3rd EMES-Polanyi International Seminar

EMES events

Welfare societies in transition
Roskilde, 16-17 April 2018

Rural social and solidarity economy initiatives from Central and Eastern Europe – In contexts of peripheralisation to what extent may participation be a reality?

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Roskilde, April 2018

COST

**EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

Funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework
Programme of the European Union

EMES Conferences selected papers

2018

Rural social and solidarity economy initiatives from Central and Eastern Europe – In contexts of peripheralisation to what extent may participation be a reality?

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1. Introduction

Social and solidarity economy has been studied empirically and theoretically both from the global South and Global North (eg. Coraggio et al. 2015, Laville 2014). In spite of the increasing interest in SSE globally, little is known about rural social and solidarity economy (SSE) initiatives emerging in post-socialist countries. This paper focuses on social and solidarity economy initiatives emerging in peripheralised rural villages of Central and Eastern Europe. The main aim of this paper is to better understand how participation may be realised in villages undergoing peripheralisation (such as loss of social capital due to selective out-migration, lack of local purchasing power due to economic decline, shrinking public infrastructure). Two social enterprises have been selected from peripheralised villages of Central and Eastern Europe. Both have a participatory approach, but the initiatives differ regarding the level of marginalisation of their local stakeholders. In the first case a complex development program has been created for and by the Roma and non-Roma inhabitants of a Hungarian village undergoing advanced peripheralisation (or what Hungarian researchers label as "ghettoization"). As through processes of peripheralisation the symmetric structures of reciprocity (Polanyi 1971) have already been destroyed in the community, the key initiator of social and solidarity economy who is a representative of a local Foundation comes outside of the village. In the second case, cheap land and the proximity of nature in a village of a peripheralised region of North-Eastern Germany provided an attractive environment for ecologically-minded people searching for a rural alternative for their urban lifestyles. The newcomers ("Zugezogene") have created an alternative village school organized around the idea of environmental sustainability. Mobilising the concepts of empowerment through a capability-based approach, the aim of this paper is to better understand in what ways participation can be realized by and for the inhabitants of villages undergoing peripheralisation. Ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, interviews with the key actors of the initiatives and documentary analysis help in better understanding how participation is reached, practiced, developed and increased in rural SSE initiatives.

2. Theorising peripheralisation and empowerment

2.1. Peripheralisation, a multi-dimensional, self-reinforcing process

To better understand regional polarisation, spatial researchers are turning to the concept of "peripheralisation". While "periphery" is a rather static notion, with the term "peripheralisation", the dynamics behind processes in which "peripheries" are produced through various social relations, can be grasped (Kühn 2015). While researchers who focus on peripheries are interested in remote locations or spaces with sparse populations, researchers of peripheralisation focus on the political, economic, social and communicative processes through which peripheries are made. Based on this multi-dimensional approach to peripheralisation, peripheries are not only determined by geographical location or the quality of the transport infrastructure (Kühn and Weck 2013: 24), but they are socially produced too, through the process of peripheralisation, which is driven by the action of certain actors. Peripheralisation is the result of purposive decisions and their – often unintended – side effects (Leibert and Golinski 2016: 257). Based on this multi-dimensional approach, peripheries are produced and reproduced through mechanisms of out-migration, disconnection, dependence, stigmatisation (Kühn and Weck 2013: 24) and social exclusion (Leibert and Golinski 2016). A person, a group or an area might all be subjected to the process of peripheralisation (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013: 207).

Consequently, peripheralisation is not an independent process, but a logical consequence of centralisation (Leibert and Golinski 2016: 257). Centralisation and peripheralisation are charachterised by antithetic socio-spatial processes, such as authonomy-dependency, inclusion-exclusion, hegemony-stigmatisation, growth-decline, in-migration-out-migration (Kühn 2015: 375). Centralisation therefore results in the concentration of people, economic and political power and infrastructure in metropolitan regions at the expense of other, often rural regions.

2.1.1. Stigmatisation

As Lang (2013, 2015: 176) argues regional development policy is always normative (even if its arguments are based on empirical data) and framed by individual and collective values linked to specific understandings and conceptualisations of development, desired policy outcomes and funding priorities. "Such understandings, conceptualisations and priorities can be seen as the results of discourses linked to particular governance arrangements which are only partly state-led." (ibid) As perceptions of desirable forms of socio-spatial development are socially constructed and are only partially the results of rational reasoning, areas, groups and people can get subjected to stigmatisation in development discourses. In certain development discourses, through overlooking the structural processes causing the structural weaknesses, remote rural areas get stigmatised as "declining", "backward", "lagging-behind", "non-innovative".

Demographisation is a current discourse in German regional policy justifying the phasing out of public and economic infrastructure from remote, rural settlements.

> "The government of the Land should communicate in ["structurally weak regions"] that an ongoing emptying-out is inevitable in the long run. Trying to prevent it would possibly be considerably more expensive than to allow it or even support it" (Steffens and Kröhnert 2009: 219).

Through portraying remote, rural areas as having absolutely nothing worth preserving the demographisation discourse implicitly stigmatises areas undergoing demographic decline (Leibert and Golinski 2016: 264).

Hungarian regional policy during socialism provides an example for the interconnectedness of stigmatisation, decisions about decreasing public infrastructure (disconnection) (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013) and selective out-migration. During socialism settlements under 3000 inhabitants were purposefully neglected and ideologically stigmatised as "relicts of feudalism" in Hungarian regional "development" policies (Bajmócy et al. 2007: 2, G. Fekete 2005: 484, G. Fekete 2015: 8). 2070 settlements with all of the small settlements have been graded as "other" (non-functional) in the National Territorial Development Policy (OTK, 1971) in Hungary. This conscious dismantling through development policies has led to inadequate infrastructure, poor living conditions, lack of employment opportunities, weak public transport which resulted in a mass and rapid selective out-migration from these villages already during socialism (Kulcsár, 1976, Bajmócy et al., 2007).

There is a risk that the inhabitants of demographically and economically declining rural regions themselves incorporate the negative perception of their villages.

> "Feelings of being left behind and forgotten, of living in a place that has had its days can affect regional identities and lead to senses of hopelessness, a "*mental peripheralisation*" (*Kühn and Weck* 2013: 39) that blocks innovation and creates isolated milieus as well as increases apathy of the population (*Reichert-Schick* 2013: 37)." (Leibert and Golinski 2017: 264)

Stigmatisation of areas can therefore make local people think the only way to counteract peripheralisation is to leave their villages. Selective out-migration on the macro-level and individual decisions about leaving a village on the micro-level are therefore tightly interconnected with stigmatisation.

2.1.2. Out-migration

Local actors develop responses to peripheralisation. With a hope to escape long-term unemployment people may decide to leave their villages (selective out-migration).

Those small settlements of rural areas that were stigmatised and consciously dismantled in state-socialist regional development policies (see in section 2.1.1.) have fallen further behind since 1989 (G. Fekete 2015: 8, Kovács 2012: 581). Disadvantages (combination of infrastructural deficits, an obsolete economic structure and a lack of human resources) rooted in socialist "development" policies made it impossible to these villages to compete in a neoliberal environment (G. Fekete 2015: 9). The selective out-migration of young people and the local intelligentsia, as well, as selective in-migration of marginalised groups, ageing and structural and demographic decline has started in socialism and further amplifed in the post-socialist period (Leibert 2013: 113; G. Fekete 2015: 9).

Out-migration is interconnected with dependence and social exclusion. On an individual level, through accessing paid work, migration is considered as "the only way out from social and spatial marginality and the existing systems of dependencies" (Nagy et al. 2015a: 149). "Those, who stay behind join the group of those who are marginalised in various social nexuses, and become dependent on local agents and institutional practices" (Nagy et al. 2015a: 149). Due to selective out-migration, processes of the concentration of immobile population (elderly people, people of Roma ethnic minority in Hungary, "undereducated", long-time unemployed) can be observed in peripheral rural areas (Leibert 2013: 115). In addition to selective out-migration, a selective in-migration of the rural poor, dominantly impoverished Roma people can also be observed in remote, rural villages of Hungary. In regions with a small settlement structure not just the ratio of elderly people as in German rural peripheries, but also the ratio of children (under the age of 14) is extraordinary high (G. Fekete 2015: 12). These typically Roma children (either they consider themselves Roma or the society considers them Roma) are often born in deep poverty and the Hungarian educational system or social and employment policy provides little chance for these kids to escape poverty.

Instead of looking at structural mechanisms and processes through which deep poverty is reproduced in rural peripheries, Roma people often get stigmatised in the media or in public and everyday discourses. A good example of this stigmatisation comes from high-level politics:

> "(…) the most pressing aspect or consequence of demographic issues – beyond the fact that not enough children are born, and the society faces aging – is, those kids who are born, where (in what families) they are born." – said Zoltán Balogh, the Minister of the Ministry of Human Capacities (Papp 2014).
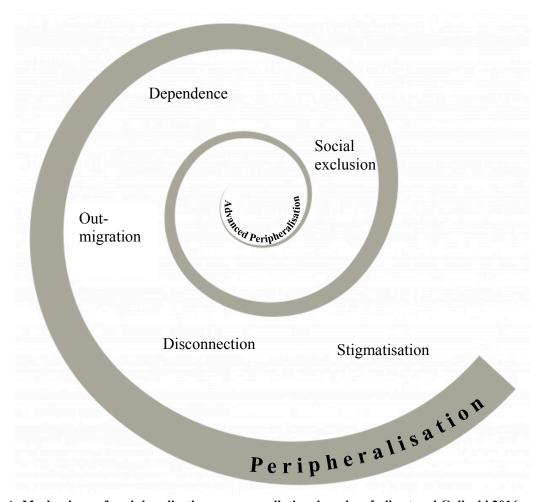
Figure 1: Mechanisms of peripheralisation, own compilation, based on Leibert and Golinski 2016

2.1.3. Disconnection

Conceptualisations of development, desired policy outcomes and funding priorities shape regional policies and investment decisions. As a result stigmatised rural villages face economic decline and shrinking of public infrastructure leading to the increasing disconnection of these areas.

Economic shrinking. The collapse of the socialist heavy industry, agricultural cooperatives and the shutdown of extraction industries contributed to the economic decline of remote, rural areas in CEE too. After the regime change rural areas in Central and Eastern European countries were hit by a severe long-lasting labour market crisis and long-term unemployment became a characteristic issue in these areas affecting people with a lower level of formal education. As an overall result of economic shrinking, finding jobs locally becomes increasingly challenging for people living in areas undergoing peripheralisation. Actors with economic power are unlikely to decide to bring their investments in these areas.

Infrastructural shrinking. Rural areas in post-socialist countries are also facing infrastructural marginalisation, which is reflected by the phasing out of public transport and the centralisation of public services, health care facilities, shops and employment opportunities in urban areas and medium-sized towns (Leibert 2013: 106-107; Naumann and Reichert-Schick 2013: 159). In an effort to cut public spending, public authorities are less and less

willing to provide non-cost effective basic services in rural regions, while private enterprises are not interested in filling the gap left by the receding state. The shrinking quality and quantity of public service provision is often justified by demographic shrinking (demographisation).

2.1.4. Dependence

By linking the concept of peripheralisation with the concept of marginalisation, Fisher-Tahir and Naumann (2013: 18) point out that "periheralisation refers to a spatially organized inequality of power relations and access to material and symbolic goods that constructs and perpetuates the precedence of the centres over areas that are marginalised".

Kühn (2015: 305) understands marginality as a multidimensional process, which covers aspects of inadequate integration, lower development and economic, social, political and cultural disadvantages (Jones, Leimburger & Nel, 2007 in Kühn 2015: 305). However, Kühn does not expand on what is to be understood under "lower development". In contrast to Kühn, Nagy et al. (2015a: 138) look at the structures causing "lower development". Peripheralisation, through the lens of a critical political economy approach, helps to reveal the mechanisms reproducing peripherality, such as centre-periphery relations or multiple dependencies. Based on their embedding into various political, cultural or ethnic contexts and historical trajectories the more and less powerful agents are in certain relations with each other and develop strategies, which shape their system of dependencies (Nagy et al. 2015: 137). Multiple and uneven social relations that weaken integrative mechanisms and social cohesion result in marginalisation (Williams 2005, Sharp 2011 in Nagy et al. 2015a). Marginality under neoliberal capitalism "manifests in a weak bargaining power in labour market processes and in limited access to public goods provided by the shrinking state that (re)produces poverty and makes it increasingly segmented and exclusionary" (Ward 2004, Váradi 2005 in Nagy et al. 2015a: 138).

Space (urban, rural, public, private etc.) and place (particularly place of residence) has a growing influence on social inequalities. The polarisation of the economic spatial structure, local communities losing control of their direct environment (and usually on goods connected to local space) and an increasing, widening social group, that is excluded from public services are the causes and results of the strengthening and reproduction of processes resulting in growing social inequalities/ socio-spatial polarisation (Nagy and Virág 2015: 173).

2.1.5. Social exclusion

People and groups can be subjected to social exclusion, which is a term referring to a process, a status and a relation. The relational aspect is the most important element of the term, as it refers to the unequal distribution of power resulting in the protection of the social status for a certain group in a way that other groups get into a deprived position (Szalai 2002). Social exclusion can be transcribed in very high levels of long-term and youth unemployment, child poverty and strong dependency on transfer payments (Leibert and Golinski 2016, 262). Intersectionality theory is a promising concept and analytical tool to

explore the intertwining features of class, gender, ethnicity (Kóczé 2011, 2) and space resulting in the social exclusion of certain groups of people. Growing social inequalities simultaneously result and are caused by the polarisation of the economic spatial structure, local communities losing control of their direct environment (and usually on goods connected to local space) and an increasing, widening social group, that is excluded from public services (Nagy and Virág 2015, 173).

Social exclusion is a term that fosters the understanding of peripheralisation. However not only inhabitants of peripheralised rural areas may be affected by social exclusion, research shows that many of the inhabitants of peripheralised areas in rural East Germany (eg. Laschewski 2009, Beetz et al. 2008, Beetz et al. 2005, Reichert-Schick 2010) and rural Hungary (Koós 2015, Kovács 2010, 2012; Dusek, Lukács, and Rácz 2014; Pénzes 2015) are socially excluded as well. Intersectionality theory, which is a newly emerging critical feminist approach helping to describe the various forms of inequalities through institutional and representational dynamics (Kóczé 2011, 2), helps to better understand how certain factors, such as ethnicity, class, gender or place of residence influence marginality. In line with the intersectionality theory Szalai (2002) argues that two main types of social exclusion connected to a "shared destiny" can be distinguished in Hungary. One affects people living in isolated small villages in Northeast and Southwest Hungary. These villages are the results of the unequal historical development of the Hungarian settlement structure and are hit by economic deprivation and high unemployment rate. The other type of social exclusion affects impoverished Roma, accounting for approximately 60%-80% of the total Roma population. Roma inhabitants of isolated small villages experience social exclusion therefore in multiple ways.

2.2. Advanced peripheralisation

The five dimensions of peripheralisation are interrelated and they often accelerate eachothers effects resulting in advanced peripheralisation. In contrast to Wacquant's theory of advanced marginality (Wacquant 1996, 2008), the concept of advanced peripheralisation is used in this work to emphasise that peripheralisation is relational and amongst others national welfare policies, the history of ethnic-based oppression or the ways a locality is embedded into Global Production Networks influence it as well.

Even though the post-socialist transition has resulted in the peripheralisation of remote, rural settlements in structurally weak areas of Central and Eastern Europe, peripheralisation seems to have different "stages", based on the national context it influences rural areas to a different extent. While as a result of socio-spatial polarisation processes within the rural spaces of Hungary, economic decline and ethnic exclusion produced contagious "ghettoes" in the last two decades (G. Fekete 2005, Smith and Timár 2010, Virág 2010), in the German context the phenomenon of a "rural ghetto" does not exist. The notion of advanced peripheralisation helps to underline that there are cases when socio-spatial marginalisation produces "rural ghettoes", which are abandoned by the mainstream society, political decision-makers or by mainstream economic actors.

The uneven social, economic and territorial development in Hungary created "internal colonies" where disadvantaged people, within which Roma are overrepresented, were locked into a "ghetto", or in other words, into socially and economically deprived spaces (Kóczé 2011, 129-130). In the Hungarian academy, the concept of "ghetto" has been imported from the American social science literature (Ladányi and Szelényi et al. 2004; Virág 2010). Váradi and Virág (2015, 90) applies Wacquant's definition of a "ghetto": (1) The area can be clearly distinguished from the other parts of the settlement; (2) the area and people living there are stigmatised by the majority society; (3) families living in the area moved there not based-on their free decision, but due to an economic, administrative or a symbolic constraint; (4) they use a parallel institutional system, which is hermeneutically sealed from the mainstream society. The spatially separated social and institutional system of a ghetto serves on one hand the economic exploitation of the excluded group, on the other hand protects the majority society from the contact and therefore from the symbolic dangers associated with the people living in the "ghetto". As the notion of a "ghetto" can be stigmatising, has several meanings and it has a different image in the United States and Hungary the concept of advanced peripheralisation is proposed to refer to the process that Hungarian scholars labelled as "ghettoization".

Any action to counteract peripheralisation can not be undertaken without the local stakeholders social change hast to be reached with them through deliberation, thus is centered around the concept of "autonomy" and "empowerment". Furthermore economic (in a Polanyian sense) and environmental issues need to be considered, the analysis of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, but an elaboration about it can be found in the dissertation of the author.

2.3. Autonomy and empowerment

For marginalised communities it is "often difficult to gain access to processes of political decision-making from which they may be culturally, educationally, and linguistically, as well as physically, remote" (Amin et al. 2002, 17). As Mészáros (2013, 92) puts it, even though resources can be recognised within an area (in people, nature, geographic location, infrastructure), locals might not possess or might not have access to these resources. In terms of the Hungarian situation, Mészáros argues that discussing social capital or trust is rather philosophical in a context "where decision-makers clearly do not trust in the competences of locals" (Mészáros 2013, 93).

The lack of decision-makers trust in local agents' competences may justify objectionably paternalistic and coercive forms of policy intervention. Mackenzie (2014a, 33) argues though that many forms of vulnerability (marginality) are caused or exacerbated by political structures. For this reason the obligation to foster autonomy is a matter of social justice and that capabilities theory provides the most promising theoretical framework for articulating this claim and for promoting democratic equality (ibid.). The aim of this section is to build up an argument, that on a personal and community level, empowerment (understood as capability development) has a potential in counteracting the peripheralisation of people, groups and areas. Autonomy is a key concept if one aims to better understand in what ways

empowerment may counteract processes of peripheralisation. For this reason individual autonomy and the capability-based approach, and collective autonomy and decision-making will be theorised, as well as the concept of solidarity. Autonomy, empowerment and the related key concepts will be then elaborated on regrading social and solidarity economy and social enterprises.

2.3.1. Theorising autonomy and empowerment

The rhetoric of individual autonomy, personal responsibility, and the minimal state often functions to mask social injustice, structural inequality, and corrosive disadvantage and it shifts the onus of responsibility for redressing these problems away from the state and onto individuals (Mackenzie 2010). For this reason the libertarian conception of autonomy associated with this rhetoric should be rejected (Mackenzie 2014a, 41).

However, from a different, relational view of autonomy—understood as both the capacity to lead a self-determining life and the status of being recognised as an autonomous agent by others—is crucial for a flourishing life in contemporary liberal democratic societies (Mackenzie 2014a, 41, Veltman and Piper 2014). In this sense, autonomy is an important concept for achieving democratic equality (Mackenzie 2014a). If autonomy is understood relationally then the apparent opposition between responding to vulnerability and promoting autonomy dissolves and, second, that duties of protection to mitigate vulnerability must be informed by the overall background aim of fostering autonomy whenever possible (Mackenzie 2014a, 41).

A relational approach to autonomy, suggests that autonomy should not "be confused with isolation or separation from society" (Fineman 2010, 260), it rather involves social and reciprocal duties to others and "as desirable as autonomy is as an aspiration, it cannot be attained without an underlying provision of substantial assistance, subsidy and support from society and its institutions, which give individuals the resources they need to create options and to make choices" (ibid.).

Responding to vulnerability by promoting autonomy is a matter of social justice and the justice obligations arising from vulnerability are best understood in terms of capabilities theory (Mackenzie 2014a, 35). Even if inhabitants of rural peripheries got marginalised they have an agency and are capable of advocating their own interests, they cannot be considered as passive recipients of development projects (Sen 1999).

From a nonpaternalistic approach to autonomy (or from the perspective of democratic solidarity) it is important in any local development project to build on the strategies of the locals and make them capable of changing their situation and live with their opportunities (Gébert et al. 2016, 27). As Sen puts it: "Greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development" (Sen 1999, 18). While emphasising the importance of individual choice and freedom, capabilities theorists, like theorists of relational autonomy, are particularly attentive to the role of the social environment and social, political, and legal institutions in enabling or constraining individual freedom (Mackenzie 2014a, 51). In contrast, libertarian conceptions of choice fetishise individual choice but ignore the social

contexts and determinants of those choices (ibid.). To advocate one's own interests, one needs basic skills.

Autonomy, when referred to a collectivity is intertwined with politics. For Cornelius Castoriadis (Greek philosopher, 1922-1997, a transdisciplinary scholar trained in economics, psychonalysis, politics and philosophy) collective autonomy, is not just limited to making one's laws, as Serge Latouche (one of the most prominent exponents of degrowth) refers, but equally importantly implies the capacity to question laws continuously (Asara, Profumi and Kallis 2013, 232). As politics is the explicit questioning activity regarding the desirable and best institutions, it can be considered the product of autonomy (ibid.).

Democratic solidarity links the concept of autonomy and democracy. It is a term referring to autonomous beings and the aim to preserve the conditions necessary for democratic societies (Gunson 2009, 245). Laville (2014, 106) distinguishes philanthropic solidarity from democratic solidarity.

> "The inclination to help others, developed as a constitutive element of responsible citizenship, carries the threat of a 'gift without reciprocity' (Rand 1990), allowing limitless gratitude as the only return and creating a debt that can never be redeemed by beneficiaries." (Laville 2014, 106)

A democratic and socially just state has an obligation to develop social, political, and legal institutions that foster citizen autonomy (Mackenzie 2014a, Mackenzie 2014b). A democratic state is obliged to foster an autonomy-supporting culture and to ensure that social institutions—including the family, educational institutions, businesses, and social clubs—provide access to the resources and opportunities and support the kinds of social relationships that promote autonomy (ibid.).

2.3.2. Autonomy, empowerment and social enterprises

Certain social enterprise scholars (eg. Laville 2014, Coraggio et al. 2015) argue that the state has a role in (re)democratisation. According to Laville (2014, 107) democratic solidarity has two faces. One is reciprocity; it designates voluntary social relations between free and equal citizens. The other is redistribution; it designates the standards of service drawn up by the state to reinforce social cohesion and to redress inequality. The question is not to replace state with civil society, but rather combining redistributive solidarity with a more reciprocal version of the latter in order "to rebuild society`s capacity for self-organisation" (Laville 2014, 108). In line with the relational approach to autonomy, a normative assumption of social enterprise scholars is that even if social enterprises receive state funding or money from private foundations or churches, they shall be able to preserve their organisational autonomy. According to Coraggio et al. (2015, 243) social and solidarity economy initiatives should not become mere implementers of government programs nor social projects initiated by private foundations. As highlighted by Defourny and Nyssens, social enterprises are "created by a group of people on the basis of a specific project and are controlled by these people. (…) They have the right to make their voices heard (voice), as well as to put an end to their activities (exit)" (Defourny and Nyssens 2013, 7 in Coraggio et al. 2015, 243). Existing

institutional contexts influence the extent to which a social enterprise can preserve its organisational autonomy.

Cho (2006) shared the concern that the dominant narrative of social entrepreneurship tends to give an apolitical account of social change. Defining "social value" or determining what lies in the collective interest of the society is that we typically have to do by a process of deliberation. This is the reason why democratic solidarity needs to be a central concept of social enterprise and social and solidarity economy. According to Coraggio et al. (2015) the desire to democratise, expressed in practice through solidarity from the ground up, that maintains and legitimises the purpose of social enterprises (Coraggio et al. 2015, 242). However Coraggio et al. (2015) draw attention that even if social enterprises are often set up to protect their stakeholders from the devastating effects of the market society, they may in some cases promote domination. Fraser (according to Coraggio et al. 2015) makes the double movement (marketisation–protection) of Polanyi more complex by converting it into a triple movement (marketisation–protection–emancipation). In this theoretical framework, all social enterprises organise forms of protection, but the social enterprise in a solidarity economy perspective, additionally tries to bring together protection and emancipation. In other words, the solidarity perspective emphasises the importance of emancipation and implementing of actions leading to protection and emancipation, rather than choosing between one or the other (Coraggio et al. 2015, 243). To advocate one's own interests, one needs basic skills. For this reason the inevitable element of social enterprises shall be to eliminate such shortages in certain skills.

3. A critical realist methodology

The focus of this paper is on empirical results from Hungary as part of a comparative Ph.D. research centered on "The role of social enterprise in rural development in Hungary and (Eastern) Germany"[1]. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the key actors of SSE initiatives, participant observation (a one week-long stay and work on the spot) and documentary analysis (eg. blogs, facebook pages, official founding documents).

The one-week long stay provided an opportunity to grasp the unique perspective of the local stakeholders. Most of my German interview partners were used to an interview situation. In the Hungarian case working together with my interview partners helped to make them comfortable with an informal interview situation. From the perspective of empowerment Romungro Roma are the most oppressed group in the Hungarian case study village. Even if I had informal talks with a Romungro Roma woman on the spot and I have observed situations affecting the peripheralisation of Romungro Roma in the village, I did not manage to visit a Romungro Roma family in their homes. During my fieldwork it was possible though to visit five Vlach Roma households, one Romanian Hungarian Household and one Ethnic Hungarian household as well. I also managed to participate on two community building events, which were attended by Romungro Roma families too.

To protect the privacy of my interview partners I anonymised the cases, all the settlement names, names of interview partners have been altered.

4. Rural SSE initiatives in peripheralised settings

The case study SSE initiatives emerged in peripheralised small settlements of Hungary and Germany. However peripheralisation manifests differently in the East German and the Hungarian case study villages. The Hungarian case study SSE initiative (Equality Foundation) emerged in a village undergoing advanced peripheralisation. The village is a „zsákfalu", within the Hungarian transport system, which means that it can be accessed through a non-primary route, but this non-primary route ends in the settlement. While public transport is limitedly accessible, the village has no train stations and two buses per day transport the inhabitants to the neighbouring city. The car ownership is particularly low in the village, where only one of seven inhabitants owns a car. This is far below the Hungarian average, where car ownership is rather low, even by Eastern European standards (KSH 2011: 78 in Leibert 2013: 115). Settlements undergoing advanced peripheralisation already lost most of those inhabitants who have the capacity to independently move forward the settlement. With the accumulation of the underprivileged a truncated local society developed in the Hungarian case study village. Those inhabitants that are stuck in settlements undergoing advanced peripheralisation often secure their social reproduction through illegal activity. The Equality Foundation has experienced "regular thefts, burglaries in worse cases robbery, usury, sex work or black trade" in Tarnót (a document produced by the Equality Foundation, 24). During my visit I have also met people who were affected in giving or receiving usury credits or who were involved in sex work. (Field_notes_H2).

Processes of peripheralisation are moderate in the German case study village, Kreltow. Kreltow is a village in Eastern Uckermark with around 300 inhabitants. Despite of the high unemployment rates, processes of selective out-migration could not only be limited, but through the in-migration of mostly young families with children, shrinking processes could have been turned back (blog entry by the actors of the initiative, 2003). The birth rate is high in the village compared to other settlements in the region. There is a village shop, two restaurants, a crèche, a school, six handicraft businesses, an organic farm, a psychosocial care facility and more small businesses characterise the economic life of the village (blog entry by the actors of the initiative, 2003). The village is also rich in cultural and community activities. They have a regionally-known Carneval, a dance group, a fishing association, a harvest feast, a fire fighters association, literature evenings, theater projects, two rock bands, a drum group or a sport festival (blog entry by the actors of the initiative, 2003). Most of the organisations and initiatives still exsited by the time of my field visit. One of the founders of the Alternative Village School even told, that

> "I am not sure if our village is a good example for you, we are not peripheralised at the end." (Marla, Field_notes_G1)

5. Empowerment on the ground: field experiences

5.1. Actors of empowerment

Both in Hungary and East Germany civil society was oppressed during state socialism. The totalitarian states of state socialism were interested in actively discouraging the formation of civil society organizations even of seemingly innocuous sorts (Chambers and Kopstein 2006, 367). The state efforts resulted in a society that finds advocacy difficult. In the German case most of the initiators of the Alternative Village School moved to Kreltow from cities of West and East Germany. People moved to the village from Trier, Rostock, Berlin or Magdeburg. It was important in building up the initiative that people being socialised in different social structures (the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany) moved to the village.

> "Two women from West Germany were particularly important at the beginning. They had way more civic courage, with the Ministerium (…). This for us, East Germans ('Ostler') was incredible, they were different, that was good."
> (Interview_G1_I3)

In spite of the state's aspirations youth groups, popular music clubs all over the CEE region and environmental groups in Hungary and Eastern Germany managed to sustain their own group resources and even socializing functions (Chambers and Kopstein 2006, 368). Later, when the regimes showed weaknesses around in 1989, these informal movements played a role in dismantling state-socialism. The regime change in 1989 in Hungary and the the reunification of Germany in 1990 implied the questions whether civil society would develop towards state control or towards a partnership and dialogue with the state. The Eastern German federal states were integrated with Western Germany.

Even if the civic engagement is lower in Eastern Germany than in Western Germany (Gensicke et al. 2009), the state provides space for dialogue and partnership with the civil actors.

Civil society organizations are highly resource-dependent in Hungary. Apart from elements of independence and impartiality that were built into the system, such as the 1 per cent National Civil Fund (NCA) tax that provides a smaller ratio of the incomes of the Hungarian CSOs, processes of grant provisions (including EU grants) have not been transparent even before 2010 (Kövér 2015, 84).

After 2010, the entire NGO self-governance and decision-making system was changed. Existing bodies of representation and self-governance that had previously made decisions independently of the government were replaced by new ones for which the allocations of seats to representatives of government bodies became dominant (Kövér 2015, 84). The same process occurred in the case of EU Fund distribution too. The newly emerging system provided an opportunity for the ruling Party to support those conservative, often religious (belonging to Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches) civic circles that were created and controlled by them (ibid. 84).

Both of my case study SSE initiatives are initiated by civilians. The civilian project of Tarnót is autonomous from the state or from the church, but this autonomy also manifests in a very

limited access to EU or national state funding and since 2016 stigmatisation by the state. As the initiative receives funding from non-Hungarian foundations (such as the Open Society Foundation), based on the new act on organisations receiving foreign funding they had to indicate on their webpage that based on this new regulation they are a "foreign founded organisation". The civilians of Kreltow were able to sustain their political autonomy from the state and still did not get negatively discriminated in accessing EU Funds or national funding for their projects.

The Hungarian case study SSE initiative (H2) is a complex development program in a village undergoing "ghettoization". The village, in which the social economy initiative operates is classified as at being of highest risk of multiple deprivation among the Hungarian settlements (Koós 2015). The aim of the complex development program run by the Equality Foundation from the neighbouring town is to counteract the reproduction of deep poverty. One of the tools for that next to community development is to offer employment locally or an opportunity to gain extra income through casual work. The complex development program has been developed from a classical civil society organization (CSO) from the micro-regional centre. The main profile of the CSO is to integrate children, often of Roma ethnic origin, coming from deep poverty to the society. The founders have realised that in order for social integration to happen next to the alternative school a complex program needs to be developed in which the parents of the children get access to paid work. If we consider that in the Hungarian case local stakeholders were affected by processes of peripheralisation severely, it might be understandable that the idea of an SSE initiative came outside of the village. However, even if locals are severely marginalised, they could have been mobilised for building up the social and solidarity economy locally.

The German case study SSE (G1) is an alternative school and kindergarten in a small settlement located in Northern Uckermark (Northeast Brandenburg) emerging from a parents initiative. The parents who initiated the school and the kindergarten moved to the village in the 90s. They refer to themselves as "Zugezogene". The "Zugezogene" took an active role in the bottom-up development of the village. They set up a parents' association which operates their alternative village school and alternative kindergarten. The main aim of the alternative school is through developing the students' creativity and critical thinking to contribute to the education of an environmentally more conscious generation. The newcomers ("Zugezogene") may be considered countermigrants. Analogous to the Polányian "double movement" countermigration may be considered as a countermovement of selective out-migration. There is a group of middle-class people moving from cities to peripheralised rural areas, often in search for "a slower", "an alternative" or "more meaningful life". The good quality of the nature, cheap real estate (land or house), the proximity to the natural environment might all be appealing for them. From the perspective of these people peripheralised rural areas are places of experimentation. Some start a CSA project (Community Supported Agriculture), others deal with ecological farming. In my

German case they started an alternative school. The founder and former headmaster of the alternative village school refers to their idea to move to the village through putting an emphasis on differentiating their behaviour from the mainstream.

> "So I studied at the Geography Faculty in Berlin as everyone else. Afterwards I completed Environmental Consultant Studies, it was Environmental Economics. And through that one can quickly come to topics such as Sustainability and personally I wanted to get out of Berlin to the countryside. And with the aim once to move out from Berlin we bought a house with like-minded people, here in Kreltow [a spart of a co-housing project] where Anette [the current principal of the alternative village school] now lives. And then there were people here who were dissatisfied with the state schools here and wanted to start their own school. Then once they persuaded me to become a teacher there at some point in the future. I also liked the idea. (...) So I did not like the system already before, so I came up with the idea of doing something different. And then we needed an idea, so some concept, with which one can run an own school (...)" (Interview_G1_I3)

5.2. Empowerment through decision-making

If we have a look at the literature about social enterprises, governance is not necessarily a normative commitment. For EMES , which is an international and interdisciplinary (dominant disciplines: economics, sociology, political science and management) research network focusing on social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, solidarity economy and social innovation an ideal type of social enterprise (or social economy initiative) is based on a collective dynamics and on the involvement of different stakeholders in the governance of the organisation (Defourny and Nyssens 2014, 53). In contrast with the US schools of thought about social enterprise, such as the "social innovation" and "earned income school" the European approach is more concerned about the governance structure of a social enterprise (Defourny and Nyssens 2010). The EMES approach promotes participative decision-making within social entreprises which contrasts with the social innovation school's emphasis on the individual social entrepreneur.

For researchers and practitioners working with social enterprises from a solidarity economy perspective the criterion is the active participation of beneficiaries in the definition and implementation of the mission of the enterprise (Coraggio et al. 2015, 243). EMES researchers see a potential for poverty reduction through setting up social enterprises in/for marginalised communities (see Borzaga et al. 2008). It must be remembered though that for marginalised communities it is "often difficult to gain access to processes of political decision-making from which they may be culturally, educationally, and linguistically, as well as physically, remote." (Amin et al. 2002, 17) Furthermore environments characterised by corrosive disadvantage (social, political, economic, educational) or social relationships characterised by abuse, coercion, violence, or disrespect may seriously thwart the development of many of the skills and competences required for self-determination or may constrain their exercise (Mackenzie 2014a, 42-43). Furthermore to lead a self-determining life requires not just having the capacities and opportunities to do so but also regarding

oneself, and being recognised by others, as having the social status of an autonomous agent (Mackenzie 2014a, 44). Such failures of recognition are quite typical in social relations involving domination, or inequalities of power, especially when these are inflected by gender, race, ethnicity, or disability (ibid.). Considering the factors limiting individual autonomy, it can be argued that participative governance can be reached to a different extent based on the autonomy capacities of the stakeholders of the social enterprise. If autonomy is understood relationally duties of protection to mitigate vulnerability must be informed by the overall background aim of fostering autonomy whenever possible (Mackenzie 2014a, 41).

The Equality Foundation aims to develop and practice participatory decision-making with as much of their local stakeholders as possible. Developing participatory decision-making in Tarnót (the altered name of the Hungarian case study SSE initiative) is not easy though, as the locals are not socialised to be asked when decisions are made. The aim of the Foundation is to make the inhabitants of the village more capable to advocate their interests and to participate in decision-making.

The aim is also a participative decision making in the case of the community garden of Tarnót (H2_I3).

In the H2 case one of the main aims of the Equality Foundation is to develop the capacity of their target group for participation. This is – as they consider – a longer process, possibly taking 20 years.

> "The main aim of the foundation is to empower a social group, which since generations, was not affected by the educational system or by work in the formal economy. The aim is to enable these people to organize themselves. To enable them to stand for their life and for their community, to solve their own problems, to communicate with eachother, to plan, for self-assessment or to exploit opportunities." (Blog entry, February 2016, Equality Foundation)

Tibor, the husband of Anna, who is another key stakeholder within the Equality Foundation shares the principle of the Foundation with me: "Nothing about them without them." (Field notes_H2, 02.05.2016)

One of the main platforms for involving the locals in the decision making processes is the team meeting, which has been introduced in 2013. The team meetings differ from the average team meetings as not just work-related issues are discussed there (Field notes_H2, 06.05.2016). The team meeting is also used to reach a higher participation level of the locals of Tarnót and to improve their skills for participation. Every colleague needs to make notes about what has happened in the previous week in his/her field. Anna describes a team meeting in her blog:

"We had a team meeting today. Every Friday afternoon we sit down and talk about the previous week. This goes now smoothly and organized. I am looking at them. As they routinely take their little black hard-cover booklet and tell who did what, day by day. It is great to see the progress they made in this field. Sometimes I ask about some more details or I compliment a succesful area. They are proud and happy. So am I. Some read out loud what they wrote. Some just check their notes and tell more freely about their past week. And there are some who dictate to their child what they did during a working day every single day, and now ask me to read it loud, what they know anyway. No one is giggling for it, we have talked about it before. And the rule is the rule. The booklet must be run, even for those ones who have challenges with writing. Based on their job description this is an expectation towards them.

In such cases I really feelt it worths it. I feel as they psychologically grow stronger and stronger. I feel how their job, the responsibility of their job develops them. In everything. In purposefullness, in communication or in cooperation. I feel how better and better they function as a community. The team meeting is no longer about picking at each other. In fact, they laugh together a lot now on good things.

We plan the next week as well. The kids leave for a camp next week, we are discussing the organizational issues. We talk about the equipment for starting the school as well [the Foundation donates a school starting package for the kids from the village yearly], everybody asks, whether excercise books and pencils are arriving with the donations. And they ask about, something that we have not talked about for long time now, the day trip for adults. Because they understand, of course, that we take the kids on trips. But once they want to participate on such a trip as well. Because they can not get anywhere from here either. We fix the time, talk about the place and the program.

They are cheerful as the team meeting ends. The ones who work here as volunteers [local volunteers] are waiting outside. They have a lot of questions, they are excited about knowing what we discussed on the team meeting. Because decisions are made, the other's suggestions or requests are discussed on these team meetings. They understand now the system that we have built up together. They understand the essence of making decisions together. They understand the role of local staff, and they are beginning to understand advocacy." (Blog entry, Equality Foundation)

The village school and the parents' association of Kreltow (the altered name of the German case study SSE initiative) is organized around the ideal of grassroots democracy, in which decisions are made through the participation of as much community members as possible. Grassroots democracy is a tendency towards designing political processes where as much decision-making authority as practical is shifted to the organization's lowest geographic or

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social level of organization[2]. Through school projects (eg. apple processing and selling cooperative) the kids of the village school also practice grassroots democracy (Interview_G1_I3).

The decision-making process is the most sophisticated among the four cases in the case of the parents' association and the village school of Kreltow. Every parent can become a member of the parents association if they pay the membership fee, which is 6 EUR and if they volunteer 30 hours a year. Both criteria have been defined by the former members of the parents' association. The decision making body of the initiative is the association meeting (Vereinsversammlung). Here, everyone who is present from the parents' association has a vote. Next to the "one member one vote" rule decisions are possibly based on a consensus. All of the normal members have a quasi-veto right and the principal (Vorstand) has an official veto right.
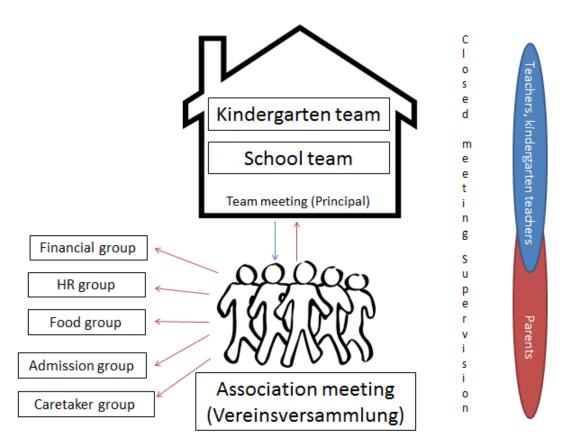

Figure 2: Decision-making within the Parents' Association

Source: illustration by the author, based on the feedbacks of the stakeholders of the village

The parents' association makes decisions together with the teachers and kindergarten teachers. Nearly all of the teachers are also members at the associations (they are or were often parents too), so they participate in the decision-making on the associations-side too.

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[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grassroots_democracy Aceesed on 07.01.18

The main decision making body is the Parents' Association (members: parents) with the kindergarten and school teams (members: teachers and kindergarten teachers). The official principal of the school and kindergarten participates on both the team and association meetings and delivers the information between the different institutional bodies. The parents form financial, HR, food, admission and caretaker groups and support the village school with their work. These working groups are formed after some generally accepted rules, but they have power to decide in single cases. For example the enrollment group has the authority to decide who can be enrolled to the school (G1_I1).

The main philosophy of the alternative school and kindergarten is to let people decide in what they want to get engaged in (G1_I2). One of the former members of the Parents' Association draws up their strategy:

> "It is also our strategy, [that within our initiative] everyone does, what he/she wants. And the ones, who do not enjoy doing it, do not need to do it at all. This is a good strategy. (…) Earlier I said that it is totally exhausting, that everything goes so randomly and messed up, but this is also how we work how we can do it. When it has gone through the [decision-making] process, everyone is there. And if it does not come through, then it is not a good idea." (Interview G1_I2)

The teachers and parents try to work with eachother very close. The feedback loop is short between the emerging challenges in the school (eg. who watches how much TV) and letting the parents know and to find a solution together. Emerging challenges are addressed and discussed with the parents (G1_I1).

The members of the school team (all of the teachers) decide in pedagogical questions. That was a conscious decision from the beginning, as "they have more competences in pedagogical questions" (G1_I3).

Making decisions in a more participative way can be more challenging as only following one leader. A recent conflict showed this. The village kindergarten won a tender, in which they could renovate one of the buildings to be the kindergarten. The community planned to build a small facility for the kids, where they could play in the garden. Some parents wanted to build a little house for children, while others a concrete snail. The decision about what shall be built for the kids in the backyard polarized the community. The concrete snail was voted with around 52%, but some of the members of the parents' association could not accept it and used their quasi-veto right. Supervision followed the escalated voting in which the aim was to understand the situation and why the conflict escalated. Supervisions are regular for the parents' association. Another supervision was organized to think about what to do, if there won't be enough kids for the village school.

As for the future, the tendency in Kreltow might be that the school will go to a rather service provision direction, as earlier a lot of the teachers had their own kids in the school and now those kids are gone and new kids came from other villages. Because of this shift towards a rather service provisioning role, Philip, one of the former members of the association is afraid of the association meetings (Vereinversammlung) ceasing to exist (Interview_G1_I2).

Anette is more optimistic regarding the engagement of the new parents and sees a future for the association meetings (Interview_G1_I1).

5.3. Empowerment of the most marginalised: Roma women

The marginalisation of Roma can better be understood through a critique of neoliberalism. Sypros Themelis (2015) argues that the post-socialist transition or as he frames the "capitalist reintegration of Eastern Europe has had devastating effects for the Roma, who, even before the transition, used to belong to the most vulnerable section of the working class in economic, cultural and political terms" (Themelis 2015, 7). Themelis points out that there is a biopolitical border between white and racialised working/underclass to prevent class solidarity among the subordinated precarious populations in Europe (Kóczé 2016, 46). Instead of solidarity and defending the public institutions and demos, the system covertly promotes the racialisation and collective scapegoating of Roma to polarise revolt against neoliberal structural oppression (ibid). As a result, Roma men are subjected to an ethnic gap and Roma women are subjected to both an ethnic and a gender gap in education and in employment.

The 2011 Roma Pilot Survey UNDP/WB/EC shows that the educational position of Roma women is lower in comparison with Roma men and non-Roma women (Kóczé 2016). The level of education of Roma women, particularly the total number of years spent in school is lower than for non-Roma women and Roma men (Cukrowska and Kóczé 2013). Based on the research sample in the age-group of 16-64, Roma men spent on average 6.71 years in education, while Roma women 5.66 years (ibid.). The respective data for the non-Roma age group are: men on average 10.95 years and women 10.7 years. The gender difference in the total years of education is higher in the Roma group (ibid.). Non-Roma women spend nearly twice as many years in education as Roma women (10.7 and 5.66 years respectively). Similarly, Roma men spend 61% of the time in education of what non-Roma men do (the same proportion for Roma women is 53%) (ibid.).

In addition to an ethnic gap, Roma women are subjected to a gender gap in employment as well. Kertesi and Kézdi (2010, 11) argue that by 1994, Roma employment in Hungary was below 30 percent among men and at 17 percent among women, and in 2003, employment of Roma men was at a mere 32 percent, and employment of Roma women remained at 17 percent. Based on the study of Kertesi and Kézdi (2010) the number of children plays an important role for women, but the geographic location explains little of the gap once education is controlled for. The gap in hourly wages between Roma and non-Roma is about one-third for both men and women, and at least half of it is explained by educational differences (Kertesi and Kézdi 2010, 6). The FRA report shows some interesting data concerning Romani women's employment status. The report states that the proportion of women who are involved in paid work is equal or even higher than Romani men in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. In Hungary, 32 % of Romani women aged 16 and above are in paid work compared with 26% of Romani men (Kóczé 2016, 48). As the FRA report does not specify the nature of the paid work, the difference between formal and informal employment remains invisible (Kóczé 2016, 48). In post-socialist countries the economic and

social structural conditions and situational possibilities coalesce to give rise and support to economic practices that are illegal or unregulated by the state (Morris and Polese 2014 in Kóczé 2016).

Empowerment is a possible way to reduce the ethnic and gender gap. However discourses on empowerment can not only emerge from capabilities theory, but from neoliberal approaches as well. As Kóczé (2016 forthcoming cited by Kóczé 2016) argues neoliberal discourses on empowerment miss to challenge racialised and gendered structural oppression, even feminists reframe and address these structural issues as an individual self-liberating and regulating project. The mechanism of "end of welfare" or "welfare dependency" becomes coded as "empowerment" in relation to Romani women in CEE (Kóczé 2016, 51). According to Kóczé (2016, 51) certain NGO programmes build on the logic of the neoliberal state that mainly privatises and philantropises social service. Promoting Roma community and individual responsibility without addressing structurally racialised and gendered oppression can not be a socially sustainable strategy (ibid.). As Kóczé (2016, 51) argues instead of recreating eg. self-responsible Romani mothers, it would be important to problematise the role of the government.

Intesectionality theory may advance an understanding of the situation of Roma women living under the conditions of advanced peripheralisation. Intersectional discrimination is named by activists, the "double exclusion" (gendered, ethnicised) and domination by both Romani patriarchal and non-Romani political and economic regimes (ibid.). Feminist intersectional theories have been recently enhanced to include class as a third category, hence the multi-tier "race-class-gender" approach becoming a decisive concept in gender equality discourse (Kóczé 2011, 54). A comparative quantitative assessment of the living conditions of Roma in Central Europe showed that the probability of being poor was higher for Roma than non-Roma, irrespective of educational achievement and employment status (Ringold and Tracy 2002, Emigh and Szelényi 2001 cited by Kóczé 2011, 73). However, the category of 'Romani women' is not homogenous. Roma women who are undereducated, married at a young age, have more than one child, are unemployed and live in rural areas face a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than Romani women, who are better educated, have one or no children, earn income, or live in urban areas (Kóczé 2011, 73-74). "Following from this, it is quite conceivable that Romani women who experience the highest levels of absolute poverty also face greater gender-related vulnerability in their own communities." (Kóczé 2011, 74)

Many women of Tarnót experience both poverty and gender-related vulnerability. Many of them are affected by domestic abuse and some of them are involved in sex work. Some women and girls of Tarnót were trafficked to Germany and forced for sex work (Field_notes_H2). Kóczé (2011, 83) calls for an intersectional approach to better understand the complex nature and violence against Roma women.

> "Since the early 1990s, women and girls have been trafficked from Central and Southeast European countries to work as forced prostitutes in the European Union. To treat this as merely a function of gender discrimination, while ignoring the

ethnic, geo-political-economical and class dimensions of the problem would ultimately result in inconsistent analysis of its root causes, effects and would not yield appropriate measures. At the least, identifying the countries of departure gives an indication of the degree of gender discrimination and the political economic situation of the given country. Nevertheless, it is important to identify, for instance, why women from certain countries and from certain regions of their country make up the majority of forced sex workers in the EU countries." (Kóczé 2011, 83)

Aggressive verbal communication and physical aggression characterises the life in many families of Tarnót (a document produced by the Equality Foundation, 2016). As the colleagues of the Equality Foundation report, women also become victims of domestic abuse:

"Many times, we are aware of their domestic abuse, we often see how tensions of privation are lowered on them, and we also feel that in this case they are left to themselves." (Equality Foundation 2016, 70).

Socialisation is also a challenge:

"Those girls, whose mothers have chosen abortion instead of contraception, do not find interrupting their pregnancy problematic. The daughter of those women whose father sent them out every night to "go out and earn money" turn to prostitution as well. Those girls, whose mother have never worked in an employment before, but were a full-time mother in ever-growing families, would not do otherwise. Those girls, whose mother tolerated sleps in the face, will endure domestic abuse without a word." (Blog entry, Anna Varga, 2017 June)

The Equality Foundation is among those organisations that acknowledge racialised and gendered systemic oppression of Roma women. The organisation problematises the role of the government, while focusing on the capacity-building of their stakeholders, amongst them Romani women living in deep poverty. Without identifying themselves as a Roma feminist organisation, the Equality Foundation has consciously focused on women as partners of local development. The reasoning behind their decision is connected to the role women play in the social reproduction of their households.

"(…) on one hand, women can be better involved for the interest of their children, and on the other hand women are expected to cope with the crises within the family, they are expected to give food for the family, and ensure the everyday organisational part of the family life. They are also stronger in keeping contact with each other, and are ready for compromises, can better be influenced emotionally, as men." (Equality Foundation 2016, 26)

One year of problem mapping and 7 year field work has preceded the two-year-long, focused community development program in Tarnót. As part of problem mapping, the colleagues of the foundation visited the families to better understand them. The regular meetings have helped to build up trust (Field notes H2, Equality Foundation 2016, 26). Finding, positioning and training the key person from the village, who is a Vlach Roma

woman, was an important step in the community development process (Equality Foundation 2016, 26).

> "Through our family visits it became clear that we can build better on women (...) in Tarnót. They were more open, and we were able to build up a more intimate relationship with them. It also helped that they were happy to participate in craft activities. For this reason we have been thinking in them in regards of the development of the village." (Equality Foundation 2016, 29)

As craft activities (mainly embroidery) provide an extra income for the participants, non-Roma, mainly elderly and some middle age women, who live under the subsistence level got interested in earning extra income as well. In spite of the initial hostility, working together has developed the relationship between Roma and non-Roma:

> "The earlier hostile tone has been replaced by something, which is based on mutual respect. The respect of the self and the respect of the other." (Equality Foundation 2016, 30)

To address the local manifestations os the ethnic and gender gap shaping employment realities of Tarnót, the Foundation trained the locals about a needlework technic. Through needlework (embroidering the drawings of their children), the women of Tarnót could get access to paid work and extra income. Building on the success of the needlework program and the long-term presence of the Foundation, the Equality Foundation also started a community garden with fruit processing manufacture (opened in 2016). Due to the financial support of both public and private, including international Foundations, the Equality Foundation was able to employ 7 people from the village, belonging to Romungro, Vlach-Roma and non-Roma ethnic groups. Anna, the founder, hopes to extend such a Development Program, which, if it could be adapted to other villages undergoing advanced peripheralisation, would have the potential to provide opportunities for the real integration of the excluded social stratum.

After one year of problem mapping and 7 year field work the Foundation built up a targeted community development program between 2014 and 2016 in the village, where they selected 30 women as partners. Young, senior, new-comer, indigenous villagers, Romungro, Vlach Roma and non-Roma women have participated in the program. Based on the problem map the Foundation has identified fields, which connect to the local women the most, and based on their collectively developed beliefs that hinder change the most. Together with the 30 women from different social backgrounds the Foundation formulated three modules of community development. The modules build on each other and go from the "easier" to the "more challenging": (1) Household knowledge, (2) Conscious family planning and child care, and (3) Development of skills, knowledge transfer and supportive cooperation in the field of domestic violence (Equality Foundation 2016, 33). While the module on "household knowledge" addressed more the development of collective autonomy through bringing together the local women having different ethnic and socioeconomic background, the module on family planning and domestic violence addressed more issues of individual autonomy.

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Addressing domestic violence proved to be the most challenging field:

> "The field in which we did not succeed so far as the problem is rooted more deeply, then we thought is sthrenghtening the women's status in the family through the community. We do have to work on this in the future, because it is important for girls not to incorporate the behavioural pattern that accepts aggression, and boys shall not incorporate the role of an aggressor." (Equality Foundation 2016, 75-76)

Intersectionality theory helps in understanding how ethnicity, class and gender influence Roma women's vulnerability under the conditions of advanced peripheralisation. However organisations undertaking a capability-based empowerment have promising results, their existence is quite insecure. In the context of anti-civilian governmental measures (Kiss et al., forthcoming) the Equality Foundation fights for finding a way to finance their operation.

6. Discussion

Peripheralisation is relational and amongst others national welfare policies, the history of ethnic-based oppression or the ways a locality is embedded into Global Production Networks influence it as well. While the Hungarian case study SSE initiative emerged in the context of advanced peripheralisation, the East German case study SSE initiative emerged in the context of moderate peripheralisation. Both initiatives follow participative practices, but while advanced peripheralisation destroyed the autonomy capacity of the individuals or the community, moderate peripheralisation (the proximity of nature and cheap land prices) proved to be attracting for countermigrants ("back to the land" migrants).

This paper aimed at answering the following question:

In contexts of peripheralisation to what extent may participation be a reality?

In the case of advanced peripheralisation building up the capacities of the local stakeholders for participative decision-making is a long-term strategy for the Foundation, which comes outside of the village and is the main driver of emancipation through local development. Empowerment of woman and empowerment of Roma is also an explicit aim of the Foundation.

In the case of less advanced peripheralisation, the key stakeholders of the social and solidarity economy initiative are amongst the inhabitants of the village. They moved to the village as "countermigrants" ("back to the land" migration). Based on the field evidence it can be argued that in case of moderate peripheralisation local agents have a capacity to start SSE initiatives and through that to empower themselves. In case of an advanced peripheralisation, even if local inhabitants have an agency, they need professional assistance from a development organisation following the philosophy of democratic solidarity or the capability-based approach. Without such an assistance it would be naïve to expect agents of severely peripheralised areas to set up and run social and solidarity economy initiatives themselves. In the same time it would be also wrong to think that without the local knowledge (for example the knowledge of surviving in conditions of deep poverty) "developers" could reach long lasting changes.

Acknowledgements

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