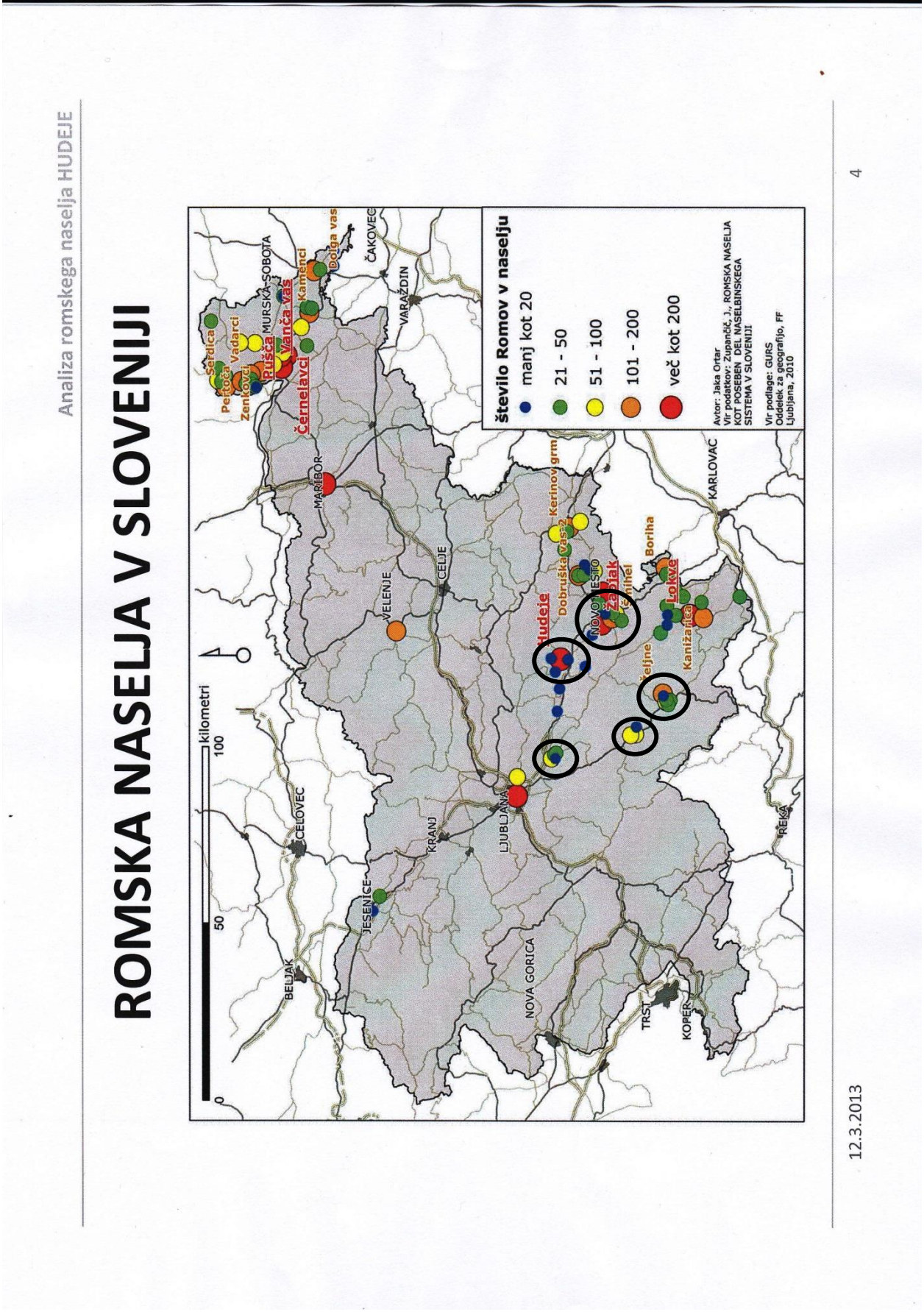
Though critical self-reflection is intertwined with the data analysis presented in the previous chapters, ethical or moral questions are to be asked with every anthropological research, especially because usually people are the object of study (Bourgois 2012: 328).

After several weeks of fieldwork I raised the question what the value of my research was for the respondents included in my research, especially for those Roma respondents who were living in deplorable living conditions. In Dolenjska it is perceived to be uncommon for non-Roma to visit Romani settlements. Therefore, Roma respondents were often surprised about my sincere interest in their lives. This, though, also resulted in supplications for help directed to me. They have experienced that many persons were just *talking* about their situation, but never actually *changing* something. Because of my profession as an anthropologist, my role seems to be limited, lacking the skills of acting as a development worker. That, however, does not make me personally insensitive to the things seen and heard during the three months of fieldwork for this research. Therefore, I am hoping that the general role of anthropologists as defining, analysing and communicating obstacles for development could also be my role in regard to the situation of the Roma population of Dolenjska.

As mentioned, agency is more likely to be effective in breaching withering structures when practiced collectively. Therefore, respondents stated that communication between Roma and non-Roma has to be promoted in order to merge their agency in trying to find solutions that will beneficial for both groups. Though many suggestions are made concerning ways of improving the current situation, too little research is conducted on how these theories can be put to practice and how to establish monitoring systems to regulate the implementation of legislation and additional ‘development programs’ at the local level. This, therefore, is a strong suggestion for further research. However, research should not be conducted as a way of postponing action. Because the situation concerning the Roma population of Dolenjska is detrimental for both Roma and non-Roma, current programs have to be continued and new programs should be set in motion immediately so that the current situation will not last as a harmful structure in the Slovenian society.

7.1. Romani settlements in Slovenia

Figure 10: Romani settlements in Slovenia



7.2. Outline of interviews

Date (Datum): ___-___.-_____
Place (Kraj): _____
Community (Skupnost): _____

PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION (PRVI DEL: OSNOVNE INFORMACIJE)

- Name (Ime): _____
- Age (Starost): _____ years (leto)
- Sex (Spol):
    a. Male (moški)
    b. Female (ženska)
- Living together with partner (Živite skupaj s svojim partnerjem?):
    a. Yes (da)
    b. No (ne)
- Children (otroci):
    a. Yes (da), _____(number of children) (število otrok)
    b. No (ne)
- Living in this settlement for _____ years (Koliko let živite v tem naselju?)
- How long has this settlement be located here? Why here/this place? (Kako dolgo se naselje nahaja tukaj? Zakaj prav tukaj/ta kraj?)

PART 2: PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY (DRUGI DEL: VKLJUČEVANOST V SKUPNOST)

- Have you had formal education? (Imate izobrazbo?)
    a. Primary school (osnovna šola)
        a.i. Finished (končana)
        a.ii. Unfinished, because (nedokončana, zakaj?)
    b. Secondary school (srednja šola)
        b.i. Finished (končana)
        b.ii. Unfinished, because (nedokončana, zakaj?)
    c. Primary, secondary and more (osnovna, srednja šola ali več od tega)
    d. None, because (nič, zakaj?)
- Do your children go to school? (Ali vaši otroci hodijo v šolo?)
    a. Yes (da)
    b. No (ne)
- Are you employed? (Ali ste zaposleni?)
    a. Yes. Function (da, funkcija)
    b. No. Source of income (ne, vir prihodkov)

- Do you receive financial assistance from the Slovenian government? (Ali prijemate finačno pomoč od slovenske vlade?)
    a. Yes (da)
    b. No (ne)

PART 3: ACCESS TO WATER (TRETJI DEL: DOSTOP DO VODE)

- Where do you collect water? (Kako zbirate vodo?)
    a. Within the home (Doma)
    b. Within the community (communal pipe) (skupinski vodovod)
    c. From public water points (if so, which) (vodo iz javnega vodovoda, katerega)
    d. Otherwise, namely (v nasprotnem primeru, in sicer)
- For which activities do you need water? (Za katere aktivnosti potrebujete vodo?)

    _____

- How much water can you approximately collect on a daily basis? (Koliko vode lahko zbere približno vsak dan?)

    _____

- Is that sufficient to meet your daily needs? (Je to dovolj za izpolnitev vaših dnevnih potreb?)
    a. Yes (da)
    b. No (ne)

The following questions are asked when connected to a water network (Naslednja vprašanja so priljučeni na vodovodno omrežje)

- Since when do you have access to running water at home, or within the community? (Od kdaj pa imate dostop do tekoče vode na vašem domu ali v vaši skupnosti?)

    _____

- Who has provided access? (What did precede?) (Kdo vam je omogočil dostop do nje in kaj pa je bilo pred njim?)

    _____

The following questions are asked when not connected to a water network (*Naslednja vprašanja so vezna, ko niso priključeni na vodovodno omrežje)*

- How much time does it take to collect water? (Koliko časa vam vzame, da zberete vodo?)

    _____

- What would it mean to you if you would be connected to a water network? What would change? (Kaj bi to pomenilo za vas, če bi se lahko priključili na vodovodno omrežje? Kaj bi se s tem spremenilo?)

  _____

- Who should provide access? Why? And why them? (Kdo bi moral omogočiti dostop? Zakaj? In zakaj prav oni?)

  _____

  _____

  _____

PART 4: SENSE OF BELONGING (ČETRTI DEL: OBČUTEK PRIPADNOSTI)

- How would you describe the community? (Close/open, segregated/integrated, etc.) (Kako bi lahko opisali vašo skupnost?) (zaprta/odprta, ločena, povezana)
- How would you describe your relationship with the local Slovenes? Why? Examples (Kako bi opisali vaš odnos s Slovenci? Zakaj? Primeri)
- How would you describe your relationship with the municipality? Why? Examples (Kako bi opisali vaš odnos z občino? Zakaj? Primeri)
- Have there been any conflicts recently between the community and local Slovenes or the local municipality? If so, can you tell me something about it? (Ali je bilo kaj konfliktov v zadnjem času med Slovenci in vašo skupnostjo, ali z vašo lokalno občino? Če so bili, mi lahko poveste kaj več o tem?)
- Has the specific issue of access to water been part of (recent) conflicts? If so, in what ways? Who were involved in the conflict and what was the eventual outcome? (To je posebno vprašanje, ki se navezuje na dostopnost do vode kot del konfliktov? Če so bili, kaj je bil povod konflikta? Kdo so bili vpleteni v konflikt, in kakšna je bila morebitna rešitev njega?)
- How important is being Roma to you? (Kaj za vas pomeni biti rom?)
- Do you feel part of the Slovenian society? Do you want to? (Ali se čuitite,da pripadate slovenski družbi, ali želite biti del nje?)

PART 5: FURTHER INFORMATION (PETI DEL: DODATNE INFORMACIJE)

- Remaining remarks or anecdotes (Pripombe ali anekdote)

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