



PLANNING FOR INCLUSION

Lessons from Roma Housing and Settlements Transformation in Serbia

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PLANNING FOR INCLUSION

Focus of the Presentation

- ❑ Practical and theoretical dimensions of participatory and inclusive planning in the upgrading and relocation of informal Roma settlements
- ❑ Drawing lessons from the Serbian experience

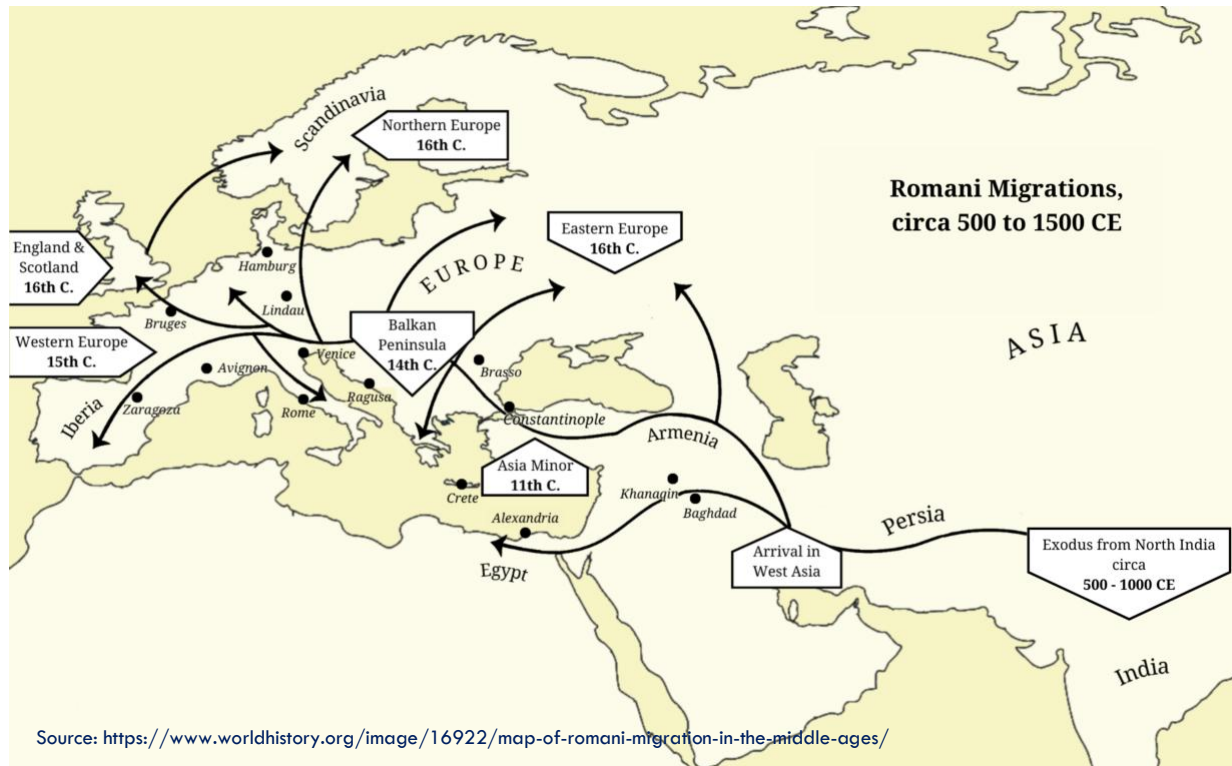
Structure of the presentations

- ❑ Roma in Europe
- ❑ Roma settlements in Serbia
- ❑ Case: Relocation Experience
- ❑ Case: Inclusion through Regularization
- ❑ Concluding remarks

Q&A

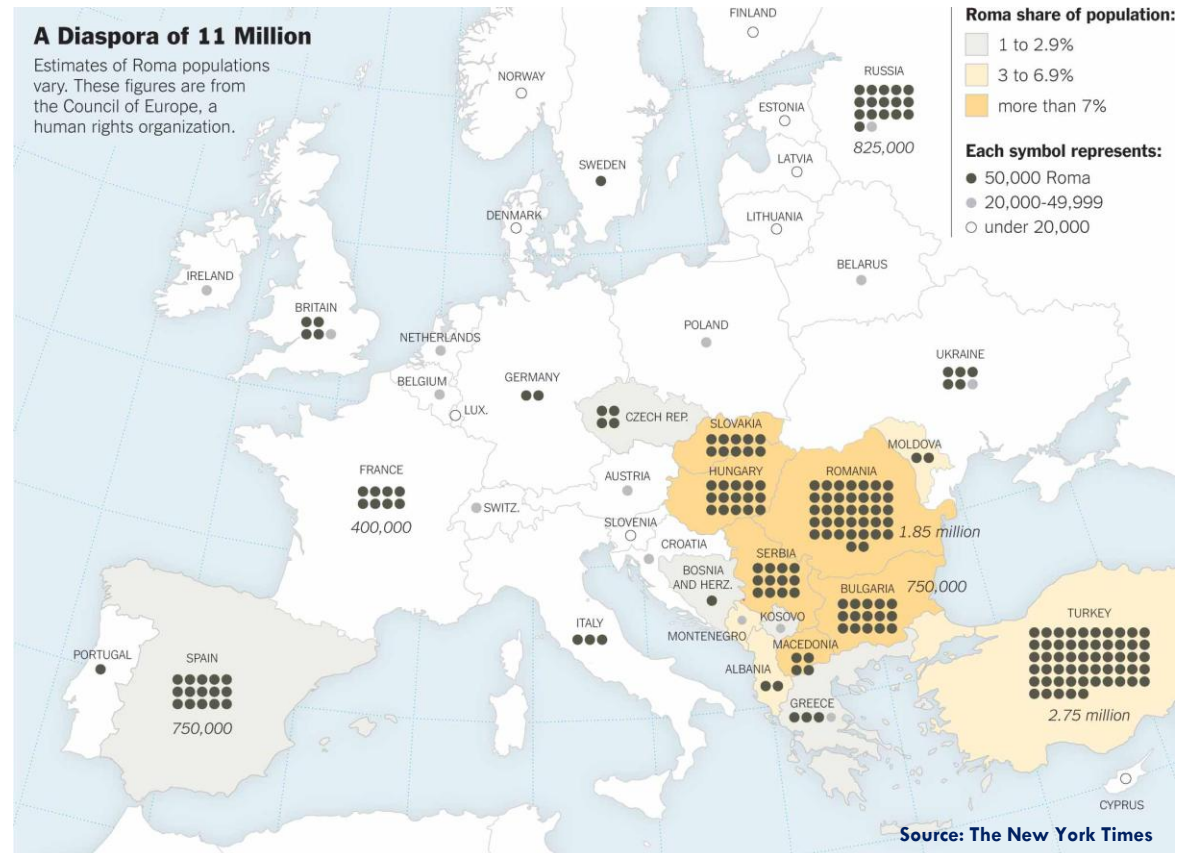
ROMA IN EUROPE

- Term 'Roma' encompasses a wide range of different people of Romani origin
Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels and Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, ethnic Travellers, Gypsies, Tsiganes or Tziganes
- "Roma" means "human" or "person" in the Romani language



ROMA IN EUROPE

- The largest transnational ethnic minority across the European continent
- An estimated 10 to 12 million Roma live dispersed across Europe



DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION

- The most discriminated ethnic minority, as many Roma continue to face discrimination, antigypsyism and socioeconomic exclusion in their daily lives.



Source: FRA, 2017. *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Main results*. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-main-results>

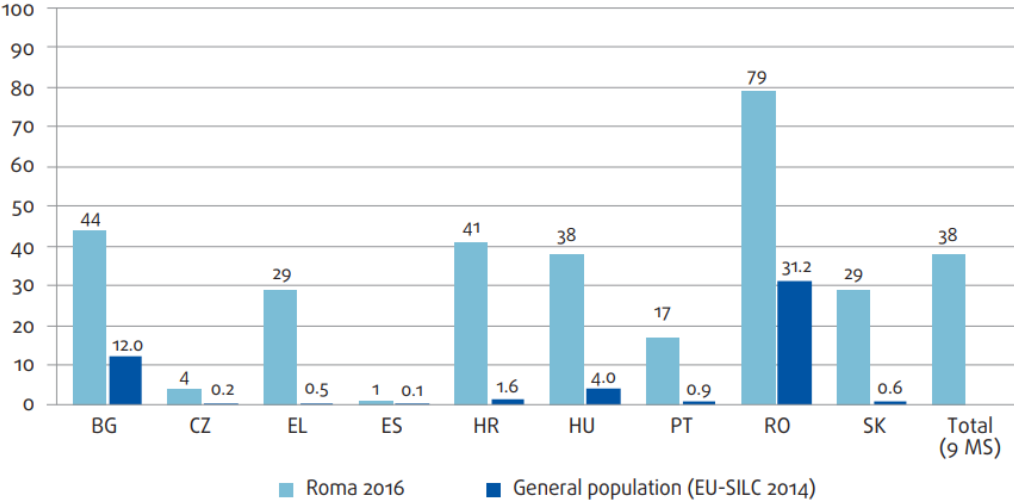
European Commission, 2020. A Union of equality : EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025

https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/beb25da4-e6b9-459e-89f7-bcd3a8f0c8_en?filename=a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_-2025_en.pdf

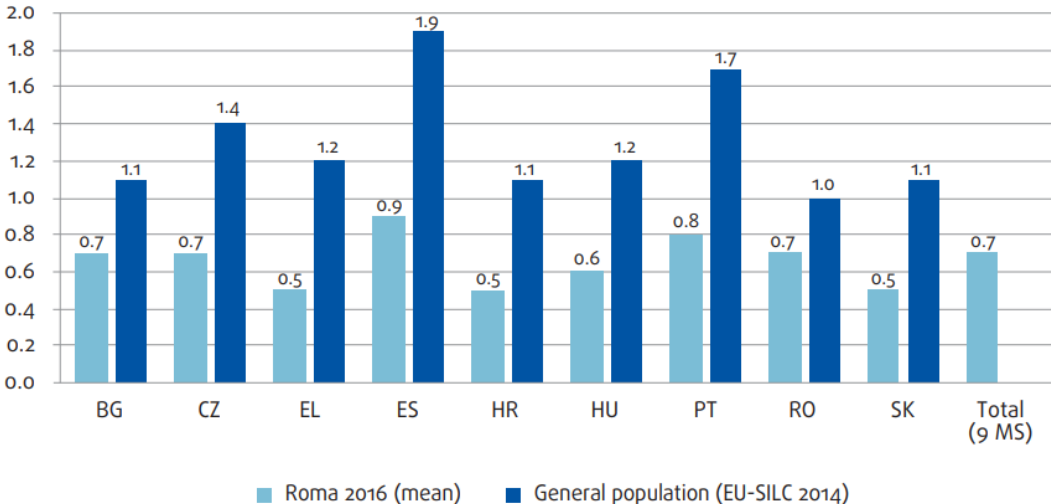


Photo credits: Council of Europe, 2020

INADEQUATE HOUSING CONDITIONS



Roma living in dwellings without a toilet and shower or bathroom inside the dwelling, compared with general population, by EU Member State (%)



Average number of rooms per person in the household, Roma and general population by EU Member State

ROMA AND HOUSING INEQUALITY

„It is clear from this report that large numbers of Roma and Travellers in the EU do not enjoy equal treatment in this respect **living in substandard conditions which fall far below even the minimum criteria of adequate housing.**“

Source: FRA, 2009.
<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2011/housing-conditions-roma-and-travellers-european-union-comparative-report>



CoE AND EU ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



- **Four priority areas**
 - ▣ Access to Healthcare
 - ▣ Access to Employment
 - ▣ Access to Housing
 - ▣ Access to Education

 - **Cross-cutting issues**
 - ▣ Combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination and supporting real and effective equality
 - ▣ Supporting democratic participation and promoting public trust and accountability
 - ▣ Reduce poverty and social exclusion
- Source: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/99cc0720-68c2-4300-854f-592bf21dceaf_en?filename=eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_for_2020_-_2030.pdf



ROMA IN SERBIA

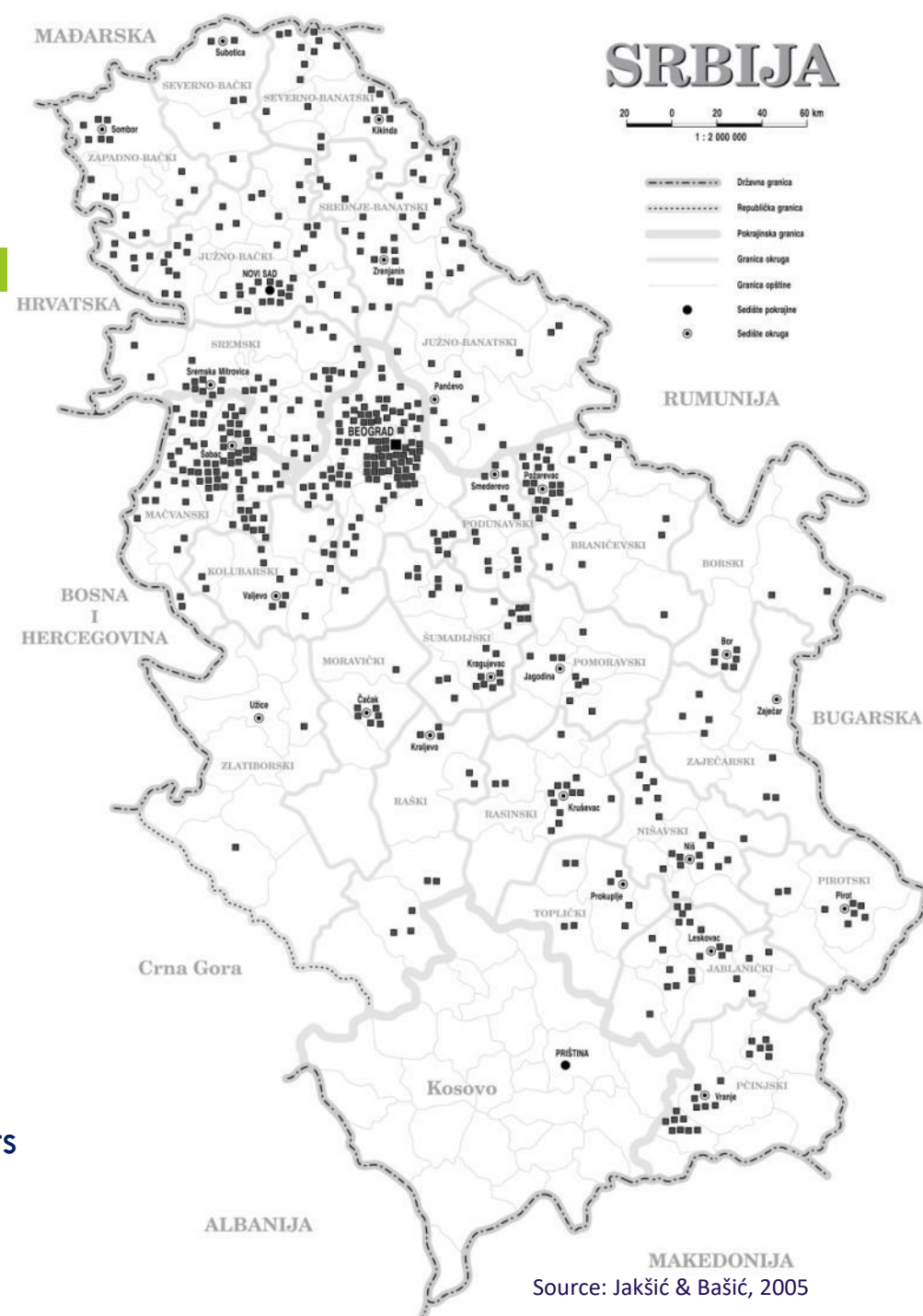
ROMA IN SERBIA

Basic demographics

- Census: around 130.000 self-declared Roma
- Estimation: 400-800.000
- Elementary school:
 - Roma 60%; general populatoion 95%
- High school:
 - Roma 0.8%; general populatoion 23%
- Yang population: average 30,6 years
- Life expectancy:
 - Roma 69 years; general population 78 years

Roma settlements

- About 600 Roma settlements
- Size of settlements: between 200 and 500 inhabitants



ROMA SETTLEMENTS TYPES



Ordered Settlements (10%)

- Residents own land and houses
- Houses built with standard materials
- Clearly defined parcels and paved streets
- Full infrastructure and integration with surrounding area

Planned Measures: Equal Treatment with the Surrounding Urban Fabric



Unserviced Settlements (70%)

- Often located on land owned by Roma residents.
- Older settlements with solid but unfinished houses lacking permits.
- Partial access to water and electricity; no sewerage.
- Narrow, poorly paved streets; well-maintained yards

Planned measures: legalization and improvement



“Slums” (20%)

- Illegally occupied land and insecure tenure
- No infrastructure or organized street network
- Makeshift housing from non-durable materials

Planned measures: relocation with provision of adequate accommodation

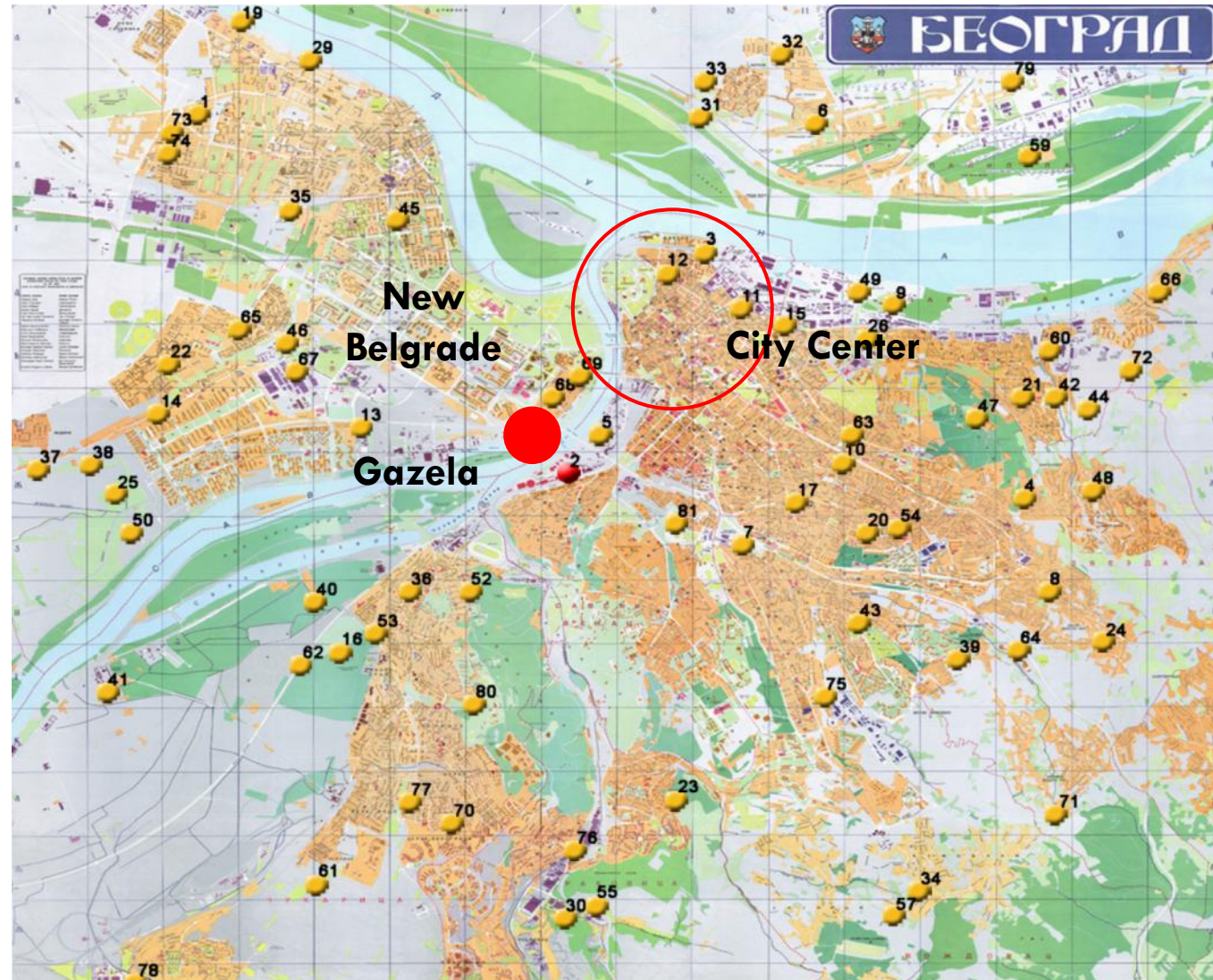


RESETLEMENT

RELOCATION OF GAZELA ROMA SETTLEMENT

Gazela Roma Settlement in Belgrade, the capital

- ❑ Gazela was one of the most famous Roma Belgrade slums
- ❑ And was one of about 120 Roma settlements (enumerated in 2000)
- ❑ Created in the early 1990s
- ❑ Demolished/ displaced in 2009



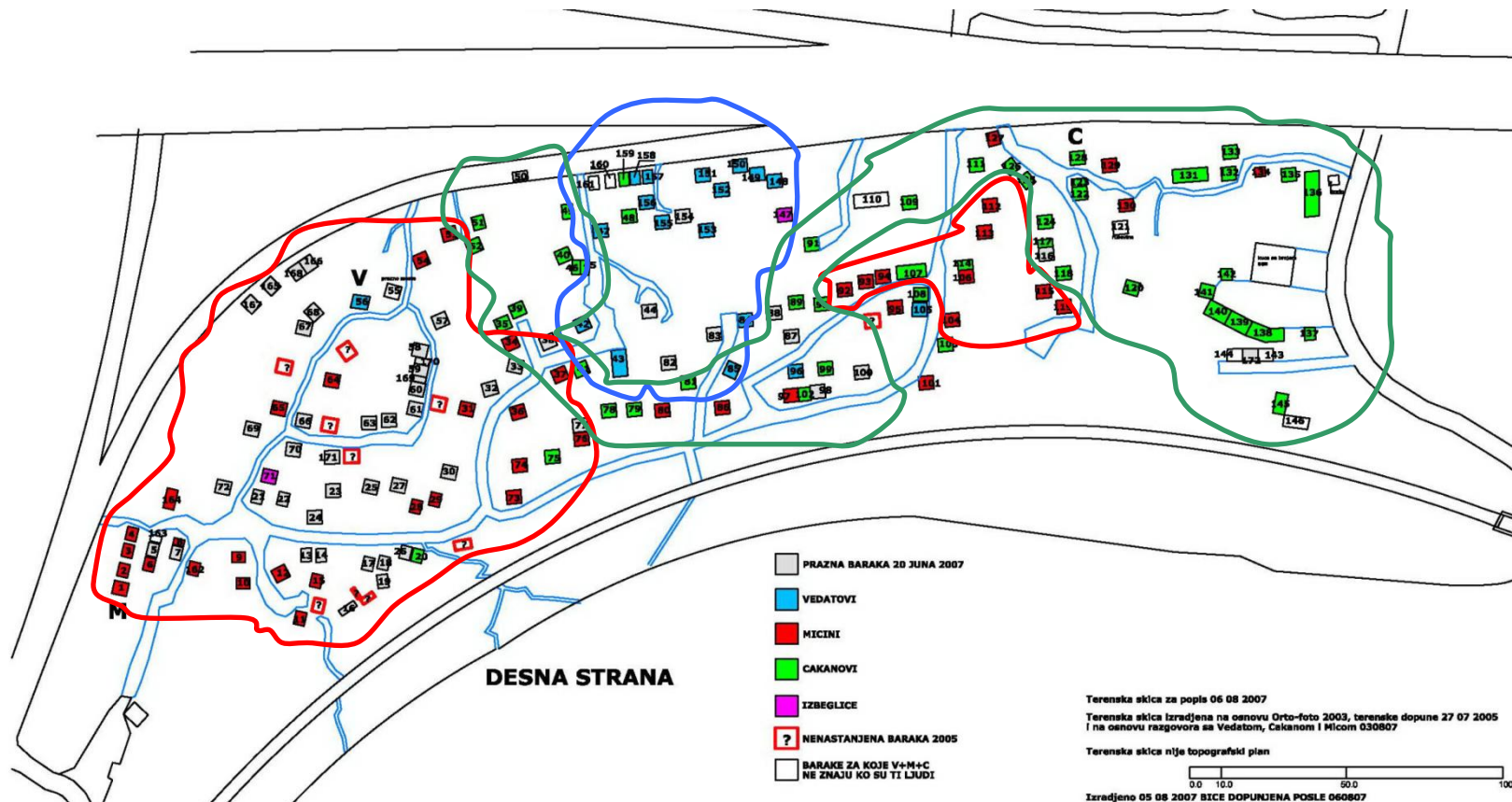
A FEW FIGURES ABOUT THE GAZELLE

- **Origin of the name:**
Named after the Gazela Bridge crossing the Sava River, near which the settlement was located.
- **Settlement growth:**
At the end of the 1990s, the settlement comprised **80 houses**; by 2003 – **138**, by 2005 – **172**, and by 2007 – **220 houses**.



Photo credits: Velimir Savatić, Society for the Improvement of Local Roma Communities, 2002

GAZELA AND IN ITS „NEIGHBORHOODS“



- 96 families were from Belgrade (44%),
- 34 were IDPs from Kosovo (15%),
- 90 were from the south of Serbia (41%).

INSIDE GAZELA SETTLEMENT

Socio-economic status:

Approximately **60%** of inhabitants were extremely poor, **36%** poor, and only **4%** were relatively better off.



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

HOUSING CONDITIONS

- ❑ Houses – “barracks” - were constructed from non-standard, low-quality materials
- ❑ Often easily flammable and lacking basic durability.
- ❑ Typical structures consisted of a single room, a small porch, and a yard area.
- ❑ The average dwelling size was approximately 20 m², inhabited by about 4.3 persons, resulting in an average living space of only 4.67 m² per person.



LIVELIHOODS AND LOCAL ECONOMY

- The Gazela functioned as a **recycling-based informal economy**,
- All household members actively participated in income-generating activities - including men, women, children, and even pregnant women -.
- Approximately 33 families had storage spaces for recyclable materials; 33 owned motor vehicles, and 135 households used handcarts for transport.
- Despite strong work engagement, the community remained highly vulnerable, dependent on the informal recycling economy without legal protection or social security.



SAVA RIVER: BATHING, WASHING, LEISURE



Photo credits: Zlata Vuksanović-Macura

INITIATION OF SETTLEMENT RELOCATION

FORMATION OF THE RESETTLEMENT COMMISSION

- In 2007, the City of Belgrade established the Resettlement Commission within the city administration to coordinate the process of relocation

Composition:

- Representatives of the city administration
- Representatives of Roma settlements
- Experts in urban planning and social policy
- NGO representatives involved in housing and human rights
- Chaired and hedged by a Roma representative



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

EXTENSIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

Extensive socio-economic data collection, jointly conducted by:

- City Secretariat for Social Affairs,
- Statistical Office of the City of Belgrade,
- Resettlement Committee
- Supervised by settlement representatives

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF SETTLEMENT'S REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE OUTSET

- Settlement representatives were intensively engaged throughout all project phases
- They were members of the City Resettlement Committee
- Served as controllers in the Gazela socio-economic survey
- Proposed alternative locations for resettlement
- Co-defined housing programs and participated in apartment design

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND DIALOGUE

- A series of meetings was held with different resident groups.
- Project explained in detail to small groups (around 20 participants per session).
- Open discussions on proposed design and planning solutions.
- Individual cases resolved, sometimes involving up to 10 families per meeting.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN FROM APARTMENT TO SETTLEMENT



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

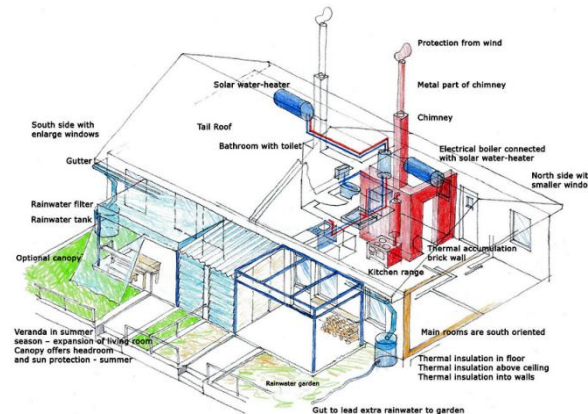
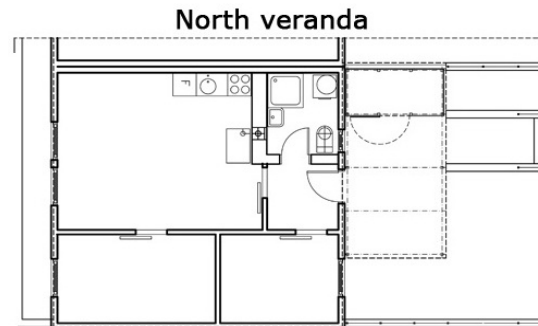
HOUSING PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

Formulated through agreements between the City of Belgrade, Roma representatives, and expert teams.

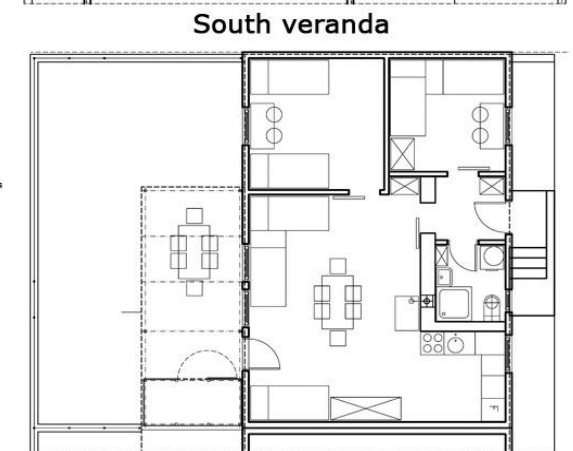
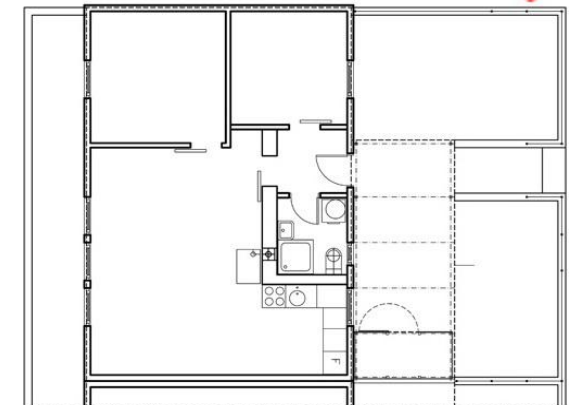
Key Elements:

- ❑ Construction type: Wooden prefabricated housing units
- ❑ Urban form: Row houses
- ❑ Design logic: Apartment layouts adjusted to household composition and size
- ❑ Spatial standard: Approximately 15 m² per household member
- ❑ Functional focus: A larger number of rooms to enhance comfort
- ❑ Four types of apartments

Type Ema = 54 m²
3-5 persons, 66 flats

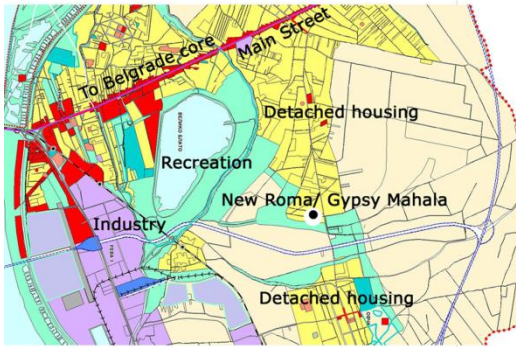


Type Afrodita = 68 m²
6-8 persons, 31 flats

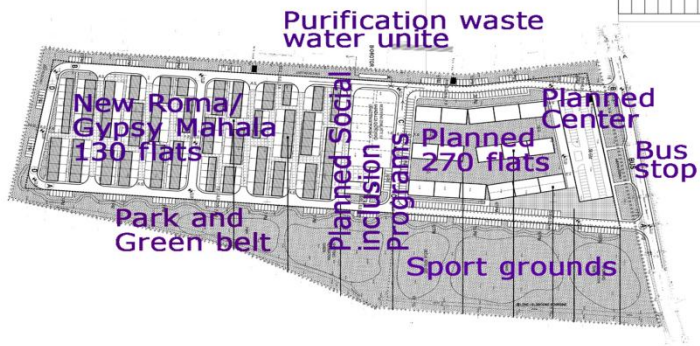


LOCATION AND LAYOUT

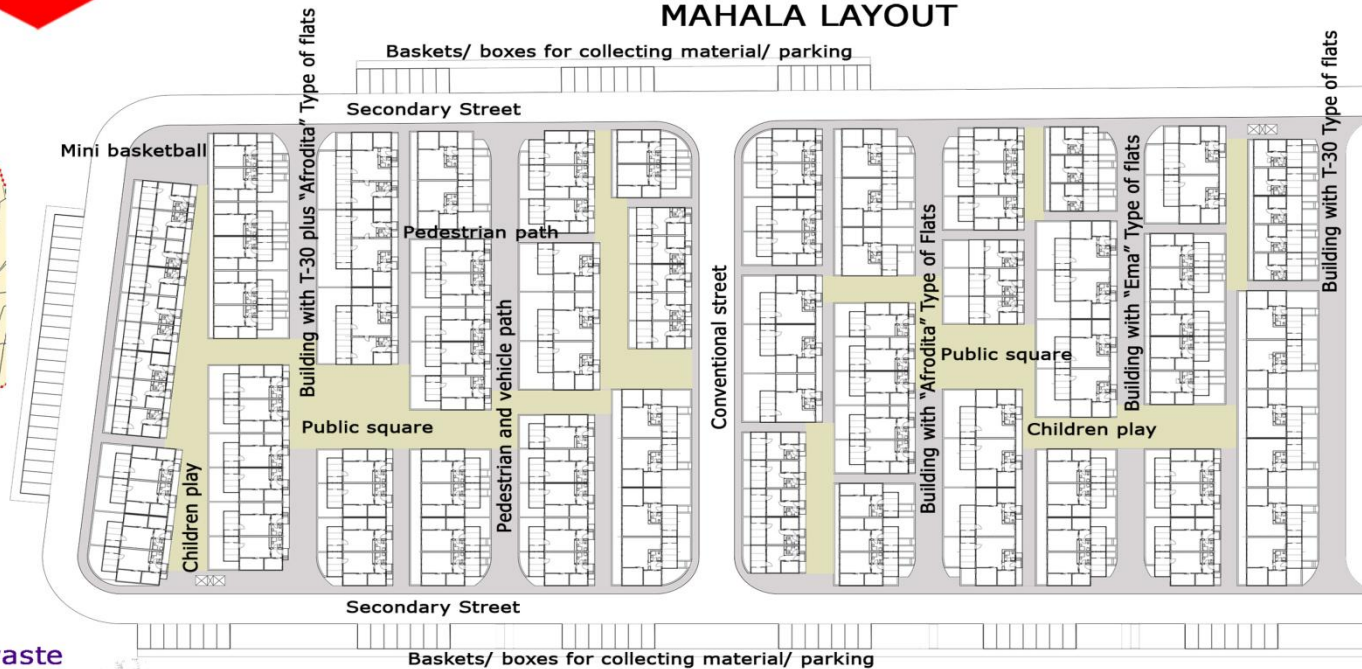
WIDER URBAN CONTEXT



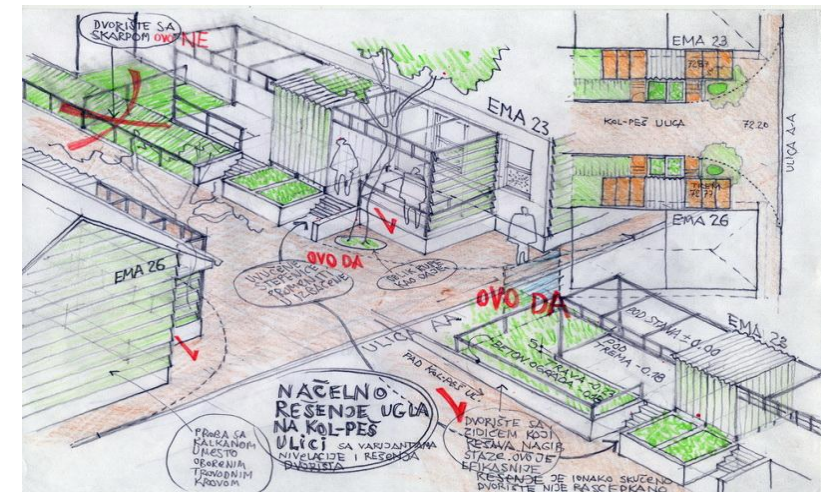
MAHALA'S QUARTER



MAHALA LAYOUT



CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD



POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL TURNING POINT

Konstituísana gradska vlast

Đilas gradonačelnik Beograda

Novu gradsku vlast tajnim glasanjem izabralo je 58 odbornika Demokratske stranke, G17 plus, Socijalističke partije Srbije, Partije ujedinjenih penzionera Srbije i Liberalno-demokratske partije

Izabran u poslednji čas: Dragan Đilas (Foto dokumentacija "Politike")

Ako ova vlast bude trajala četiri godine, na kraju tog mandata vidim Beograd sa završenim jednim mostom, rešenim infrastrukturnim problemima, sa, u dobroj meri, rešenim problemom saobraćaja, kao svetao i čist grad, poručio je juče Dragan Đilas, nakon što je izabran za gradonačelnika Beograda. Ocenjujući da je izgubljeno dosta vremena, Đilas je rekao i da će nova gradska vlast da nadoknadi sve što je propušteno, da nastavi projekte koji su započeti i da pokrene nove projekte u glavnom gradu, kao i da veruje da koalicija u kojoj su stranke levice i centra, a ima podršku liberalnih stranaka, može da omogućiti da se ispoštuje ideja socijalne pravde, ali i da se nametne još brži tempo razvoja Beograda.

Ovča je ocenjena pogodnom za izgradnju socijalnog naselja pre više od pet godina. Da li ćemo graditi na tom mestu pokazaće analiza ponuda na tenderu i ekonomska računica. Ukoliko se ispostavi da ponude premašuju svotu koju možemo da izdvojimo, tražićemo rešenje koje zahteva manje novca. Da li ćemo se opredeliti za Ovču, Lazarevac ili Srećicu, nije bitno – kaže Krkobabić.

Upravo zbog lošeg rezultata prethodnog tendera za izvođača radova u Ovči, na koji se prijavio samo jedan ponudac, početak radova zakazan za 15. oktobar prošle godine je odložen. Sada se prikupljaju ponude na drugom tenderu, čiji će ishod uskoro biti poznat.

- **August 2008:** Election of a new city government in Belgrade
- **Autumn 2008:** Public tender for construction of the new Roma settlement announced — *the process failed*
- **Following months:**
 - **Protests** emerged from part of the **hosting community**
 - The new city government **abolished the Coordination Center** responsible for resettlement
 - **Abandonment** of the previously **adopted resettlement project**
- **Consequence:**
The administration introduced **new policy directions and alternative ideas**, marking a significant **discontinuity in the inclusion process**.

RELOCATION TO METAL CONTAINERS



- In 2009, the City of Belgrade relocated about 150 Roma families into newly formed container settlements on the periphery.
- Strict usage rules introduced.
- Support provided to children to travel to school by bus.
- Men were given temporary jobs in the city's utility company.
- It was an expensive solution, but the situation quickly became unmanageable.
- Human rights advocacy organisations prompted re-relocation from container housing into adequate and permanent housing.

RE-RELOCATION PROCESS

- In 2015, families were re-relocated into newly built social housing units:
 - Location distributed across several city locations
 - Provision of good-quality housing
 - Formal participation of families, only in choosing relocation sites
 - Lack of accompanying facilities to support recycling-based livelihoods
 - Housing costs are subsidised but still unaffordable to many families
 - Absence of social support programs to assist adaptation to the new environmentt



Photo credits: Zlata Vuksanović- Macura



SOME LESSONS LEARNED

- Need for the formalization of the relocation process
 - The new Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (2016) contains provisions on the resettlement procedure
 - Consultations with residents and the host community are a mandatory part of the process.
- The need to implement a holistic approach - housing, employment, education, and healthcare - and individualized measures
- The need for continuous work and targeted support for displaced families until they get used to the new environment

QUESTIONS



REGULARIZATION



INCLUSION VIA REGULARIZATION

Current urban planning practice in Serbia

- ❑ Linear and traditional process – from decision to develop plan to its adoption
- ❑ Requires minimal participation of citizens
- ❑ Two public hearings over a few days

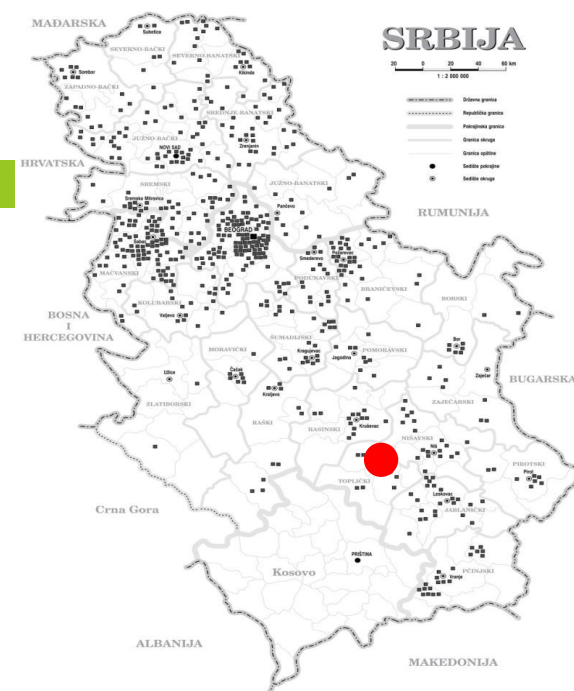
Concept of Regularization

- ❑ Legalization of settlements by urban plan - means regulating previously illegally constructed structures (houses, streets, infrastructure)
- ❑ Improvement of infrastructure, public space and houses
- ❑ Social inclusion measures: education, employment, health and housing
- ❑ Goal: **integration of informal settlements** into the formal spatial, social and economic system

ROMA SETTLEMENT “MALA GUBA”

- Informal Roma settlement in Prokuplje, Municipality in South-East Serbia
- 50 houses with around 300 inhabitants in 2011
- Location: the confluence of Srtazevacka stream into the Toplica River

Source: Macura & Vuksanović-Macura, 2018.



Map: Jakšić&Bašić, 2002



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

THE CHALLENGES

- ❑ Lack of infrastructure
- ❑ Some houses are built of low-quality material
- ❑ Some parcels are tiny
- ❑ The settlement was exposed to flooding



THE STRENGTHS

- ❑ Proactive and engaged community
- ❑ Active support from local Roma organizations
- ❑ Commitment and cooperation from municipal authorities



POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE POLICYMAKING

- The Municipality of Prokuplje demonstrated political commitment to the legalization and upgrading of the Roma settlement “Mala Guba.”
- This commitment was confirmed through the adoption of the Assembly Decision initiating the preparation of an urban development plan for the settlement’s legalization



Photo credits: Municipality of Prokuplje

The Municipal Assembly of Prokuplje decision on the development of the urban plan for the informal Roma settlement Mala Guba.

ROLE OF PROFESSIONALS

Professional support in participatory planning

Professionals - architects, urban planners, and municipal technical staff should:

- ❑ Provide technical assistance inhabitants and local authorities
- ❑ Facilitate dialogue between inhabitants and local authorities
- ❑ Identify and propose feasible urban and architectural solutions for settlement improvement



ESTABLISHING A SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE

- ❑ Active engagement of local community is key to successful neighbourhood improvement.
- ❑ Their initiative is important for success.
- ❑ **Settlement Committee** formed to include residents' needs in planning.
- ❑ Intergenerational and gender-inclusive representation



MAPPING THE SETTLEMENT

By inhabitants

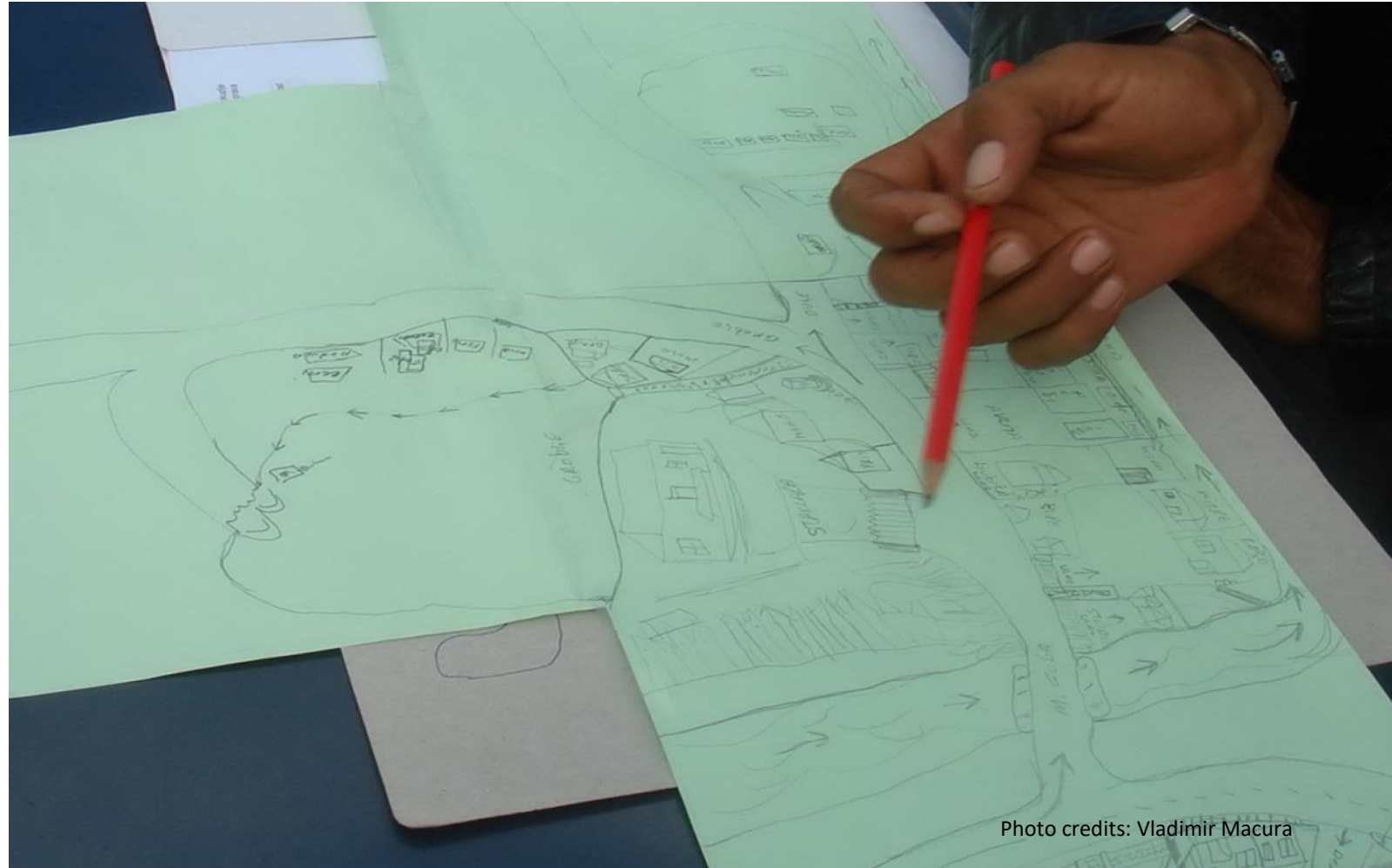


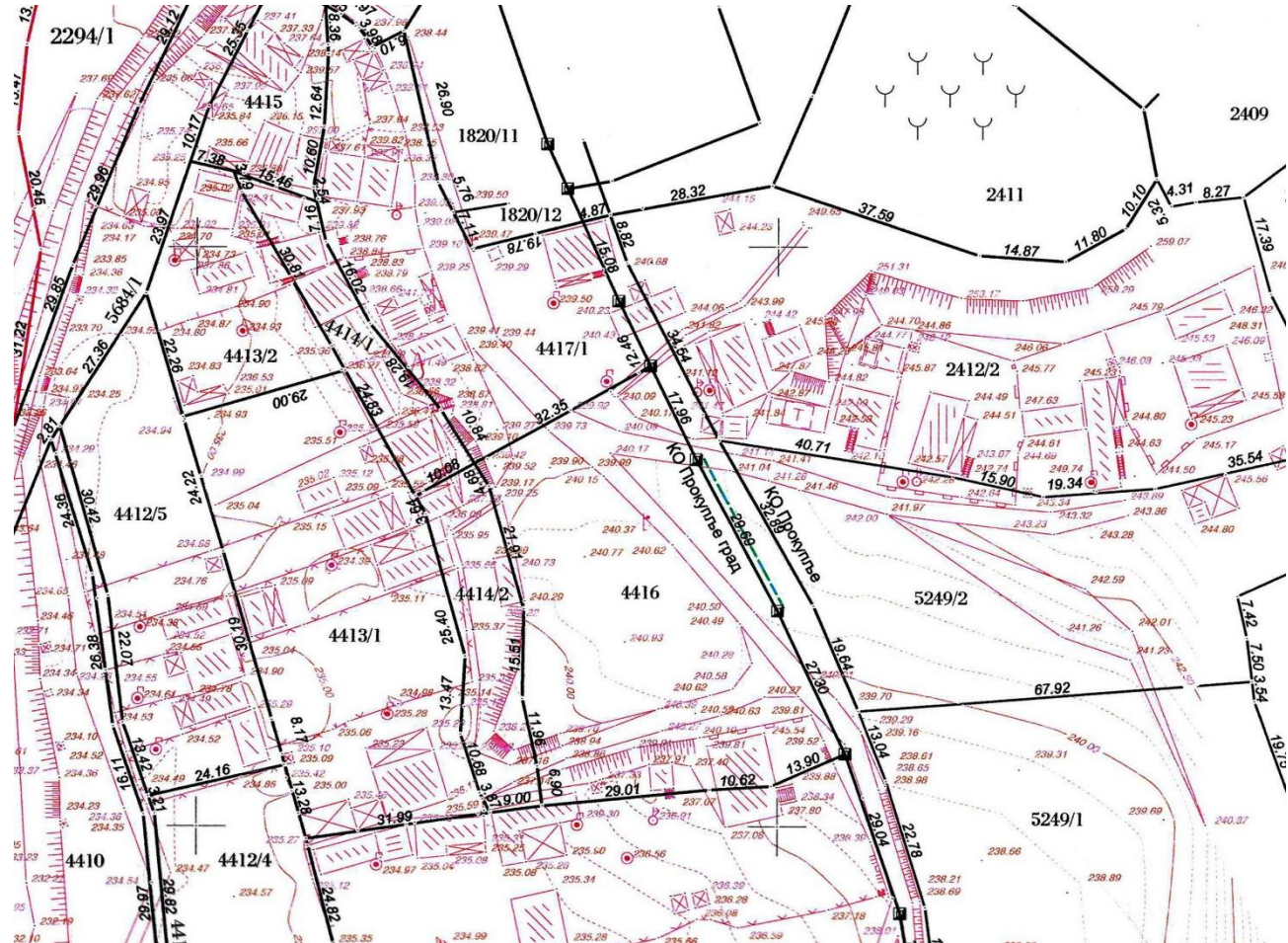
Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

MAPPING THE SETTLEMENT

By professionals



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura



Source: Detailed Regulation Plan for Mala Guba Settlement in Prokuplje, 2012

CONDUCTING HOUSEHOLD SURVEY



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

- The household survey provides valuable insights into residents' socio-economic conditions, housing situations, needs, and aspirations
- Obtains essential data and input for urban plan elaboration and any further action.
- Foster communication between urban planners and inhabitants and encourages active participation.
- Survey used to involve traditionally unrepresented groups, particularly women
- **Participatory survey** - jointly with representatives of the settlement or activists from local organizations

DRAFTING A SPATIAL SOLUTION

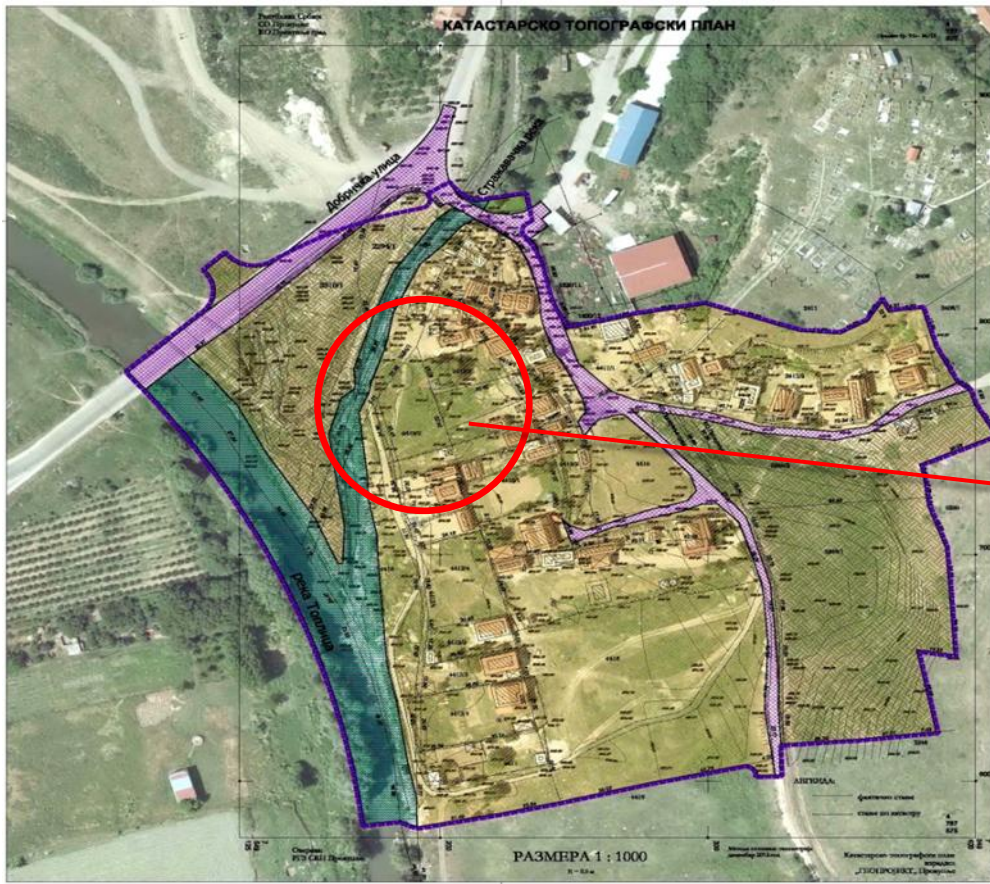
- ❑ The Settlement Committee and architects and urban planners collaboratively formulated the spatial concept guiding the physical development of the settlement.
- ❑ The role of architects and urban planners was to provide technical solutions, including functional zoning, street design, public space design, and river embankment design, as well as guidelines for housing improvement and upgrading.



Photo credits: Vladimir Macura

NAGOTIATION AND COMPENZATION

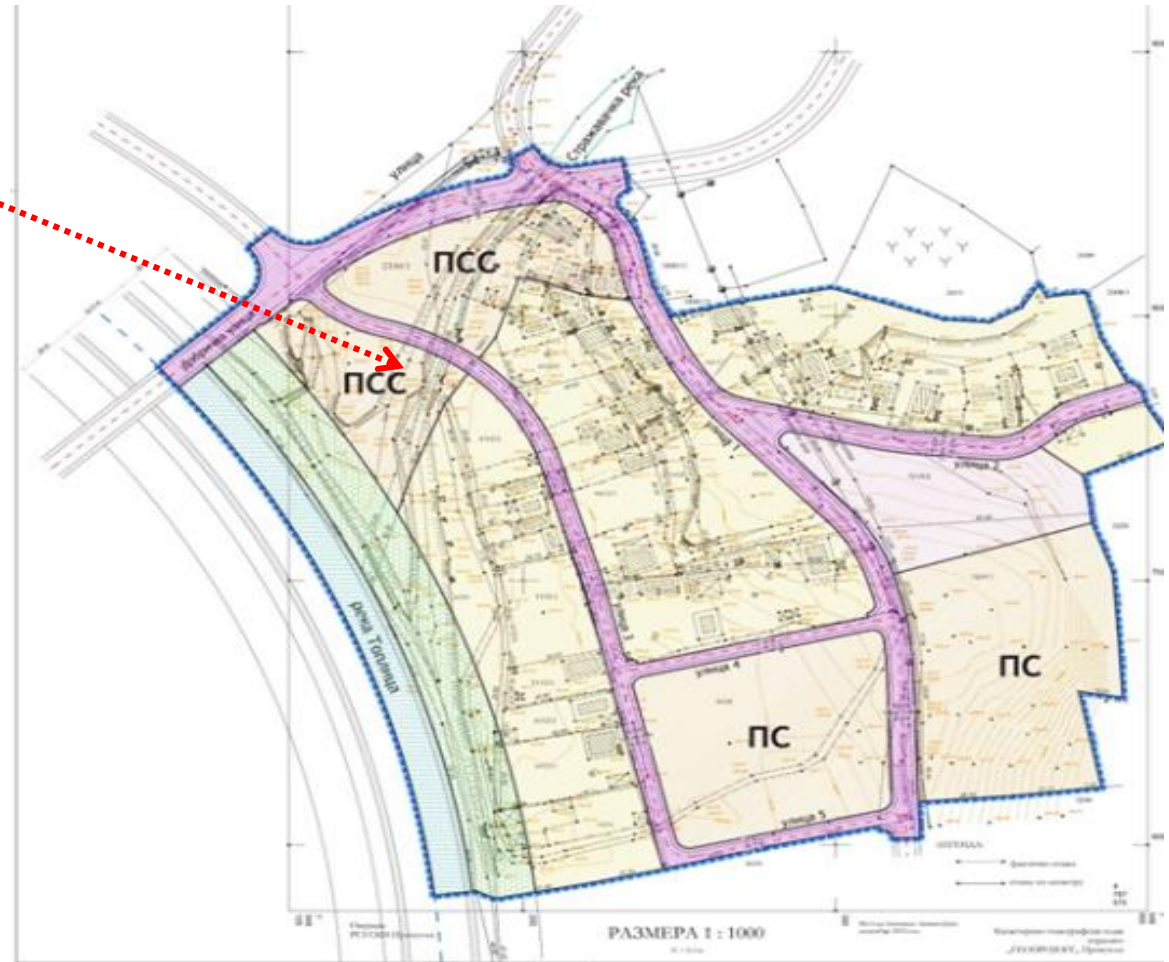
- Negotiation and compensation for the residents affected by planned solutions



Source: Society for the Improvement of Local Roma Communities, 2012

STREETS REGULATION

- ❑ **Initial proposal:** a central street dividing the settlement.
- ❑ Rejected by Roma due to parcels fragmentation.
- ❑ Accepted solution: new street aligned along the river.



ROMA CONSENT TO THE SPATIAL SOLUTION

- The Settlement Committee reviews the draft urban plan and reaffirms its agreement with the proposed spatial and design solutions.
- The Settlement Committee and the Municipality engage in dialogue to negotiate and reach a consensus on the key components of the plan.
- Urban planning professionals prepare the final version of the plan based on the agreed principles and community inputs.



Drawing: Vladimir Macura; Source: Society for the Improvement of Local Roma Communities, 2012

THE EFFECTS OF THE ADOPTION OF URBAN PLAN

Enabled legalization of the settlement and integration into the formal urban structure

Enabled legalization of individual housing units

Enabled resolution of tenure and ownership issues

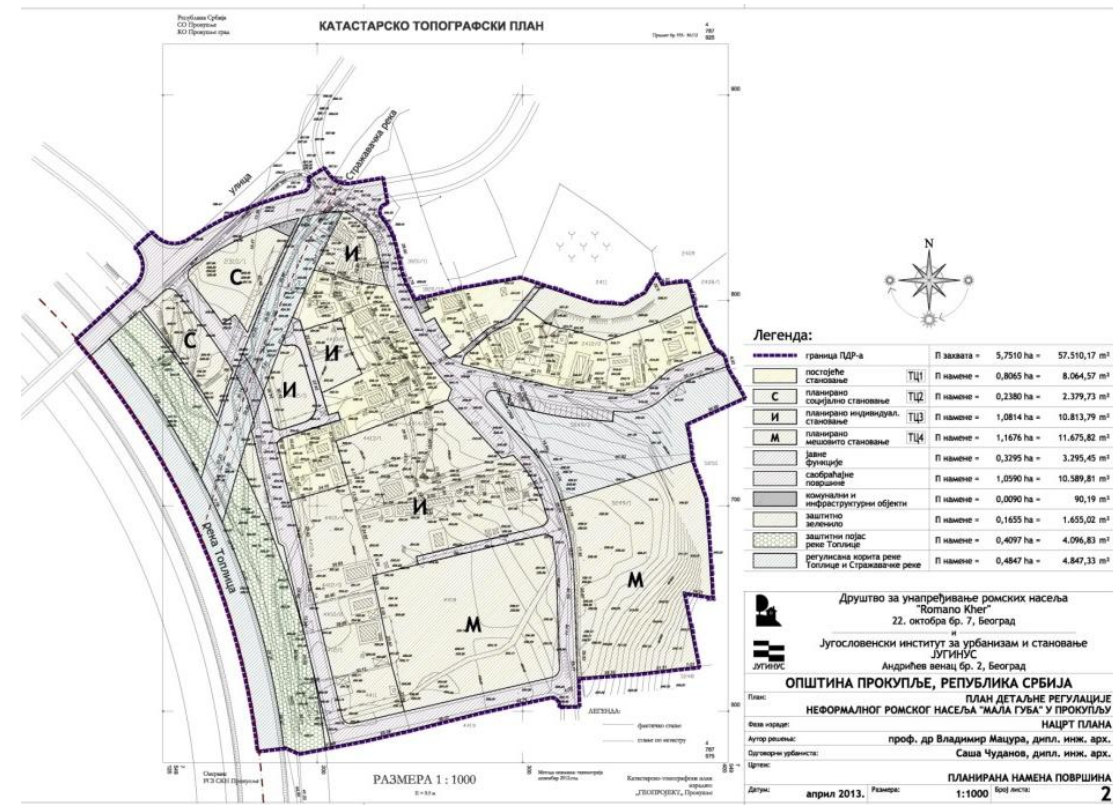
Improved access to public funding for settlement upgrading (infrastructure, street layout, and public spaces)

Access to micro-loans supporting housing renovation and improvement

Enhanced flood protection and stream regulation

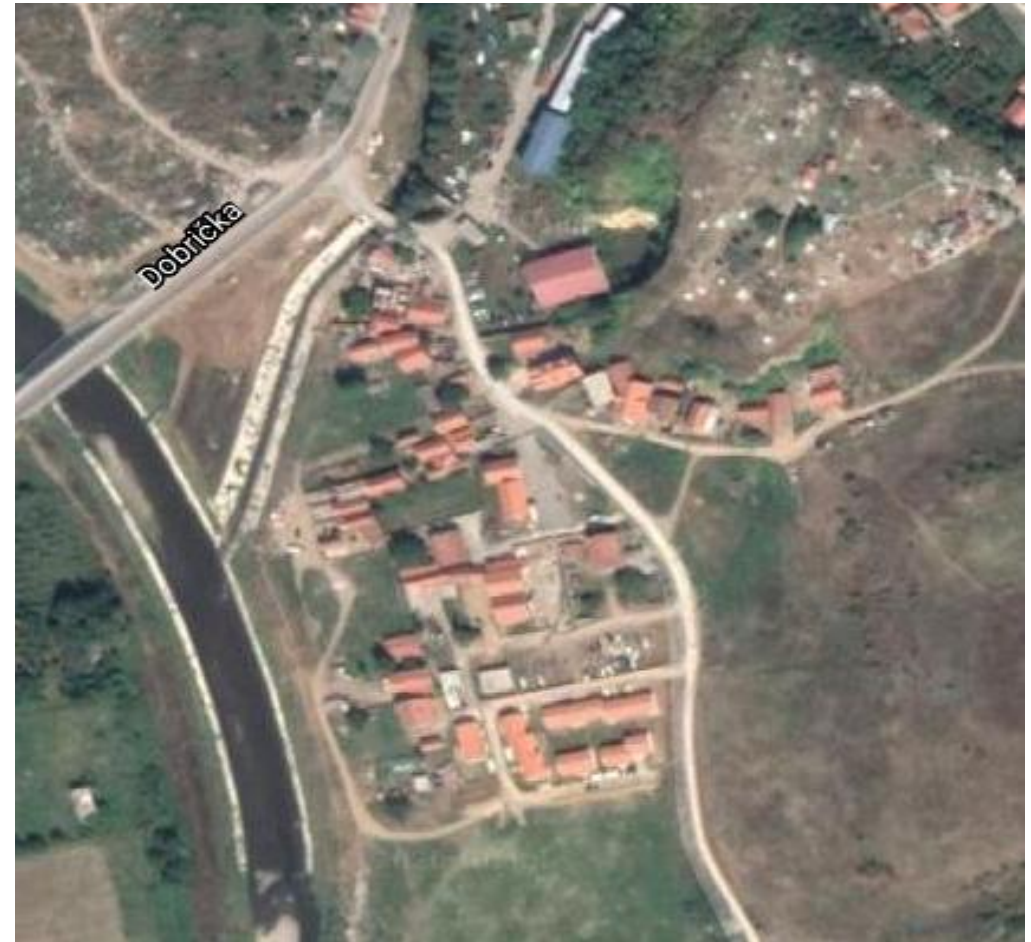
Construction of a community or social center

Construction of new social housing units



PROTECTION FROM FLOOD AND STREAM REGULATION

- Construction of over 400-metre long stone embankment to protect the settlement from flooding in 2018



NEW SOCIAL HOUSING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

- 20 new social housing units built in the settlement in 2021



CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

- Community action on cleaning garbage from settlements



SOME LESSONS LEARND



- An urban plan – when formulated in an inclusive and participatory way - represents a crucial instrument for the legalization and sustainable development of informal Roma settlements.
- Ensure broad partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement, including residents, local authorities, administrations, and neighbouring communities
- *Active involvement of the community is the key.*

QUESTIONS



PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH

BUILDING AND FOSTERING PARTNERSHIP

- Partnership among residents of informal settlements, municipal authorities, local administrations, professionals, NGOs, and other stakeholders is essential for fostering mutual understanding and achieving effective regularization outcomes.

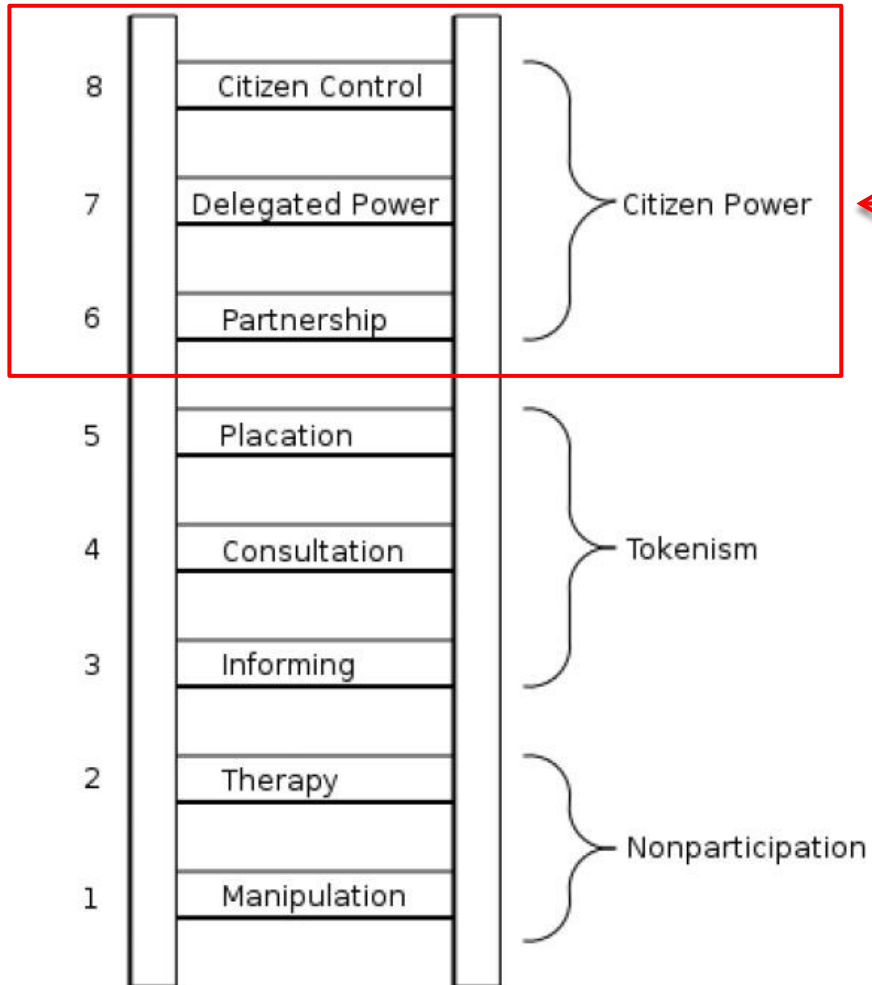


INCLUSIVE APPROACH

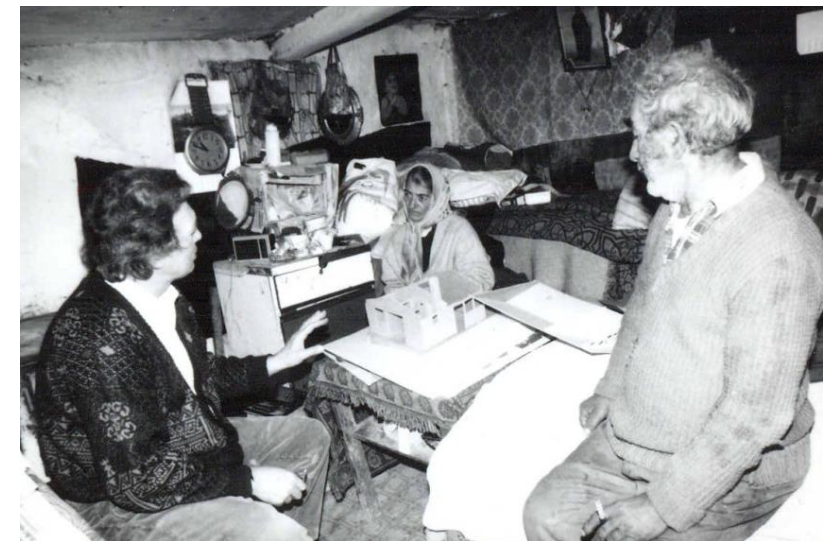
Promoting and Applying an Inclusive Approach at all Scales

- ❑ Develop a **coherent and shared vision** for inclusive and sustainable upgrading of informal settlements
- ❑ Foster a **positive and constructive perception** of informal settlements and their residents
- ❑ **Strengthen political commitment** and institutional support for regularization processes
- ❑ Ensure **broad partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement**, including residents, local authorities, administrations, and neighbouring communities
- ❑ Encourage **active participation of residents** at all stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring
- ❑ **Adapt legal and regulatory frameworks** to the specific contexts of informal settlements, recognizing that many existing regulations were formulated without, or deliberately excluding, these realities
- ❑ Promote **holistic and integrated policy approaches** that address spatial, social, economic, and environmental dimensions
- ❑ **Plan and implement tangible, context-sensitive interventions** on the ground

ENSURE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION



"For Roma, with Roma" is a slogan and a strategy

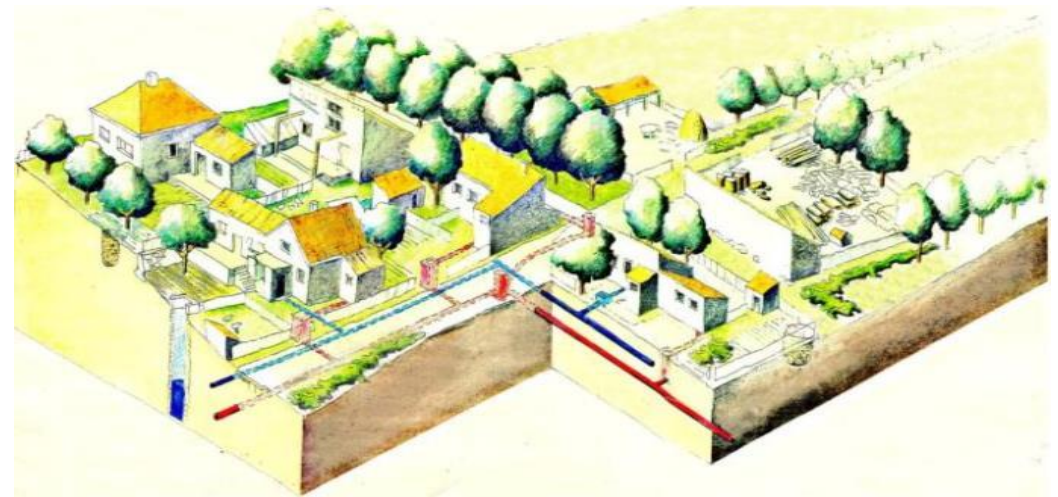
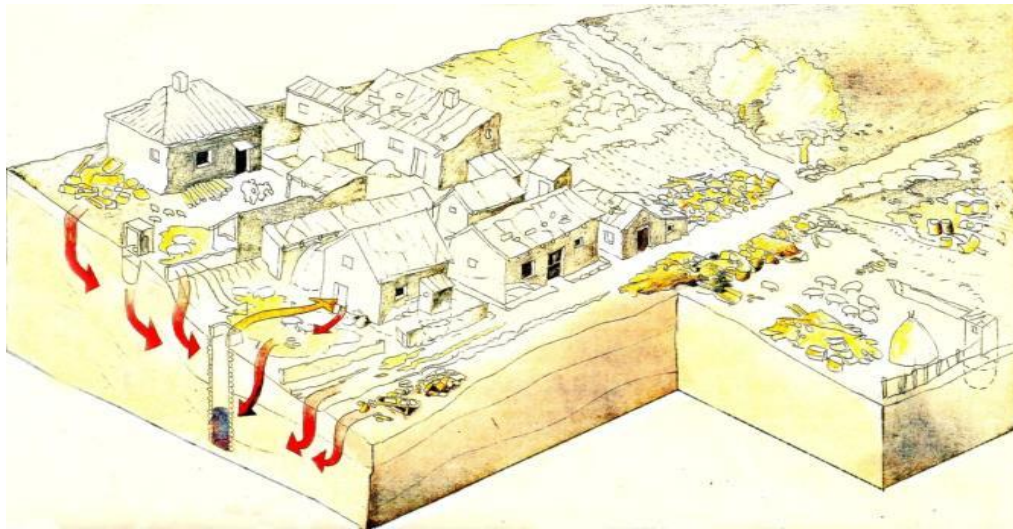


Ladders of participation, by Sherry Arnstein, 1969.

Photo credits: Velimir Savatić

QUESTIONS

THANK YOU



Source: Macura, Mitrović, Cvejić, Mujbegović, 1994.

SOURCES

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