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MILETIĆ

HOUSING
CONDITIONS
AND RESIDENTIAL
ASPIRATIONS OF
THE ROMA

Among the Roma, marginality is a basic feature and problem, which more or less encumbers almost all Romani communities on the European continent. Marginality is a concept that implies the exclusion of the Roma from important social processes – economic, cultural, and political (Šućur, 2000). It is very difficult to distinguish what the cause is – it seems to be a type of “vicious” circle in which distinct cultural patterns interfere with education. Subsequently, this blocks access to employment and encourages marginality and stigmatisation that results in particular cultural patterns and a no-win situation (Macura et al., 1997). Thus, the space within which Romani life unfolds is greatly determined by poverty, social exclusion and cultural specificity – the result is life that is frequently beneath human dignity.

There are many elements that relate to the social marginalisation of the Roma in Croatia (Štambuk, 2000). The necessity to change this state of affairs stimulated the state to invest additional effort and to become more actively involved in the solution of accumulated Romani problems. For this reason, the *National Programme for the Roma* was implemented. This proposes to “help the Roma in a systematic way to improve their living conditions and to be a part of social life and decision-making processes in the local and wider community while preserving their identity, culture and tradition in the process” (National Programme for the Roma 2003: 3). The success of the programme can only be anticipated if the solution of all three dimensions (economic, spatial and socio-cultural) of marginalisation is approached in a parallel way (Šućur, 2000). In this context, the improvement and development of Romani settlements becomes one of the priority objectives.

“Wild residence” is one of the basic problems and simultaneously a feature of the locations where Roma have settled. Rogić includes two different forms of residence

“outside of the law” in this term. On the one hand, this is in flats/houses that meet civilisation standards but are not compatible to positive legal regulations and on the other hand, this is residence that is predominantly below existing civilisation standards (Rogić, 1990). Residence in Romani settlements unites both forms of “wild” – since this is most often a combination of different forms of illegal building and unsuitable housing.

Residence in this type of setting that is remote from civilisation standards, especially in light of the unhygienic life conditions produces many risky situations both in the environment and in terms of health for the inhabitants of the settlement. Precisely, health risk is frequently the base of stigmatisation and marginalisation and serves, for example, as an argument for separating Romani and non-Romani children that are included in educational programmes. Thus, solving deficiencies primarily at the level of the settlement and improvement of the living standard of Romani households seem to be a priority. Since, in the end, a dwelling is a place where most human beings carry out essential activities and for this reason must adequately fulfil its function; first of all, this is undoubtedly the insurance of health and welfare of individuals and their families (King, 1996 according to Clapham, 2002). Solving settlement and residential problems would speed up processes for the Roma to get closer to the average life standard of the majority population. In other words, by raising quality of life, the Roma could be more easily integrated into mainstream society.

Thus, it is difficult to anticipate social integration without town-planning in Romani settlements. Accordingly, urbanisation and improving the quality of life received a very important place in the *National Programme for the Roma*. For this purpose, it is necessary to obtain an insight into the existing state of affairs in Romani settlements. This is related to the aims of this chapter. This includes showing the basic features of existing residential practices of Romani households; primarily features of housing through the examination of particular objective indicators. It also encompasses reviewing the residential aspirations of the Roma i.e., their subjective experience of housing problems.

This paper is based on data obtained in a field survey study conducted within the framework of the scientific project “The locations of settled Roma – the state and improvement of settlement development as well as aspirations for types of housing”. The survey was carried out in ten counties in summer-autumn 2004 and consisted of a

random sample of an adult Romani population who live in separate locations that are predominantly or exclusively inhabited by the Roma (N=968). Results from counties with extensively unordered and unequipped (illegal) settlements that have a larger share of Romani population will be highlighted. These include the Counties of Sisak-Moslavina, Varaždin, Primorje-Gorski kotar, Slavonski Brod-Posavina, Osijek-Baranja, Istria, and Međimurje and Zagreb.¹

Features of housing

Types of residential space. Survey results show that most respondents live in flats and houses; structures that nominally should guarantee an adequate standard of housing (see table 1). Barracks, board huts, shacks (from sheet metal, wood, and cardboard) as well as those structures in the *Other* category are home for 20% of the surveyed Romani households. These are constructions that do not meet standard housing norms; they cannot offer household members an environment in which, at least, the basic human needs (protection, food, and sleep) can be adequately met. The analysis shows that these types of structures (barracks, board hut, shack and other) are more frequent in the City of Zagreb and the County of Zagreb, where 33% of the respondents in these areas live. Similarly, in the County of Primorje-Gorski kotar just over 36% of the respondents live in barracks, board huts, and shacks.

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Flat	8.9	.0	2.5	.0	2.0	16.0	26.5	.9	6.0
House	58.0	88.5	78.8	62.2	96.0	80.0	50.0	77.9	74.5
Barracks (abandoned at building sites)	14.3	5.2	5.0	16.7	1.0	4.0	23.5	8.3	9.1
Board hut - shack (from sheet metal, wood, cardboard)	16.1	4.2	10.0	20.0	1.0	.0	.0	12.9	9.5
Other	2.7	2.1	3.8	1.1	.0	.0	.0	.0	.9

Source: Field study 2004

Table 1
 Types of residential space (%)

On the other hand, survey results show that 75% live in houses while 6% live in flats. Living in either a house or flat is considerably more frequent in the Counties of

Slavonski Brod-Posavina and Osijek-Baranja; in both counties over 95% of the households are either houses or flats. As was mentioned, household members that live in a house or flat should be in a better position. However, it became evident during fieldwork that there is a considerable difference in housing standard between different residential spaces. In a similar way, this applies to the building material – even though they are mostly built from durable material (bricks, stone, concrete blocks) their construction is often of very questionable quality. Thus, better building material does not necessarily guarantee better housing conditions.

Space standard. With regard to housing space, it can be said that the space standard of Romani households is very low (see table 2). Nearly half of the surveyed households live in no more than 35 m² and 11% of these households have living spaces that are less than 10 m². The situation is by far the worst in the Counties of Međimurje and Varaždin; around 45% of the respondents live in spaces that are less than 20 m², while not one respondent in the County of Istria lives in such a small living space.

Table 2
 Area of residential space (%)

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Up to 10 m ²	20.5	5.3	26.3	3.3	7.0	3.0	.0	17.1	11.3
10-20 m ²	10.7	24.2	18.8	5.6	8.0	17.2	.0	28.6	17.6
20-35 m ²	15.2	26.3	18.8	12.2	17.0	34.3	9.2	25.3	20.4
35-50 m ²	17.0	14.7	12.5	22.2	12.0	17.2	31.6	10.6	16.6
50-75 m ²	20.5	18.9	11.3	15.6	38.0	8.1	24.5	8.3	16.6
75 m ² and over	16.1	10.5	12.5	41.1	18.0	20.2	34.7	10.1	17.6

Source: Field study 2004

It is important to mention that scientific studies have pointed out the negative health, psychological and social effects of living in a crowded space (for example, Housing-health indicators, 2004; The social report, 2004). The mentioned studies suggest that the minimum living space area threshold is 14 m² a person. Thus, anything below this is often linked to the mentioned negative effects (Housing-health indicators, 2004). The most optimal variants here do not seem to be too applicable but for illustrative purposes, increasing the living space standard to 20 m² a person for every inhabitant of Croatia is suggested as a long-term objective of housing reproduction (Rogić, 1990).

In table 3, the average size of the household is shown with regard to the surface area of living space. The average household in this sample has around 6 members while a household with a living space of less than 10 m² has an average of 5 members. Alarming, this is only 2 m² a person. Beyond doubt, it is highly improbable that this provides adequate housing to all members. Substandardness does not adequately describe this housing as these conditions are far from humane.

Area of residential space	Average number of household members
Up to 10 m ²	5
10-20 m ²	4
20-35 m ²	5
35-50 m ²	5
50-75 m ²	6
75 m ² and over	6
Total sample	5

Source: Field study 2004

Table 3

The average size of household with regard to the area of their dwelling

Even though we highlighted the group of households that live in less than 10 m², not a large majority of remaining households live in conditions that provide the essential 14 m² of living space for each person of the household. Only about 17% of the surveyed households (flats/houses larger than 75 m²) ensure a space standard that crosses the mentioned pathological threshold for their members.

The crowded nature of these living spaces is indicated by the fact that in 21% of cases these are spaces without functional divisions e.g., these homes do not have separate bedrooms (see table 4). The remaining constructions most often have only one to two bedrooms (64% of surveyed households) while only 14% have three or more bedrooms. The fact that household members do not have their own bed in 45% of the surveyed households is additional confirmation of the inhumane crowdedness of Romani living spaces (see table 5).

Not one	21.6
One	38.5
Two	25.9
Three	8.6
Four and over	5.5

Source: Field study 2004

Table 4

Number of bedrooms (%)

No	45.0
Yes	55.0

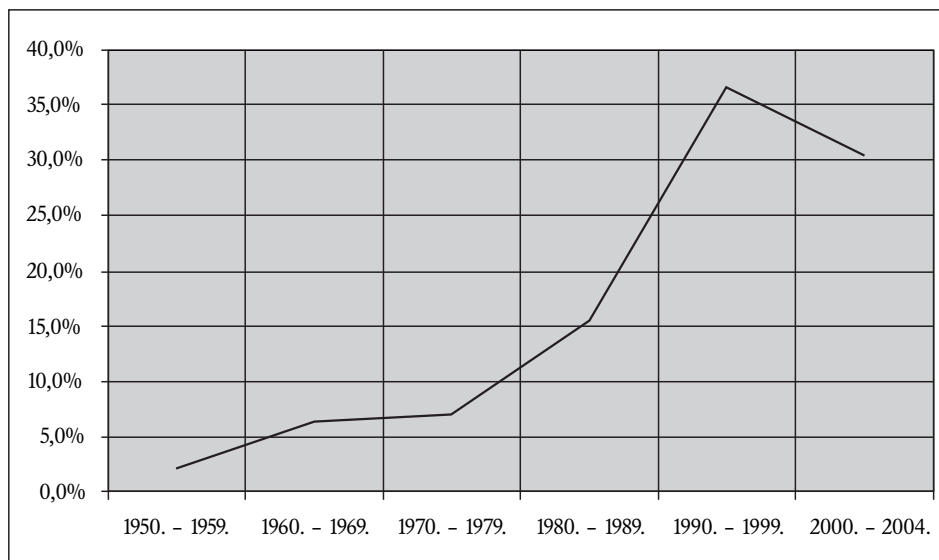
Source: Field study 2004

Table 5

Does each member of the household have their own bed? (%)

Age of housing. The year of construction or last adaptation shows that the housing in this sample is relatively new. Two thirds of the structures were built or had their last major adaptation in the period following 1990 and almost 30% of these were in last five years (see diagram 1). New buildings are more common in the County of Istria where 83% of structures have been built or thoroughly renovated since 1990. The oldest examples of housing can be found in the County of Osijek-Baranja (see table 6). However, to a large extent, new structures are less than 20 m²; alarmingly, almost a third of this *new construction* is this size (see table 7).

Diagram 1
 The dynamics of
 construction/adaptation of
 housing objects



Source: Field study 2004

Table 6
 Year of construction (or last
 alteration) of housing
 structure (%)

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Until 1949	8.2	2.2	.0	.0	.0	5.5	5.0	.0	2.2
1950 - 1959	2.1	2.2	1.3	.0	.0	11.0	1.7	.0	2.1
1960 - 1969	8.2	2.2	2.7	5.1	10.8	25.3	.0	2.0	6.4
1970 - 1979	4.1	7.7	5.3	10.3	8.6	12.1	.0	5.4	7.0
1980 - 1989	19.6	12.1	10.7	26.9	18.3	15.4	10.0	14.4	15.4
1990 - 1999	41.2	38.5	30.7	26.9	32.3	15.4	51.7	43.6	36.5
2000 - 2004	16.5	35.2	49.3	30.8	30.1	15.4	31.7	34.7	30.4

Source: Field study 2004

Area of residential space	%
Up to 10 m ²	11.9
10-20 m ²	19.8
20-35 m ²	18.8
35-50 m ²	16.0
50-75 m ²	16.3
75 m ² and over	17.2

Source: Field study 2004

Table 7

Construction from 1990 in relation to housing space area

Equipment and facilities of living spaces. Access to public utilities such as electricity, waterworks and sewerage are definitely among the most important services that facilitate proper functioning of dwellings. 74% of households have electricity, 51% have running water and 21% have sewerage in the sample (see table 8). It needs to be noted that sewerage is not a common public utility in rural villages in Croatia and a considerable number of locations where this survey was conducted are in fact of a rural character. In these situations, rural households have septic tanks but this is not common in Romani settlements. If they do exist, they are rarely built properly.

Water supply is very poor; 49% of the surveyed households do not have running water in their homes. Some households (precisely half of the households that do not have connections to waterworks) compensate this deficiency by using wells or water pumps in their yards. Moreover, the surroundings of these Romani settlements is extremely polluted, which puts the Roma at risk, especially in terms of their health.

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Electricity	79.5	67.7	51.3	91.1	80.0	91.9	76.5	61.8	73.9
Waterworks	57.1	60.4	13.8	82.2	59.0	52.5	76.5	24.9	51.1
Well or pump in yard	25.2	42.7	60.0	4.4	32.0	45.5	13.4	51.6	35.3
Sewerage	53.6	6.3	8.8	13.3	8.0	25.0	77.6	3.7	21.2
Kitchen	67.0	65.3	57.5	85.6	63.6	85.0	86.7	52.5	66.8
Bathroom	58.9	22.9	17.5	65.6	32.0	38.0	77.6	18.0	36.7
Indoor toilet	57.1	16.7	7.5	70.0	32.0	41.0	76.0	12.4	33.9
Outdoor toilet	33.9	72.9	60.0	41.1	88.0	86.0	36.5	59.5	59.4
Fridge	76.8	40.6	49.4	95.5	81.0	83.0	90.8	34.7	63.0
Freezer	46.4	66.7	58.8	48.9	66.0	51.0	67.0	66.8	58.7

Table 8

Level of household equipment/facilities by counties (%)

Table 8
 (continued)

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Washing machine	58.9	16.7	25.0	73.3	62.0	55.0	71.4	48.8	50.1
Television	83.9	81.3	80.0	96.7	96.0	90.0	87.8	79.3	85.0
Video or DVD	53.6	25.0	12.5	59.6	55.0	31.0	62.2	14.3	36.0
Bicycle	47.3	74.0	63.8	20.2	90.0	74.0	44.8	73.7	63.5
Motorcycle	5.4	2.1	2.5	2.2	6.1	2.0	8.2	2.8	3.6
Car	46.4	46.9	35.0	37.1	32.0	22.0	39.8	19.4	32.5
Holiday house	.9	.0	5.1	.0	3.0	5.0	8.2	.0	2.2
PC	9.8	.0	.0	5.7	7.1	3.0	15.6	.5	4.4
Satellite antenna	30.4	5.2	15.0	65.2	31.0	14.0	57.1	6.5	23.5
Telephone	36.9	40.6	43.8	58.9	37.0	52.0	30.2	27.6	38.8
Mobile phone	68.8	25.0	28.8	65.6	41.0	39.0	79.6	21.7	42.4
Radio	64.9	60.4	62.5	73.0	81.0	85.0	84.5	55.8	69.1

Source: Field study 2004

Only 18% of all surveyed households have all three public utilities (electricity, running water and sewerage) – in other words, they live in minimum hygienic conditions (see table 9). On the other hand, as many as 21% of the surveyed households live in conditions that are anachronic to say in the least – they do not have one single public utility. Romani households with no public utilities are mostly in the Counties of Varaždin (approx. 42%) and Međimurje (approx. 34%).

Table 9
 Share of households that
 have connections to
 electricity, running water
 and sewerage (%)

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Households with all three connections	46.4	4.2	3.8	13.3	8.0	23.2	70.4	2.8	18.6
Households without one connection	15.2	21.9	42.5	6.7	17.0	6.1	16.3	34.6	20.9

Source: Field study 2004

This aforementioned data reveals the poor hygienic conditions that a significant number of Romani households live in. Additional proof of this is the following: only 36% of households have a bathroom and 33% have an indoor toilet. Outdoor toilets are more common: 56%

of households in the sample have outdoor facilities. However, these types of toilets are often improvised and accomplish the opposite effect – pollute the environment and are often the source of disease. Moreover, it needs to be emphasised that 17% of Romani households do not have an indoor or outdoor toilet. All this indicates a lack of sanitary-hygienic conditions essential for a normal life. A distinct lack of these facilities was noted once again in the Counties of Međimurje and Varaždin.

It needs to be emphasised that the analysis shows that only 4% of households in the sample have facilities that guarantee a hygienic standard necessary for a normal life, that is, a household equipped with all the essential public utilities (running water, electricity, and sewerage) as well as a bathroom and indoor toilet.

Results also show that a significant share of households (between 50% and 63%) own a fridge, freezer and washing machine. 85% of the surveyed households have a television, even more than those households that have connections to electricity. This is not rare because Romani households that do not have their own electricity often access their neighbour's with an extension cord. Most often they do not have their own connection or they cannot afford to pay their electricity bills. On the other hand, their homes may have been unlawfully built and lack the necessary documentation for connection to public utilities.

Out of transport means, the bicycle is the most represented; 63% of households have a bicycle while 32% of the surveyed households have a car. It is interesting to note that the mobile phone is more common (42%) than the telephone (38% of the households in this sample have a connection). Holiday houses, motorcycles and personal computers are 'luxuries' to most of the respondents.

Perception of housing conditions among respondents

The subjective perception of their own situation, especially in the case of specific communities that have special cultural patterns, seems to be an important aspect worth examining. The previous analysis of objective indicators shows that the state of housing in the sample is devastating and it is difficult to expect that respondents are satisfied with the existing housing situation. However, in response to a question on the biggest problems of the household, poor housing conditions were in third place (see table 10). This per se should not be so surprising because poverty and unemployment are most often considered to be the biggest problems of the household. In a sense, they objectively are the major

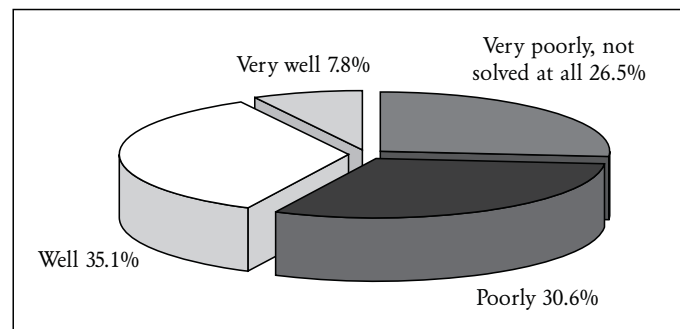
problems because they in many ways generate all other problems. However, what is surprising is that only 33% of the respondents perceive poor housing conditions as a big problem of their household. This is particularly unusual since 95% of households live in housing conditions that are spatially and in terms of equipment and facilities or in some other way – substandard.

Table 10
 The biggest problems of the household (%)

	%
Poor material status (shortage, poverty)	64.1
Poor family health	19.6
Difficulty with schooling of children	8.0
Poor housing conditions	33.1
Long distance to work	2.5
Unemployment	46.5
Overburdened women (job, family obligations)	3.9

* two responses were possible
 Source: Field study 2004

Diagram 2
 How have housing problems been solved according to respondents?



Source: Field study 2004

Results show that 57% of the respondents rated that their housing problems had been solved poorly and very poorly. Moreover, even though it was estimated that 17% of households have adequate living surface area and that only 4% have adequately equipped homes to ensure the requisite sanitary conditions, nearly 43% of respondents think their housing problems were solved well and very well. It can be concluded from these results that ‘a roof over one’s head’ it seems is enough for satisfaction. This is confirmed by the data in table 11 that shows that almost a quarter of the respondents (that live in households that are less than 20 m²) consider that their housing problems have been solved.

Area of residential space	Well and very well
Up to 10 m ²	24.1
10-20 m ²	23.6
20-35 m ²	33.0
35-50 m ²	42.5
50-75 m ²	65.4
75 m ² and over	65.7

Source: Field study 2004

Table 11
How have housing problems
been solved with regard to
the area of their dwelling (%)

Research results show that respondents most often mention that a lack of equipment and facilities in a dwelling is a big problem; 63% of the respondents claimed that a poorly equipped dwelling (lack of water, gas and electricity) is a definite housing problem (see table 12). However, excluding the mentioned dissatisfaction, respondents more often link the main housing problems with the setting and atmosphere of their settlement rather than features of their housing. Thus, the polluted air and environment, ugly appearance of the settlement and its poor maintenance as well poor conditions for marginal groups (children, the elderly...) are perceived more frequently as definite problems rather than particular housing conditions. The location of these settlements is considered by 36% of the respondents as definitely problematic. One would expect more dissatisfaction since their homes are often on other people's land, spatially isolated and located in dangerous zones.

Table 12
Definite housing problems
according to the respondents

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Too small living space	47.3	49.0	62.5	54.4	41.0	47.0	43.9	64.5	53.6
Unsuitable interior arrangement	44.6	45.3	57.5	63.3	41.0	34.0	42.9	53.0	49.0
Poorly equipped dwelling (lack of water, gas and electricity)	51.8	68.4	78.8	73.3	60.0	53.0	29.6	77.0	62.9
Dampness and dilapidated condition of dwelling	46.8	36.8	47.5	67.8	43.0	49.0	46.9	51.6	49.1
Difficult accessibility to dwelling (awkward location)	25.0	18.9	25.0	66.7	33.0	29.3	16.7	29.0	30.4
Ugly or abandoned residential building	30.4	20.0	28.8	62.2	13.1	26.0	28.6	24.9	28.9
High expenditures for dwelling (high rent, overheads)	42.9	46.3	22.5	46.7	33.0	41.0	58.2	38.6	41.6
Unpleasant neighbours	15.5	11.6	22.8	6.7	17.0	7.0	14.4	15.7	14.7
Poorly equipped settlement (lack of shops, school)	25.9	77.1	65.0	55.6	69.0	49.0	15.3	56.7	51.9

Table 12
(continued)

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Ugly appearance and poorly maintained settlement	40.2	77.1	87.5	76.7	71.0	43.0	21.4	52.1	57.2
Polluted air and environment	50.9	88.5	86.3	55.6	75.0	38.0	19.4	56.5	58.1
Unsuitable location	25.0	41.7	46.8	56.7	41.0	25.3	14.4	36.3	36.6
Poor conditions for children in the settlement	42.0	77.1	77.5	71.1	74.0	77.0	26.8	61.1	62.4
Poor conditions for women	36.6	71.9	72.5	70.0	64.6	56.0	25.5	50.0	54.7
Poor conditions for the elderly	43.8	76.0	77.2	70.0	69.0	71.7	27.8	55.3	60.1

Source: Field study 2004

Besides poorly equipped dwellings, living spaces that are too small are frequently perceived as another deficiency. 53% of respondents perceive this as a definite problem followed by dampness and a dilapidated condition of the dwelling as well as unsuitable interior arrangement, which are perceived as big problems to half of the respondents. Around 40% of the respondents mention high expenditures as a definite problem. Difficult accessibility to dwellings (within the settlement) and the ugly appearance of buildings/houses are problems that are mentioned by about 30% of respondents. Only 15% of respondents in this sample have problems with unpleasant neighbours. Problems related to housing are considerably more frequent in the Counties of Primorje-Gorski kotar and Međimurje while in the Counties of Sisak-Moslavina and Varaždin, the main housing problems are linked to the features of the settlement.

The residential aspirations of the respondents

Analysis showed that the most desirable type of dwelling is a house with a vegetable plot and yard. This was first choice among 93% of respondents (see table 13). Respondents almost equally have aspirations to live in either a village or town, although the rural setting was somewhat more appealing (55%). With regard to distribution by county, the choice of a rural or urban settling was linked to current place of living. A more frequently expressed aspiration to live in a town was expressed by respondents who now live at locations within town settlements in the Counties of Istria, Primorje-Gorski kotar and Zagreb.

Table 13

Where would respondents from different counties like to live? (%)

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Total sample
Close to the town centre*	83.1	86.1	85.7	67.2	83.3	77.5	77.6	81.8	79.1
Away from town centre*	16.9	13.9	14.3	32.8	16.7	22.5	22.4	18.2	20.9
In an older part of the town with classical (traditional) architecture*	31.7	38.9	21.4	35.5	14.6	32.5	22.2	27.9	28.5
In a newer settlement with modern architecture*	68.3	61.1	78.6	64.5	85.4	67.5	77.8	72.1	71.5
In a house with a vegetable plot and yard	94.5	96.9	94.9	96.4	90.0	96.0	87.9	93.5	93.5
In a residential building or family house without a vegetable plot and yard	5.5	3.1	5.1	3.6	10.0	4.0	12.1	6.5	6.5
In a big town*	90.4	91.7	92.9	96.9	80.9	92.5	85.1	84.1	90.4
In a smaller or small town*	9.6	8.3	7.1	3.1	19.1	7.5	14.9	15.9	9.6
In a Romani settlement	22.9	45.8	57.0	55.3	47.0	46.0	19.2	48.1	44.3
In some other (non-Romani) settlement	77.1	54.2	43.0	44.7	53.0	54.0	80.8	51.9	55.7
In a village	24.5	62.5	82.3	5.7	52.0	60.0	17.0	79.2	54.8
In a town	75.5	37.5	17.7	94.3	48.0	40.0	83.0	20.8	45.2

* Only respondents that expressed that they would like to live in towns are included in the analysis.

Source: Field study 2004

Respondents who are more inclined to live in an urban setting (58%) would more often choose a big rather than a small town. While there seems to be some uncertainty about living in a big or small town that cannot be said about living on the periphery or in the centre of a town – nearly 80% of the respondents that would prefer to live in a town would also prefer to live closer to the centre. In addition, these *urbanites* would prefer to live in a newer settlement as confirmed by 72% of the respondents. Based on these ratings, it can be concluded that there is a group among the Roma, even though this is a minority group, whose residential aspirations tell us that their desired place of living is considerably different from where they now live.

A desire for change is confirmed by the fact that more than half of the respondents (55%) who now live in settlements that are predominantly inhabited by the Roma are willing to live in a non-Romani settlement. Town, a non-Romani settlement, newer settlements with modern architecture, closer to the centre of the town – these are all images and motives that reflect that this

Table 14
 Living preferences among
 respondents with different
 levels of education

	No schooling	1-4 grades	Unfinished primary school	Primary school	Secondary school	Total sample	P
Close to the town centre*	65.7	59.6	69.0	72.7	71.2	66.4	.074
Away from town centre*	34.3	40.4	31.0	27.3	28.8	33.6	
In an older part of the town with classical (traditional) architecture*	44.0	41.3	29.6	31.6	28.8	37.2	.004
In a newer settlement with modern architecture*	56.0	58.7	70.4	68.4	71.2	62.8	
In a Romani settlement	54.7	46.7	46.0	26.0	25.9	44.4	.000
In some other (non-Romani) settlement	45.3	53.3	54.0	74.0	74.1	55.6	
In a village	60.0	67.3	51.7	37.2	38.5	54.9	.000
In a town	40.0	32.7	48.3	62.8	61.5	45.1	

Source: Field study 2004

Concluding remarks

This analysis has shown that the housing conditions at locations where the Roma have settled are exceptionally poor. First, there is a lack of housing units, which indicates that a large share of households live in barracks and huts. Poverty is evident since 29% of surveyed households accommodate several families. Thus, it can be assumed that many of them cannot realise basic housing aspirations, especially younger members who cannot live on their own (Bežovan, 1987). However, besides the fact that the existing housing is inadequate, the space standard is very low; there is a lack of living space and rooms. Dwellings are very poorly equipped and a lack of public utilities (electricity, running water) and facilities (bathroom and toilet) is evident. Residential structures often have earth floors. Moreover, walls even if they are made of proper building materials often do not provide insulation. All in all, housing conditions are so poor that they are often below the level of human dignity.

In the Counties of Varaždin and Međimurje, it was shown that housing in Romani settlements most often does not have features that are not compatible with standards of civilisation. Evidently, these locations of settled Roma are poorly equipped and to a greater measure have been abandoned in these counties. Settlements that stand out are Donja Dubrava (County of Međimurje) and Sveti Đurđ (County of Varaždin).

In summary, existing housing is inadequate, the space standard is very low and the level of equipment is very poor. All this indicates that these households, in most cases, do not fulfil the required functions of a normal life, for example eating and sleeping. This is commonly housing that, apart from the mentioned deficiencies does not offer the most basic need – security – and in this way does not fulfil conditions of being a shelter let alone a living space. On the other hand, according to the subjective evaluations of the respondents, although they voiced dissatisfaction with the housing situation, it is often not that dramatic as would be expected considering the mentioned features of their housing. This reflects a particular resignation that is present among the respondents. However, in a similar way, *in light of the expressed residential aspirations, it is evident that there is a group of respondents who would like to live differently.* Ideas about a desirable lifestyle are opposite to the housing practices and the scenery that Romani settlements offer. Moreover, it was shown that these aspirations are often linked to a higher level of education.

In this way, it was shown that raising the level of education is imperative and the only guarantee of modernisation of the Romani community. Abandonment of traditional patterns of behaviour is necessary since these habits often threaten the health and welfare of the individual, family and the whole community. *Therefore it is difficult to expect a better life standard without a change within the Romani cultural code. Thus, it is necessary to include the Roma in modernisation processes and in this way ensure the necessary preconditions to boost the general quality of life in the settlements where they live.*

¹ Locations in the City of Zagreb as well as the County of Zagreb are included.

FOOTNOTE