

**Methodological insights into the area-based social survey of a segregated Roma settlement  
near the landfill of Cluj-Napoca**

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The area-based social survey in Pata-Rât, a segregated and deeply impoverished settlement near the landfill of Cluj-Napoca, tried to explore a different methodological path than regular poverty-mapping inquiries. Designed and implemented within the preparatory phase of a UNDP pilot-project for the social inclusion of deprived Roma families in Cluj-Napoca<sup>2</sup>, the survey aimed to put on the map of various stakeholders the needs and resources of individuals and families from Pata-Rât. Thus, the survey was part of a larger and longer process of desegregation, integration and development, with the specific aim to make visible the manifold potentialities and barriers of residents from Pata-Rât.

**Factsheet**

**Area:** Pata-Rât and Cantonului streets, located at the outskirts of Cluj-Napoca, near the substandard municipal landfill.

**Population:** Around 1,300 persons (given seasonal fluctuations), mostly composed of deprived Roma families evicted from the city or moved near the waste dump from the surrounding rural areas in order to work in recyclable waste collection.

**Survey:** comprehensive (no sampling) and anonymous. Questionnaires filled in by trained field researchers during face-to-face interviews at respondents' homes.

**Fieldwork period:** 5-15 October 2012

**Instruments:** (1) **household questionnaire**, containing also detailed items for each household members; (2) **individual questionnaire** to be filled in by each person above 14 years old; all research instruments were anonymous.

**Desk researchers:** responsible for verification of questionnaires and dataset preparation: two graduate students (MA and PhD) of the Sociology department, Babes-Bolyai University, selected based on their CVs and recommendation letters;

**Enumerators:** 15 students of the Babes-Bolyai University Cluj in the field of social sciences, selected based on their CVs, recommendation letters and a semi-structured interview. They participated at two training sessions organized by the research coordinator and desk researchers.

**Coverage:** 273 households with altogether 1,156 persons (90% coverage). Additionally, 542 individual questionnaires were completed with persons above 14 years old (78% coverage).

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<sup>2</sup> *Preparatory Phase for Model Project: Making the Most of EU Funds for Sustainable Housing and Inclusion of Disadvantaged Roma (explicitly but not exclusively targeted) in Cluj Metropolitan Area (2012)* implemented by the United Nations Development Programme in partnership with the Cluj-Napoca municipality and financed by the Open Society Foundations, Making Most of EU Funds for the Roma.

**Presentation of survey results to the communities: 14<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2012**  
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### *Involving the communities*

The initial idea was to carry out not only a comprehensive survey, but to involve the inhabitants of Pata-Rât in the questionnaire-design and data interpretation. We managed to remain faithful to this quest only partially. We have held several informal discussions with residents and various local stakeholders (social workers, school mediator, faith-based charities and other NGOs active in the area<sup>3</sup>) that inspired the questionnaire and helped us capture relevant dimensions specific to this extremely deprived area, which would have otherwise been omitted from regular poverty assessment surveys. Due to the time constraints and difficulties of levelling-down existing hierarchies within the communities, so as to ensure democratic participation for all, the final version of the questionnaire was not designed side-by-side with the residents of Pata-Rât. Nonetheless, they were consulted and we tried to use all grassroots level knowledge and various expert-opinions<sup>4</sup> to design a complex questionnaire suited for Pata-Rât. Importantly, the questionnaires asked about future plans, interests, personal competences and skills, work experience, social networks within and outside of the settlements, patterns of mutual help, kinship ties, relations with public authorities, NGOs and faith-based organizations active in the area. More general questions exploring their material and housing situation, health status, environmental risks, access to education, work and social protection were also addressed. .

The previous small-scale surveys carried out by the municipality (May 2010) and GLOC (February 2011, covering only the families forcibly relocated from Coastei street to Pata-Rât in December 2010) provided lessons to learn and some rough estimations of the demographic structure in the four settlements. Despite the attention to local context, the elaborated local survey is compatible with general surveys and provides a good basis for comparative studies. The survey

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<sup>3</sup> The ProRoma Organization from the Netherlands and the Foundation for Helping Families from Pata-Rat, who have been active in the area since early 1990s, but also NGOs such as Amare Phrala, Desire Foundation, Ecce Home, Christiana, Habitat for Humanity, World Vision etc., some of them also part of the Working Group of Civil Society Organizations – GLOC ([www.gloc.ro](http://www.gloc.ro)).

<sup>4</sup> We are grateful for the generous feedback offered by the UNDP Bratislava Regional Office, in particular Marta Marczis and Jaroslav Kling, and the Research Institute for National Minorities (ISPMN) Cluj-Napoca. Previous consultations with the Maltese Community Service from Pecs, Hungary were considerably helpful for the design of research instruments.

model developed in Cluj was later implemented for segregated Roma communities in Pécs in frame of the UNDP local development intervention there.

Prior to the fieldwork, the questionnaire was presented to some of the so-called local “leaders” to ensure their support and then piloted in a few families from each four community. The UNDP community coaches informed all communities from Pata-Rât about the coming survey, explained its relevance and objectives and prepared them to answer openly. The trust of the residents from Pata-Rât in the scope of the survey, but also the fact that some of the field researchers and the coordinator were already familiar faces for them, ensured positive answers to the inquiry and a final coverage rate close to 90% of households and individual responses from 78% of all inhabitants aged 14 or above.

The results of the survey were presented first to the communities from Pata-Rât in the community-centre of the Foundation for Helping Families (FAF), on two different occasions, so that all those interested might have attended. The figures were interpreted with the help of participants, asking their feedback in order to ensure the validity and reliability of data.

### ***Doing field research***

The quality of the field research was important not only for data validity and reliability, but also for building trust in the ongoing development project, of which the survey was an integral part. The visits of field researchers at respondents’ homes in Pata-Rât, their face to face conversations on delicate and often emotionally-loaded topics were part of the bridging between “the ghetto” and “the city”. This required preparations on both sides. The UNDP community coaches informed the residents of Pata-Rât about the status of field-researchers, their role within the project and about the fact that they were university students, not employees of local authorities. Correspondingly, field researchers were carefully selected by the core research-team, they participated at two training-sessions and learned about the history of the place and structure of the four settlements. Maps of the settlements were prepared using GoogleMaps, but they proved to be outdated and somewhat less helpful than expected. Field researchers were asked to work in teams of two persons, to go to the settlements by the very same public buses that residents themselves use, and to hand-in the completed questionnaires

at the end of the day, by 7pm in the evening, at the researcher coordinator's office. Each questionnaire was verified by the desk researchers, and in case that anything was unclear (e.g. number of children, the legal status of partners etc.), field researchers were asked to double-check. These late-evening meetings also served as briefings on the evolution of the fieldwork, the attitude of respondents, the experiences (and often emotional distress) of field researchers. They were crucial for achieving the objectives of the survey.

Does:	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep anonymity and confidentiality</li> <li>- Explain clearly your role as a researcher</li> <li>- Ask for factual information</li> <li>- Relate events in order to facilitate remembrance of life trajectory sequences</li> <li>- Allow respondents to return to and correct their answers</li> <li>- Leave an explanatory note about the survey to all respondents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do not ask for identity papers or other official documents</li> <li>- Do not affirm anything about the long-term outcomes of the survey</li> <li>- Avoid hypothetical questions that raise expectations</li> <li>- Do not accept unclear answers that you yourself do not understand</li> <li>- Refrain from confrontational statements</li> </ul>

***Political stakes***

The survey results were presented first for the residents of Pata-Rât in November 2012, so as to empower them with a sociological image of their communities that can be instrumental for their political voice. In January 2013, a public report issued by the UNDP and Babes-Bolyai University in both English and Romanian was made available for all those interested. Yet, no public presentation took place in front of the press.

Instead, all relevant stakeholders at the local level were invited to specific workshops concerning the situation of Pata-Rât, where survey results were thematically presented and opportunities for collaboration in the processes of desegregation and development were

discussed. In collaboration with the local UNDP team and GLOC, four local workshops took place on the topics of housing (architects, urban planners, and housing charities), education (school directors, the school inspectorate, and the Roma school mediator from Pata-Rât), social services (the Municipality Social Assistance and Health Directorate, the County Social Assistance and Child Protection General Directorate, local NGOs providing social services for vulnerable communities) and health (the directors of the municipality hospital, Public Health Directorate, the Roma health mediator from Pata-Rât, etc). The outcomes of these workshops are to be evaluated on the long-run.

The data were subsequently used in all projects proposals submitted by local actors.

Most importantly, survey results were instrumental to include Pata-Rât in the Development Strategy of the Municipality Cluj-Napoca, designed by a large team of experts from local authorities, the Babes-Bolyai University, and civil society. The chapter on Social Inclusion, coordinated by Eniko Vincze<sup>5</sup> makes several references to the survey in order to ground different measures of desegregation, social and economic integration, and the sustainable, inclusive development of the city.

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