

## **Roma engagement strategies in Manchester: the MigRom project**

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## 1 The initiative and its organizers<sup>1</sup>

This report looks at an engagement strategy between Manchester institutions and Romanian Roma. As the engagement is continuously evolving, this report should be regarded as a ‘snapshot’ taken between October 2014 and March 2015. The Romanian Roma targeted by the engagement schemes live in the Southeast of Manchester, more precisely at the intersection of the neighbourhoods Gorton South, Levenshulme and Longsight. The area is located about 15 minutes from the city centre by public transportation. The scheme is co-managed by the Regeneration department of the Manchester City Council (MCC) and coordinated by the Romani Project at the University of Manchester under the leadership of professor Yaron Matras. The engagement scheme is an integrated part of the inter- and transdisciplinary EU-funded research project MigRom<sup>2</sup>: ‘The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects and future engagement strategies’. MigRom lasts from 2013 to 2017 and has a total budget of €2.5 million. About €250,000 is reserved for outreach activities towards the Roma community in Manchester. Apart from academic partners, MigRom also includes non-academic partners, namely the Manchester City Council and the European Roma and Traveller Forum (ERTF), an umbrella organisation of Roma NGOs affiliated with the Council of Europe<sup>3</sup>.

The MigRom project understands Roma engagement as a two way process between the Romanian Roma community and the institutions, actors and fellow inhabitants of Manchester (I: MigRom project coordinator). It wants to be a catalyst for positive change in the relations between public institutions and the Roma community. It aims to do this by introducing:

*“measures for capacity-building within the community, provisions for advice and support services and the creation of a consultation forum that will allow Roma migrants to take part in planning and decision-making processes affecting their community.”<sup>4</sup>*

The engagement strategy consists of a variety of activities, such as media interventions, making exchange experiences available to young people, awareness raising in local institutions and so on (see part four of this report for more detail). Two main activities stand out. The first is the weekly drop-in consultations for Roma residents in the Longsight neighbourhood. A team of three outreach workers

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<sup>1</sup> This report is based on document analysis, in-depth interviews and a focus group. More information about the methods used can be found in: Kazepov, Saruis, Wukovitsch, Cools, & Novy (2014), accessible at <http://improve-research.eu/>. When information is drawn directly from one of the interviews, or when one of the interviewees is quoted, we will refer to it (I: Alias of the respondent). The respondents allowed the researchers to use an alias that discloses their affiliation to the organisation. Appendix I provides an overview of all interviewees and gives more information about the methodological choices made for this particular case study. The authors want to express their gratitude to the interviewees for their participation and valuable input. The authors are particularly thankful to Yaron Matras and his MigRom team of the University of Manchester for their hospitality and cooperation.

<sup>2</sup> Migrom is funded by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme call on ‘Dealing with diversity and cohesion: the case of the Roma in the European Union’ (GA319901). The project is carried out by an international consortium, which apart from Manchester University includes academic partners in France (Paris), Italy (Verona), Spain (Granada) and Romania (Cluj-Napoca). The website of the project: <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ertf.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/strategy.html>

who are familiar with the Roma culture and speak Romani and/or Romanian hosts the consultations. Two of them are themselves Romanian Roma from the community in Manchester. This team assesses needs and develop responses, supported by academic specialists (Matras, Leggio, Constantin, Tanase, & Sutac, 2014). The second activity relates to identifying and supporting leadership from within the community. The project supports an informal 'leadership group' of three young Roma men who volunteered to represent the community in communication with the council and take initiatives on behalf of their community. Plans to set up a Roma community group or 'Roma consultation forum' that goes beyond the Manchester community group are in the making as well. The formation of a community group that could continue some of the support for and communication on behalf of the Roma community after the MigRom project is regarded as a desirable legacy for the project (I: Regeneration, MigRom project coordinator).

The experiences with engagement activities also provide input for the MigRom research, i.e. a longitudinal ethnographic survey of the Romanian Roma in Manchester and their interactions with public authorities and services. The researchers and outreach workers, who are fieldwork assistants, work together closely in developing the engagement scheme, writing reports and discussing research and outreach ethics (I: MigRom research associate).

The project stands out in the way that engagement strategies and scientific enquiry are intertwined. It is set up as a socially innovative partnership between academics, policy makers and members from the community, typically the 'subjects' of policy and research, who are actively involved as outreach worker and volunteers. The partnership resembles what Novy and colleagues (2013) have called a 'knowledge alliance': Projects or fora based on cooperation and deliberation between different perspectives and interests in order to produce valuable networks and practical knowledge that can establish social cohesion and socially innovative solutions to unmet needs. This shows in one of the project's main objectives:

*"To assess policy measures targeting migrant Roma communities in an integrated way that takes into consideration both the articulated views and needs of the Roma migrants and the position of the local authority; to make use of the participation of a local authority in the project to draft, test, implement and assess the impact of a variety of measures of advice and support, capacity building and consultation offered to the Roma migrant community."*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/objectives.html>

## 2 Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems

### 2.1 Roma migrants in the UK

According to Horton and Grayson (2009) Roma migration to the UK has been going on throughout the period after the Second World War. However this phenomenon was very small until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. The post-1989 westward migration of Roma showed at least three distinctive features (Matras, 2000). The first is that Roma migrate in (extended) families instead as individuals. The close family structures, a key feature of Romani society, continue to play an important role in the country of arrival. The phenomenon of group migration adds to the visibility of Roma migration, which often feeds fear and prejudices. The second feature is that Roma migrants have little confidence in non-Romani (gadje) institutions. Reluctance to identify with the 'majority' population and its institutions is often attributed to the history of discrimination and prosecution and the lack of territorial claims. It helps to explain why Roma families are more likely to opt for migration in order to escape situations of physical and socio-economic insecurity even under very risky and bad circumstances, instead of choosing for juridical procedures and collective action for change and rights. Thirdly, migration movements away from Eastern Europe were often triggered by discrimination, economic deprivation, hostilities and the experience of insecurity in the country of origin.

*"As a result of these particular external and internal features, Roma differ from other migrants in their willingness to incur the risks of migration: repeated expulsion and self-sufficing clandestine existence." (Matras, 2000, p. 46)*

During the 1990s and early 2000s the number of Roma migrants in the UK increased with the inflow of Eastern European who came to the UK as asylum seekers. The number of Roma amongst these migrants was more or less proportional to the share of Roma in the country of origin. Very few of the ones applying for asylum were allowed to stay. Many of them left around the early 2000s while some families stayed in England without a legal residence permit. The situation changed as new countries entered the EU in 2004 and 2007 and the migrants from these countries became EU citizens. The UK allowed gradual access to the labour market for people coming from Romania and Bulgaria (often called the A2 countries, who entered the EU in 2007). In practice this meant that until 2014 most migrants from these two countries could only work as 'self-employed', as seasonal workers or in specific segments of the food sector.

Within the UK, Roma are often mentioned together with Irish travellers and English Gypsies in the media, in policy documents and by advocacy- and other third sector organisations<sup>6</sup>. The work of Rachel Humphris (2013), focused on the recognition of Roma in education, indicates that public departments and service providers are increasingly treating Roma as a distinct group rather than a subcategory of Irish travellers and/or English Gypsies (see below). However, Romani studies pointed out repeatedly that prejudices, misunderstandings and fictitious images, like the ones of travelling gypsies that are

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<sup>6</sup> See for instance the separate news feed page 'Roma, Gypsies Travellers' of the national newspaper The Guardian <http://www.theguardian.com/world/roma-gypsies-and-travellers> (last accessed 16-03-2015); or see the website Roma Gypsy Traveller Achievement Service in Leeds <http://www.grtleeds.co.uk/> (last accessed 16-03-2015).

bound to a nomadic lifestyle, persist in the eye of the general public, despite the fact that today the Roma migrants in England are not nomads. The confusion between Roma and the romanticized, fictitious category of gypsies as eternal outcasts (Vermeersch, 2014) contributes to the legitimization of Roma strategies and policies that blame Roma culture as the cause of their exclusion and deprivation (Jorna, 2014). In highly politicised public debates<sup>7</sup> Roma are further criticised for undermining the social benefit system and impacting negatively on the social relations of and liveability for the communities where they settle.

Being an ethnic group (and not a nationality), the Roma in the UK are hard to count both on the national and the local level. Hence, the available national aggregates about Roma migrants are not very reliable. The UK National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) estimates the Roma population between 80,000 and 300,000, while the council of Europe estimates them at approximately 225,000, which would be 0,38% of the UK population<sup>8</sup>.

The report 'Council conclusions on a EU framework strategy for Roma integration up to 2020: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'<sup>9</sup> stress that there is a lack of comprehensive data on the socio-economic situation of Roma in the UK. Barriers to social mobility and social inclusion are reported in the field of income, employment, housing, education and health, but most of this research reports either on Roma in a particular local context or on broader migrant groups that include Roma without focussing solely on this group (Craig, 2011). Most attention related to the social deprivation of Roma in the UK has been in the field of education. This includes figures on educational achievement of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children, research on how to improve outcomes (Wilkin et al., 2010) and exploratory research on the school experiences of Roma migrants (Equality, 2011). However, this research has to work with data that is not very reliable, because they are limited to those who officially ascribed as Roma. Most of the more qualitative data we found is rather anecdotal and difficult to compare or generalize. Therefore these researches are not further discussed in this report.

The UK has hardly developed a separate national strategy for Roma inclusion. The governments' general approach to social inclusion and poverty has no explicit focus on Roma (Craig, 2011). The government's approach to integration, explained in the 2012 paper 'Creating the Conditions for Integration'<sup>10</sup>, does not mention specific groups and explicitly moves away from a national approach, encouraging local authorities to take the lead. The UK reports on its Roma-related policies to the European commission in the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) documents. Here, the UK confirms its intention to complement and reinforce the EU commitments to address the needs of Roma,

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<sup>7</sup> See for instance the reportage 'UK Roma population one of biggest in Europe' on Channel 4 (30 October 2013): <http://www.channel4.com/news/immigration-roma-migrants-bulgaria-romania-slovakia-uk> (Last accessed 16-03-2015); or 'Roma migrants could cause riots in cities, warns Blunkett' in the Telegraph (11 November 2013). <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10442352/Roma-migrants-could-cause-riots-in-cities-warns-Blunkett.html> (Last accessed 16-03-2015).

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_country\\_factsheets\\_2013/uk\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_country_factsheets_2013/uk_en.pdf) (last accessed 17-04-2015).

<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_uk\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_uk_strategy_en.pdf) (last accessed 17-04-2015).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-the-conditions-for-a-more-integrated-society> (last accessed 17-04-2015).

*“whilst at the same time not ceding any new powers or competence to the Commission and without accepting additional requirements above what the UK is in any case already doing, such as by ensuring sufficient flexibility around what constitutes national strategy, not imposing unhelpful targets, nor accepting burdensome reporting obligations on those, like the UK, with relatively few Roma citizens.” (DCLG, 2012)*

According to one interviewee, this means that in practice the UK has no separate national strategy for Roma inclusion (I: MigRom project coordinator). Others have also argued that within the UK there is no coherent policy framework on Roma not nationally or at the local level (FRA, 2009, European Dialogue, 2009).

*“In this policy vacuum, local agencies have tended to make up policy as they go along, sometimes shaped by a general stance towards ethnic minorities, sometimes drawing on their experience of working with Gypsy and Traveller populations.” (Craig, 2011: 23)*

Rachel Humphris (2013) observes that Roma are often mentioned in education policy while they remain largely invisible in other national policies. She examines the changing construction of ‘Roma’ in education policy documents and the consequences of changing funding structures.

*“The largest change [over the last decade] is that Roma are now considered with reference to their history and minority status in national education policy documents, rather than as a category within English Romany Gypsies or Irish Travellers.” (Humphris, 2013, p. 30 brackets added)*

As the Roma population grew in Manchester, at first there was some discussion about whether they should be approached by the International New Arrivals team (focussing on general matters of integration) or the Travellers Education Service (attributing specific attention to the cultural identity based on their experiences with English Gypsies and Travellers). In the meantime these services have merged and are gathering more information about Roma as a distinctive but heterogeneous group. These trends coincided with devolution of responsibilities to the local level (under the previous Labour government) and later significant budget cuts, especially for local authorities (under the 2010-2015 Coalition government). A substantial part of the money they used to employ and commission support for minority groups in schools like bilingual staff and outreach work is now given directly to the schools<sup>11</sup> (I: Education and Skills B).

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<sup>11</sup> A recent overview of the Coalition government’s social policy, spending and outcomes shows that the National Health Service, schools and pensions have been protected from budget cuts while there have been severe cuts to social security and local services. “The biggest loser was the Department for Communities and Local Government. According to the local government association, total local government funding in England fell by 33 per cent from 2009/10 to 2014/15. This, of course, includes funding for a very large range of services. Those services that councils are obliged by law to provide have necessarily been protected more than those over which they have discretion” (Lupton et al., 2015: p. 21).



## **2.2 Romanian Roma in Gorton South**

It is estimated that about 3,000 Roma reside in Greater Manchester, which has a population of over 2.5 million. This number is based on observations of practitioners and council agencies, as no reliable statistics exist. In general Roma from Eastern Europe have been arriving in Greater Manchester in two waves, often after being settled elsewhere in Europe. The first wave took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This group consisted of families that had been living in different European countries and families joining them directly from Romania. Most of them arrived in the UK seeking for asylum. The majority of these applications were denied and those families were ordered to return to their country of origin. Some of the stayed despite this order to leave, but most of them left and went back to Romania or other European countries. From 2007, they could return. From then on, families from countries such as Italy, France, Spain, Ireland, Belgium and Portugal joined the group in Manchester (Matras, Beluschi Fabeni Leggio, & Vránová, 2009). The majority of Romanian Roma in Manchester are part of a tight community, made up of kinship networks of around five large extended families (I: MigRom research associate). The Romanian Roma is the most visible Roma group in Manchester. They are also the most documented group (Davies & Murphy, 2010; Matras et al., 2009) and they have been targeted explicitly by local policy through a multi-agency 'Roma Strategy Group' (Mills & Wilson, 2013) in 2009. In the following years the group has been approached through a variety of projects and outreach strategies, many of them related to issues of school attendance. Other Roma groups remained largely invisible in public debates about Roma specific policies (I: MigRom research associate).

Most of the Romanian Roma immigrants in Manchester live at the intersection of the Gorton, Levenshulme and Longsight neighbourhoods in the south of Manchester. Some related families live elsewhere in the Greater Manchester area, mostly in Oldham. In 2009 it was estimated that about 280 to 350 Romanian Roma were living in the Gorton/Levenshulme/Longsight area. The majority of them originate from a town called Țândărei, in the Romanian province of Ialomița (Matras et al., 2009)<sup>12</sup>. In general, the Romanian Roma in the community are not experiencing extreme poverty and most of their basic social needs such as access to housing, education and healthcare are met. The vast majority of the Romanian Roma community was able to obtain affordable terraced housing in the neighbourhood on the private renting market, mostly from migrant landlords (I: MigRom research associate). Access to the National Healthcare Service (NHS) is tied to proof of address, so most members of the community have access to public healthcare (Matras et al., 2014).

Schools and the team of the education department concerned with school attendance of international new arrivals have been in contact with Roma children and families since the late 1990's. When the Roma community became seen as a policy problem by policy-makers, following resident's suspicions and complaints (see chapter three of this report), the relations between the Roma community and schools became an important point of attention in the Roma engagement strategy.

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<sup>12</sup> The scope of this report does not allow us to do justice to the diversity and history of the Romanian Roma in Manchester. For more detailed information we refer the reader to an extensive time line written by researchers of the Romani project in their 2014 'Report on the Pilot Survey' (p.8-13). It can be found under the headings 'project report', 'first year' and 'Manchester report': <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/report-policy-briefs.html> (last accessed 13-07-2015).

Those concerned with the presence of the Roma community claimed that Roma families were often reluctant to send and keep their children in school regularly and linked this to Roma culture, family life and previous negative experiences with education. Researchers, on the other hand, showed that Roma families experienced difficulties when registering their children in the school of their choice. This can be partially attributed to insufficient places in primary schools in Manchester, but surveys by the University of Manchester also reported experiences of discrimination against Roma (Matras et al., 2009; Matras et al., 2014). According to the Manchester City Council's 'Roma Strategy 2011-2014' published in 2013 (Mills & Wilson), there are no noticeable issues of school attendance with the Roma community. In 2013 attendance of Roma even outstrips those of other communities, which is regarded as a positive effect of the engagement strategy (see below). A growing number of Roma pupils are now finishing high school and attend college or university. Before 2014 many Roma families were self-employed doing scrap metal collection and selling the Big Issue<sup>13</sup>.

*"In general, these types of self-employment generate a low income (£5,750 per year per person on average), allowing most families to receive income tax breaks. A minority of the families received Housing<sup>14</sup> and child benefits. Austerity measures, however, are making accessing even tax breaks increasingly more difficult."* (Matras et al., 2014, pp. 6-7)

After the lifting of the employment restriction in January 2014 a growing number of the members of the Romanian Roma community is finding employment, often as drivers or in the cleaning or catering sector (I: Outreach worker A). On the level of urban policy-making, Manchester profiles itself as a city that is open to newcomers. Cultural diversity is put forward as one of its selling points in the 'Greater Manchester Strategy 2013'<sup>15</sup>. The city has a well-developed apparatus for monitoring equality<sup>16</sup>. Interviewees refer to what they perceive as a genuine commitment of the city council to integration (I: MigRom project coordinator, Education & Skills A, Regeneration). In the council's view the main routes to successful integration are education and employment (Mills & Wilson, 2013). Among city services it is a common strategy to use existing community structures, networks and leadership figures to engage with communities. This proved to be difficult in the Romanian Roma community (I: Regeneration), which has no organised voice or clear leadership to represent them to the outside world (Matras et al., 2009). This is a concern, especially in the current context where statutory services are forced to reorganize under pressure of budget cuts. While outreach work was fairly developed in the previous years, today – as a result of budget cuts – online administration and community representatives having to take initiative by coming to the services with proposals and questions themselves became the new modus operandi for the city council. Those communities that are not able to do this increasingly risk missing out on government support (I: Regeneration).

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<sup>13</sup> Magazine sold by homeless people, long term unemployed and other group at risk of poverty: <http://www.bigissue.com/>. The Big Issue is affiliated with the Big Life Group, an actor involved in the Manchester-Roma engagement strategies (see further).

<sup>14</sup> The reasons are not entirely clear. The researchers from the University of Manchester note "the relatively high rate of rejections seems due to the opaque presentation of eligibility criteria" (Matras et al., 2014, p. 26).

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.agma.gov.uk/cms\\_media/files/gm\\_strategy\\_stronger\\_together\\_summary3.pdf](http://www.agma.gov.uk/cms_media/files/gm_strategy_stronger_together_summary3.pdf) (last accessed 16-03-2015).

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200041/equality\\_and\\_diversity/5885/our\\_policy\\_approach/6](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/5885/our_policy_approach/6) (last accessed 16-03-2015).

### 3 Genesis of the initiative<sup>17</sup>

Researchers and students from the School of Arts, Languages, and Cultures at the University of Manchester have been engaging with Romanian Roma in the Gorton/Levenshulme/Longsight area for several years. They did this through the Romani Project<sup>18</sup>, which focussed primarily but not exclusively on Romani linguistics and language related projects. The coordinator of these projects, professor Yaron Matras is a linguist, specialized in several languages including Romani (also called Romanes), the language of Roma. Being one of the leading scholars in this field he has published several peer-reviewed articles and books on Roma and Romani. He is also the editor of the cross-disciplinary journal *Romani Studies*<sup>19</sup>. The MigRom research associate is also an expert in this field and proficient in Romani.

Given the researchers' expertise in Roma culture and Romani they were well placed to play a bridging role between the Roma community and Manchester public institutions and city council. The research group became involved in policy advocacy and engagement strategies around 2008-2009<sup>20</sup>. The start of active engagement of Manchester public institutions with this group of Romanian Roma can be situated around 2008 when Manchester schools experienced a growing number of requests to enrol Roma pupils. In the summer of 2008 the primary school with the highest number of Roma pupils contacted the Romani project at the University of Manchester for information and advice about the community and their background. This school was the first to appoint a man from the Romani community to support school attendance and the communication with parents. The following school year a member of the Romani project became a teacher and later the EAL (English as an Additional Language) leader at that school (Matras et al., 2014).

In the summer of 2009 politicians under pressure of complaints of some inhabitants put the presence of Romanian Roma in the Longsight neighbourhood on the agenda. Over a relatively short period different Roma families settled in the same street where they spent time outside on the streets together regularly. This triggered a range of complaints about littering and nuisance. Residents also raised various suspicions and accusations about Roma being unemployed, evading taxes, not sending children to school and even engaging in criminal activities and child trafficking. Neighbourhood meetings were organised where dissatisfied neighbours discussed the situation with local officials. At that point no Roma were invited. Emotions ran high at the first meeting and the concerns were voiced in a language with racist overtones. This, combined with an unrelated incident in Belfast where the autochthonous population assaulted Roma at that very same time, made the local authorities judge the situation as explosive. They devised a coordinated 'multi agency' approach, that was as much about resolving tensions in the neighbourhood and proving that the Roma did not pose a threat to the neighbours as it was about solving 'problems caused by Roma' (I: Regeneration).

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<sup>17</sup> For a much more detailed chronological overview of the events leading up to the MigRom project we refer readers to the 2014 *report on the pilot survey* (Matras et al., 2014).

<sup>18</sup> <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/index.shtml>

<sup>19</sup> <http://romanistudies.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/>

<sup>20</sup> The MigRom project coordinator (Interview) points out that the University of Manchester provides an enabling context in this regard. The university has a social responsibility agenda that encourages "members of the University community to bring advanced knowledge and expertise to bear on public discourse, policy-development and the formation of public attitudes, values and understanding" Online: <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=11015> (last accessed 16-03-2015).

A multi-agency approach to support cohesion in a neighbourhood, sharing information about communities and coordinating activities amongst agencies is not exceptional in itself. However, the explicit and intensive policy attention for this particular community and its neighbours (through a 'Roma Strategy' and later through a more informal 'Roma Operational group'<sup>21</sup>) can be regarded as exceptional (I: Regeneration, MigRom project coordinator). The strategy encompassed amongst other things: supplementary cleaning services for the area, neighbourhood initiatives to encourage positive encounters and exchange, police and tax controls, and elements from the engagement strategy that was proposed in the 2009 report of the University of Manchester. Manchester City Council commissioned this report, on advice of the primary school mentioned above (Matras et al., 2009). The recommendations for an engagement strategy at the end of the report read as follows:

*"1) Training young Roma from the community to serve as role models, 2) engaging the trainees as Roma interpreters for local agencies and as Roma classroom assistants in schools, 3) recruiting short-term support and inspiration (by presenting them with role models) for the trainees and support for the community through two full-time positions for Roma outreach workers, to be recruited from outside the community, for a period of one to two years."* (Matras et al., 2014, p. 9 brackets added)

From 2010 onwards these recommendations have largely been implemented. The city *"worked with two outreach projects to work directly with the Roma community"* (Mills & Wilson, 2013, p. 3), together with other actors such as: Manchester City Council Regeneration, the University of Manchester (Romani Project), The Big Life Company (who already provided opportunities of self-employment to the community and proposed to support the training of young people), Manchester City Council's Children's services International New Arrivals, Traveller Education Service and Supplementary Schools Team (INA/T/SS)<sup>22</sup> and BHA for Equality, formerly the Black Health Agency<sup>23</sup> (BHA). BHA is a non-profit organisation that has been engaging with migrant communities through the Routes programme and was commissioned by Manchester City Council's Children's services to provide outreach and bilingual support for newly arrived communities, funded by the city's Migrant Impact Fund. This was not a Roma specific project, but its activities included the employment and support of Roma outreach workers and classroom assistants (I: BHA Director), as such it contributed to Roma engagement.

The schemes that are implemented and further developed through the MigRom project draw on the experiences with the Manchester Roma engagement strategy. It builds further on some of the relationships between the actors developed since 2009 (such as the relationship with Regeneration who is a partner in the project and with the Big Life Group who has made its Sure Start centre available

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<sup>21</sup> The 'Roma Operational Group' was set up in May 2010 to succeed the 'Roma Strategy Group'. The Roma Operational Group consisted of local police officers, staff from local schools and representatives of voluntary sector agencies.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.natt.org.uk/organisation/manchester-international-new-arrivals-travellers-and-supplementary-schools-team> (last accessed 20-03-2015). Here we use INA/T/SS to refer to the different teams working on education and minorities in Manchester. We interviewed four employees of these services during a group interview (Appendix I).

<sup>23</sup> BHA is a limited company and a registered charity that offers "a range of unique services delivered at local, regional and national level in the areas of sexual health, community health education and engaging and involving communities in health and social care decision making". Online: <http://www.thebha.org.uk/aboutus> (last accessed 12-03-2015).

for the drop-in sessions) and not the least on the experiences of the young Roma that participated. All the actors interviewed highlight the positive evolution in the engagement with the Romanian Roma migrant community and the 'majority society' and its institutions since 2007: school attendance, recent to access employment, participation in the neighbourhood, access to services and so on.

*"Although all families are now eager to send their children to school, it took some time before early arrived families felt settled enough in Manchester to send their children to school. Outreach work and interventions in school played no small part in increasing families' sense of stability in Manchester."* (Matras et al., 2014, p. 5)

As the Migrant Impact Fund project came to an end at the end of 2011, the two positions of Roma outreach workers lost funding. However, at that time Romani project of the University of Manchester successfully submitted a research proposal entitled 'The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies (MigRom)' for a grant from the European Commission<sup>24</sup> and invites Manchester City Council Regeneration to participate. They present it as an opportunity to get funding to continue and further develop Roma engagement in Manchester. Manchester City Council Regeneration agrees to join the research project as they saw it as a welcome opportunity to keep the momentum and positive evolution of the existing engagement with the Roma community going. More specifically, they hoped that this funding could be used to work towards a self-determining community, in order to enable them to transfer more responsibilities to the community. At that time, according to a Regeneration staff member, the council was concerned that most members from the Roma community would turn towards the employment benefit system when restrictions on employment would be lifted in January 2014<sup>25</sup>. Continuing the engagement could be a way to monitor and, if necessary, to address this. In February 2015 it was clear that their concerns were ungrounded (I: Regeneration).

Two of the outreach workers that were appointed by the MigRom project were part of the group of young people that received training during previous phases of the Roma engagement strategy. They worked before as outreach workers, interpreters and classroom assistants with the Big Life Group and/or BHA. At first the plan was for the Roma outreach workers to be employed by MCC, but, MCC decided that it was not opportune at that time because several departments were forced to let staff go due to budget cuts (I: Education and Skills A; MigRom project coordinator). MCC proposed to outsource the outreach part of the project to third sector partners, but the European Commission disapproved of this as key activities of the project cannot be outsourced. In the end, the Romani project of University of Manchester decided to employ the outreach workers and have them functioning within their research team.

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<sup>24</sup> 'Dealing with diversity and cohesion: the case of the Roma in the European Union' (GA319901).

<sup>25</sup> According to the interviewee (I: Regeneration) this was observed within the Somali community when they moved from asylum to refugee status.

## 4 The activities and organization

The main activities of the MigRom project are described in table 1 and illustrated with examples.

**Tab. 1: Main activities of the MigRom project**

Activity	Description and examples
Weekly drop-in sessions	The outreach workers offer support to members from the Roma community. The needs and concerns emerging from these sessions are monitored and analysed (after making the visitors anonymous) together with the research staff.
Supporting Roma self-reliance	Supporting members of the Roma community to set up and manage interactions with local institutions themselves, reducing dependency on mediation, support and advice by third sector organisations. <i>Examples: The project has set up a 'Roma Leadership Group' together with young Roma volunteers. These young volunteers set up a community cleaning action with people from the neighbourhood and with support of local councillors<sup>26</sup>; The establishment of a Roma Consultation forum is a deliverable of the project. Current attempts to set up such a forum or community group aim to go beyond the Manchester area.</i>
Empowerment through education	Raising awareness and sharing information about Romani language, culture and history with schools, pupils and staff. Encourage and support young Roma to become role models for younger Roma children. <i>Examples: University started this already in 2008 after the request of a primary school (see above). The support for young Roma translators is one example of supporting young people to become a role model. Supporting the Roma outreach workers to further develop their research and writing skills is another example (I: Outreach worker B).</i>
Roma Youth Forum	Facilitate exchange between university students, international Roma activists and academic experts.
Raising public awareness	Active involvement in the public debate, often through the media, on social relations between Roma and British society and its institutions. <i>Example: At a time of media hysteria and negative coverage on Roma in Britain, the MigRom did efforts to rebalance the discussions, which led to very positive coverage in national media (Chanel 4, BBC) on Manchester as a positive example of engagement between the city and their Roma community<sup>27</sup></i>
Policy assessment and dissemination of good practice	Based on the experiences with their activities and the activities of other actors intervening in the Manchester context the project puts together policy briefings and press releases. The project also assesses and reviews policies and policy-oriented research. <i>Example good practice: The MigRom research associate wrote a newspaper article in the Guardian with the title 'How Manchester has reached out to Roma migrants' (09-12-2013). Online: <a href="http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/dec/09/migrant-roma-communities-integration-uk-manchester">http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/dec/09/migrant-roma-communities-integration-uk-manchester</a> (last accessed 23-07-2015).</i> <i>Example assessment of policies: The MigRom project published (on their own initiative) an evaluation of a project of BHA about young Roma (girls), early marriage and school attendance in Manchester. This controversial document includes contributions of academic experts (MigRom, 2014a).</i>
International networking	Being a large international consortium, MigRom has direct access to the highest levels of the research-policy interface through international fora, workshops, conferences and partnership with European Commission, the Council of Europe, local authorities and large NGO's. <i>Example: One of the outreach workers has participated at various international events, giving presentations to activists and policy makers, participating on exchange and policy oriented programmes and more (I: Outreach worker B).</i>

Source: (MigRom, 2013, p. 2) and interviews with staff and partners from the MigRom project.

The table shows that engagement strategies and supporting activities are intertwined with academic research, advocacy towards policy-makers and the development of public interventions. Activities and strategies are informed by and deliberated with members of the Romanian Roma community and academics who are experts in Romani and are familiar with the Roma culture. The Manchester MigRom

<sup>26</sup>This activity got media coverage: <http://www.mancunianmatters.co.uk/content/261171825-roma-youngsters-clean-longsight-streets-attempt-sweep-away-prejudice> (last accessed 20-03-2015); It was also put forward as a good example of scholars taking social responsibility on the website of the University of Manchester: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/article/?id=13358> (last accessed 20-03-2015)

<sup>27</sup><http://www.channel4.com/news/uk-immigrations-migrants-roma-eu>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25559645>

team consists of three outreach workers (two fulltime-equivalents), a research associate, a research supervisor and administrative staff that meet regularly. The table shows that the activities target different dimensions of the life of members of the Roma community (education, work, housing, representation) and cover different policy levels and networks (local, European).

In the section below the focus is on the weekly drop-in sessions. This activity is at the core of the engagement scheme and shows how the community engagement and research activities are intertwined. The same can be said about the activities related to Roma leadership and representation. These experiences are briefly mentioned in table 1 as an example of activities that aim to support Roma self-reliance. It comprises several distinct activities such as: young Roma that invite neighbours to engage together with them in a cleaning action; young Roma that ask a meeting with local officials to discuss the way that early marriage is described as a 'Roma issue' in council minutes; attempts of the MigRom project and Roma volunteers to establish a Roma consultation forum. Some of the experiences with these activities (who are described in depth in MigRom, 2015) will be discussed in chapter seven of this report on the governance challenges.

#### **4.1 Drop-in consultation**

Every Thursday morning the outreach workers of the MigRom project host drop-in sessions for Roma at the Sure Start centre<sup>28</sup> in the Longsight area, close to where most Romanian Roma live. The centre is run by Big Life Families, which is part of the Big Life Group. The drop-in is open for all kinds of questions.

In the first two months of the project the outreach workers visited people in the neighbourhood and at home in order to find out which kind of support people would appreciate. The idea of a drop-in emerged from these consultations and deliberation within the MigRom team (I: Outreach workers A and B). Figure 1 shows the number of people from different households that visited the drop-in consultation each quarter of the first year that the service was operational i.e. the period from September 2013 until October 2014. Many of the 93 families who visited drop-in sessions returned regularly. The number of first time users rose again in the fourth quarter as the project started to host a second drop-in consultation on Tuesday in Oldham in cooperation with Oldham city Council.

*“Queries typically cover issues relating to adjustment into a new environment. Clients seek support to fill in self-assessment and tax returns, to search for job opportunities, to pay utility and Council Tax bills, to register their children to school, register with GPs, etc.” (MigRom, 2014b: p. 1)*

In the first year the outreach team recorded 325 queries. Figure 2 shows the proportion of different types of queries according to their content. The category 'others' includes questions about the translation and interpretation of documents, birth certificates, bank accounts, driver license and different registration procedures. After January 2014, when the employment rights for A2 nationals changed, the number of queries about job opportunities, training and how to write and spread a CV increased. Before most employment related inquiries were about licenses for self-employment (I:

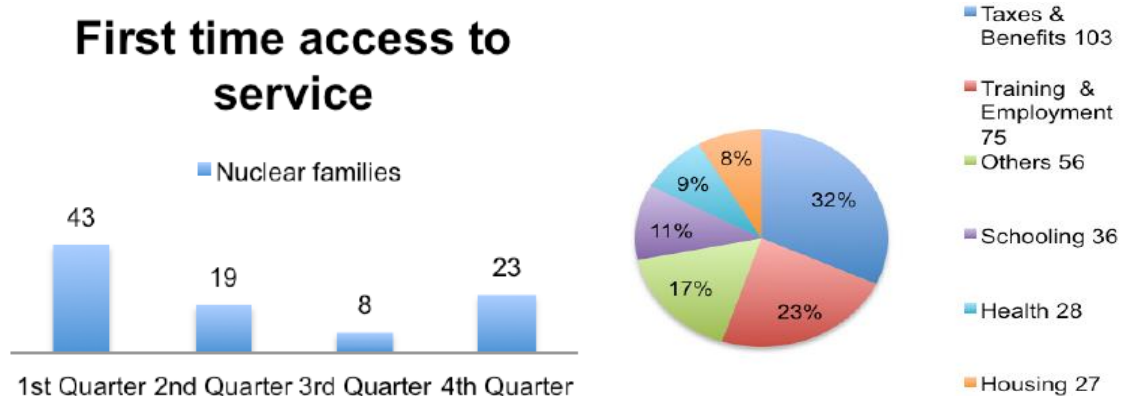
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<sup>28</sup> Local child care centre that can be run by local authorities, charities and/or social enterprises.



Outreach worker A). In the category 'taxes and benefits' most queries concern tax credit. After 2014 there was a rise in questions about benefits.

Fig. 1: Number of first time visits Sept 2013- October 2014. Fig. 2: Type of enquiries Sept2013- October 2014



Source: MigRom Briefing: Drop in consultation first year report, October 2014.

Given that the outreach workers come from the Romanian Roma community, the outreach workers are well-known figures in the community and people occasionally go to the drop-in sessions for advice about personal matters. *“Sometimes people just come in because they need to have a chat with somebody”* (I: Outreach worker A). The relationships of trust between the community and the MigRom project are regarded as key to its success. The background of the Roma and Romanian outreach workers and the fact that other members of the university team speak Romani clearly helped to establish these trust relationships. In Manchester there were little or no difficulties to reach the community (I: Outreach workers A and B)<sup>29</sup>.

The organisers of the drop-in sessions describe their outreach approach as demand led and promoting self-reliance. In this regard it is a conscious and important choice to organize drop-in sessions at a fixed location, instead of going out to people’s homes. People often feel uncomfortable to speak about their need for support or related issues when other people, family and community members are around. House visits are often experienced to be intrusive<sup>30</sup>. The drop-in is a more confidential setting where visitors have more control over the moment and topic of discussion. People from the Roma community also regard it to be more ‘professional’ (I: Outreach workers A and B). Outreach workers also believe that this way of working encourages people to find answers themselves, to *“go outside their little box”* (I: Outreach worker B), instead of relying on other people looking out for a solution for their problems.

<sup>29</sup> Other possible explanations that were mentioned are the smaller awareness of the service or a smaller need for extra information and support.

<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that outreach workers have been involved in house visits before, mostly through projects with a focus on education. They do not dismiss that this way of engaging with the community has been valuable, for instance for addressing school attendance. Still, one of them feels, based on personal experience, that assertive outreach is often applied in a manner that is too problem oriented, risking to reproduce the image of Roma as a group that needs continuous attention and support. In their current professional situation, where the goal is to respond to needs voiced by the community and contribute to a longitudinal survey of the Romanian Roma community in Manchester, they both believe the drop-in session and demand led approach is the appropriate method (I: Outreach worker A and B).



The MigRom team also claims that their method is less 'problem oriented' (or problem imposing) compared to what they consider to be the more conventional outreach method where social workers are sent in by policy makers to assess the needs of a community and intervene when something is perceived to be 'wrong'. Their approach is explicitly 'demand led' or 'client defined': people come when they have questions themselves (I: MigRom project coordinator).

In some cases the outreach workers are able help people immediately, for instance with translation or filling in a form. In many other cases the outreach workers explain the visitors what the different options are (for instance related to training), refer the visitors to other institutions or bring them in contact with somebody who can help them. Visitors sometimes need professional assistance, for instance in accountancy, which is beyond what the outreach workers can offer (I: MigRom project coordinator). In any case, the outreach workers seek to strengthen the self-reliance of clients i.e. inform families so that they know what to do, who to contact or how to fill in that form in the future. An important strategy is that families are encouraged to take (young) relatives with them who are proficient in English and acquainted with computers and online systems.

It is essential to the design of the MigRom project that the drop-in consultations also provide an important entry to conduct the longitudinal survey of the Romanian Roma in Manchester<sup>31</sup>. It is both a service to the community and academic fieldwork. The engagement scheme and research pragmatics are very much intertwined. The outreach workers have the best access to the community, but they were not trained as researchers in advance. They are supervised and supported by an experienced researcher to write small reports that are used as input to write research reports. The outreach workers and academics meet regularly (more than once a week). The researchers put a lot of emphasis on taking research ethics into consideration. Hence the team discusses openly and regularly about what is appropriate to disclose and what not. The outreach workers are encouraged to give input from their perspective as members of the community. The research associate mediates and compiles this input. When the research associate writes a draft reports, the outreach workers are invited to comment on how their input was used (I: MigRom research associate).

This relation between outreach and research has to be understood within a particular vision of Roma empowerment and the role of the University and the production of knowledge in this process (further discussed in the next chapter in the section on empowerment). The client-led outreach aims to bring the framing of 'Roma needs' and the construction of 'Roma problems' more under control of the members of the Roma community. Resources of the research project and the outcomes of the research itself are meant to be of use in reaching that goal. The outreach workers are producing knowledge about processes in which they are an active partner, which is a unique feature of the MigRom project.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/objectives.html>

## 5 The innovative dimension of the initiative

In this part, the socially innovative dimensions of the MigRom project are analysed through three basic components of social innovation (Gerometta, Haussermann, & Longo, 2005; Moulaert, Martinelli, Swyngedouw, & Gonzalez, 2005): (a) the satisfaction of basic social needs (content dimension); (b) the transformation of social relations (process dimension); (c) and the empowerment and socio-political mobilization (the political dimension linking the process and content dimension).

### 5.1 Content dimension

The outreach component of the MigRom project aims to support members of the Romanian Roma community to alleviate a variety of possible social needs, related to the social inclusion of the community and its members in Manchester. We can make a distinction between individual/family social needs and collective social needs of the Romanian Roma as a community.

The individual and family needs that emerge from the drop-in consultations and are addressed there are predominantly about the relationship between Roma individuals and families and the institutions of British society (education system, social security system, labour market and employment agencies, fiscal system, driving license, housing system...). More generally, this part of the engagement scheme reacts to the needs of Roma to understand 'how things work' in Manchester and the UK, to know where to go to sort out certain issues and understand the different options available and who to ask for help. What they can or need to do in order to enjoy their social rights.

In the Manchester context, described in chapter two of this report, community representation and leadership is regarded as a need for communities in order to get recognized as such. Communities that are not able to voice their concerns and go to the local authorities themselves increasingly risk "missing out" (I: Regeneration). Hence community leadership and self-organisation is a perceived collective need of the Roma community by the policy and academic partners of the MigRom project. Through the support of a leadership group and a Roma Consultation Forum (community group) the project addresses the social need of the community to have the capacity and leadership to scrutinize the way Roma are depicted in the media and policy documents. Since interviewing members of the community fell outside the scope of this research, we are unable to say to what extent members of the community regard community representation as a need. It is clear that this issue was initially flagged outside the community and that no established leadership was observed during the 2009 research, but the MigRom project managed to find young volunteers for the Roma leadership group (MigRom, 2015). These youngsters had been involved as a volunteer or employee in previous engagement and/or training projects in Manchester (see chapter three of this report).

The importance of self-reliance and having influence on how the needs of Roma are interpreted and problematized is stressed both when addressing individual or collective social needs. It is one of the goals of the project to ensure that the Roma community will no longer depend on special trajectories or mediating structures to fully participate in English society and its institutions.

The research associate (interview) argued that in most public discussions about Romanian Roma and policy interventions concerning Roma, the issue is not so much the concrete needs of Romanian Roma as it is the need of public authorities and institutions to know more about Roma.

## **5.2 Process dimension**

*“The social inclusion of Roma is a two-way process: Roma face the challenge to make use of the opportunities available to them in education and public participation. Majority society and its institutions are challenged to confront traditional perception and prejudice against Roma and to help secure opportunities for equal participation. Both processes require information, critical reflection, and the will to test new approaches; the active involvement of members of the Roma community in this process is essential. This is the basis for our partnership between academic researchers, policy makers and practitioners.” (MigRom, 2013, p. 2)*

The above quote, which is part of the mission statement of MigRom, explains how the project envisions the process of inclusion of Roma in the Manchester society. In this regard it is important to keep in mind that the drop-in consultations is only one out of many activities. Raising awareness amongst institutions and spreading positive messages through the media are equally important in the total process. These activities always involve the Roma outreach workers or volunteers from the community. This is regarded as essential to the socially innovative process of rearranging the social relationships between the majority society and the Roma community. Efforts are made to create or give access to platforms where it is possible to continue that kind of exchange and dialogue (like a community group or international exchange programmes).

MigRom itself can be regarded as such a platform. The project is socially innovative in the way that it set up as a research and learning partnership between researchers, practitioners, a local authority and members from a community that is often regarded as marginalized and hard to reach. It is a transdisciplinary endeavour, bringing together different interests and different forms of knowledge. This partnership is based on a joint commitment to fostering participation, producing knowledge that is applicable to the local context and making knowledge available to deprived communities who can benefit from creative strategies.

The researchers are actively involved in their field of study and forge relationships with their ‘research subjects’ who themselves are actively involved in the agenda setting and research process. These are characteristics of what Novy and colleagues (2013) call a ‘knowledge alliance’. Novy et al. point out that the success of such a socially innovative partnership and process of knowledge production is not guaranteed. Besides a range of practical concerns (funding, tools of communication) they stress a continuous need for deliberation and open debate, which is often difficult to realize in practice. ‘Knowledge alliances’ foster multi-perceptivity, context sensitivity and stakeholder involvement. Dealing with competing interests and working towards a joint problematization of the field in which involved actors have to act, they deal with politically contentious issues - such as the needs and rights of Roma migrants - which they treat as public issues and matters of collective responsibility. It is therefore not unusual that power relations and competing interests influence the process. These caveats are very similar to the experiences described in the interviews in Manchester. The specific challenges emerging from this will be addressed in detail in chapter six and seven of this report.

### 5.3 Empowerment dimension

*“Empowerment in the Roma community? It is in the first place a word for people who know how to play with this word. They say we need to empower the Roma community but at the same time they make me believe that they [the Roma] are a problem.”* (I: Outreach worker B, brackets added)

*“If you mean by empowerment living your life the way you want, having control over your life, they are already doing this. There are probably some small things that people see Roma community or Romanians do and think they are bad, but it is not so bad as in other countries... I don’t know how to explain it. They have the empowerment to have a good lifestyle... there are opportunities schooling, jobs.”* (I: Outreach worker A)

The above quotes of the two Roma outreach workers relativize and contextualize the assumption that Roma are in need of empowerment. The term is often used in different ways, hence it is important to specify ‘for what’ and ‘by whom’ empowerment is desirable. The first quote illustrates the concern that empowerment is often used to construct Roma as ‘a needy subject’<sup>32</sup> or ‘people with special needs’. These often well intended empowerment strategies risk to reproduce prejudices and can even create relations of dependency. In that regard, the outreach workers propose to that unmasking these assumptions is to be understood as real empowerment.

*“People tell me that Roma girls need empowerment and that Roma boys and girls cannot work together. But each year I see more and more Roma girls participating in all kinds of activities, often together with boys. So why do they say that?”* (I: Outreach worker B)

The other outreach worker points out that access to housing, education and employment are fairly well realized in Manchester and that discrimination and hostilities are not as bad as in other countries. In that sense the community members are already ‘empowered’. The quotes show suspicion towards external actors that claim that the Roma community would need special (categorical) strategies, trajectories or policies in order to take more control over their life.

Concepts such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘participation’ are often used in relation to Roma minorities, but with very different meanings (van Baar, 2013). The MigRom project has a particular vision on what Roma empowerment should entail in the Manchester context. The self-reliance and self-representation of the Romanian Roma community are at the centre of this vision. While some of the activities focus on capacitating a limited number of individuals (who could represent and support the community), empowerment is primarily regarded as a collective process of the Romanian Roma living in Manchester that relates to a much broader struggle i.e.: the emancipation of the Roma as an heterogeneous ethnic group with a particular history.

The MigRom project justifies its interventions for capacity building and support at the local level and beyond by referring to its temporary character. The project partners aim to kick-start an independent Roma community group (possibly functioning as a forum or advice centre) that can continue after the

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<sup>32</sup> This formulation is borrowed from Timmer (2010) who shows how even well-meaning NGO’s in Hungary overemphasise stories of poverty and discrimination, constructing the Roma as ‘needy subjects’.

project. In that case the project would not leave a gap when it is finished, but a legacy. This ambition fits with a vision of empowerment as a temporary process of informing, capacitating and supporting individuals and their community to be self-reliant and represented in the public debate.

Enabling self-reliance is implied in the methods and logistics of outreach work that operates through the drop-in sessions and the notion of 'client defined support' (see chapter four of this report). The goal of enabling Roma representation is part of a vision that regards it as empowering for Roma to subject local authority, policies and public interventions about Roma to scrutiny, which was attempted with Roma volunteers through the leaderships group (MigRom, 2015) and by the MigRom project by interventions in the media and publications on their website.

A key strategy to pursue this vision of empowerment, which was also already part of the Manchester engagement strategy before the MigRom project, is to capacitate young individuals who want to engage in training trajectories, exchange fora and jobs as classroom assistants or mediators. It is empowering for these individuals because it opens up their view of the world and offers opportunities to develop new skills. It can also be empowering for members of the community because these youngsters become role models who break up stereotypes about what Roma can or cannot do (I: MigRom project coordinator, Education & Skills C). In similar fashion, positive media coverage of Roma in Manchester featuring community members are also part of the processes of empowerment.

The quote below from professor Matras' work is helpful to put MigRom's approach to Roma empowerment in a historical perspective.

*"The absence of a tradition of literacy and public institutions within Roma society confines Roma culture largely to the private domain of the home and closed communities and thus makes it inaccessible to outsiders unless they undertake a special effort to become acquainted with Roma and their way of life and values. In writing about Roma culture we are therefore challenged to do more than simply inform; we must also undo much of the process of accumulation of incorrect information based on hearsay, projection and fantasy."* (Matras, 2011: p. 8)

The quote touches again upon the aforementioned temporary dimension and the idea that members of the Roma community could and should influence the debate and policies that affect them. Both are central to the vision on empowerment of the MigRom project. The latter is very much related to issues of representation and participation. In this case the university plays an important role in mediating the relation between Roma community and local authorities. It claims legitimacy by having access to both the community and scientific expertise.

This puts the MigRom project in a strategic, yet difficult, position. There does not seem to be an explicit mandate of the Romanian Roma in Manchester for MigRom scrutinising policies and responding to wrongly informed policies. This mission partially derives its legitimacy of scientific procedures to validate knowledge. MigRom is then involved in a difficult attempt to strike a balance between supporting the empowerment of Roma by bringing in scientific knowledge and legitimacy and assisting capacity development on the one hand, and leaving sufficient room for Romanian Roma in Manchester to define their own identity, needs and interest on the other hand. This inevitable involves the risk of paternalism and/or steering the trajectory of the Romanian Roma in Manchester too much, which would undermine the very conception of self-reliance and self-representation underlying the

empowerment strategy of the MigRom project. In this context, it is important, however, to refer to the statement of Fung, a leading social science expert on participation, that “somewhat paradoxically, realizing autonomy requires the sensitive application of external guidance and constraint” (Fung, 2004, p. 8). MigRom deals with this balancing exercise in a variety of ways: by involving Roma as outreach workers, by supporting the Roma leadership group while leaving the initiative for interventions to its volunteers, by adopting a ‘client-defined’ approach to needs of the Roma community in their outreach activities, by encouraging young Roma to engage with other networks and platforms outside the Manchester context and by presenting its interventions as temporary (I: MigRom research associate, MigRom project coordinator, Outreach worker B). The following quote from the academic leader of the MigRom project reflects their awareness of the challenge:

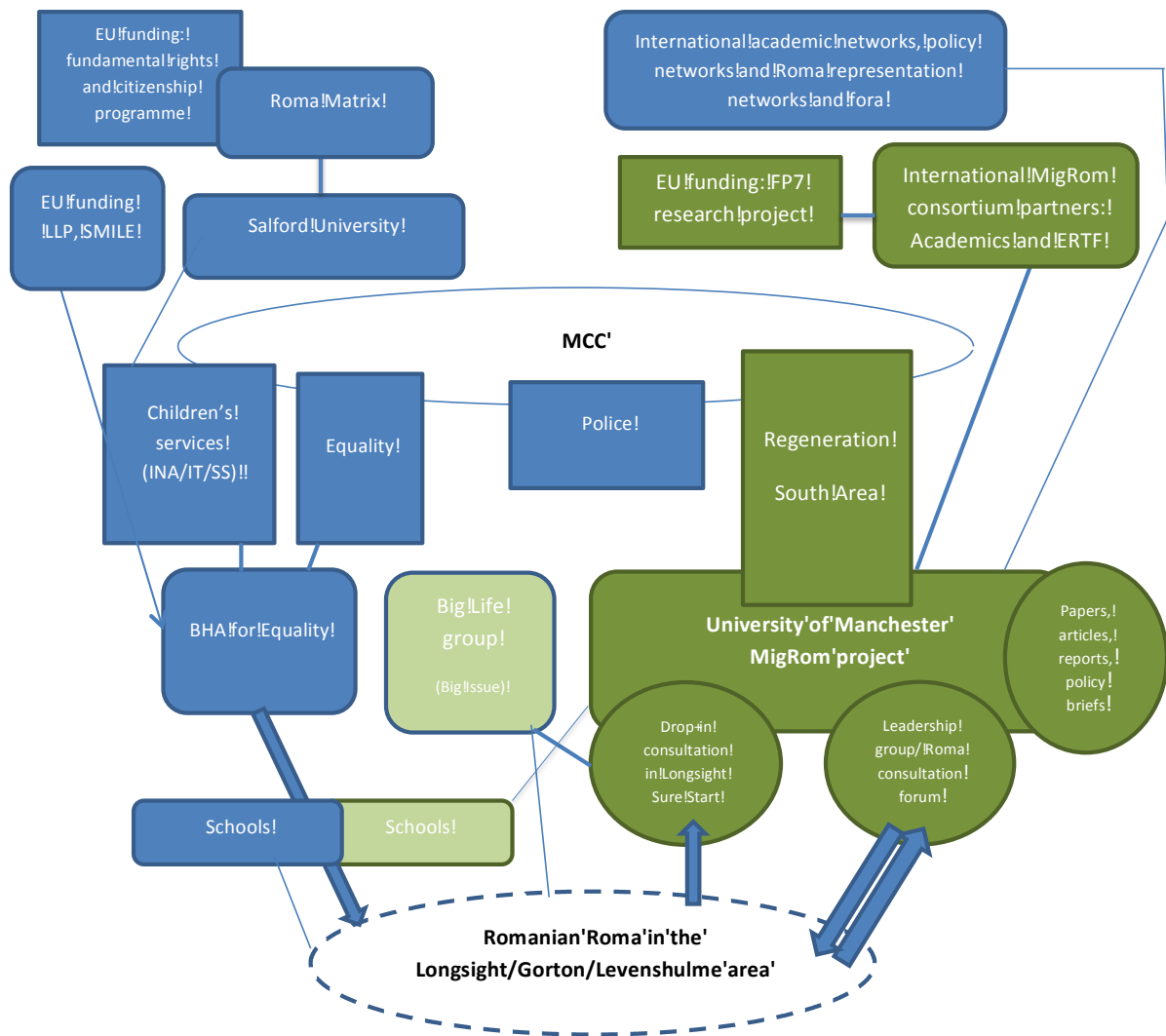
*“We are very wary to appoint a leadership in the community. You know that would not be possible or appropriate to just appoint leaders. [...] [Through our project] Young Roma get the opportunity of working with other young Roma’s from other cities that were in a somewhat similar position. So we got people networking through various ways, partly through Council of Europe sponsored initiatives and other activities. And that is in a sense empowerment because they meet Roma who are activists in other cities and they are exposed to other kinds of discourses and so on.”* (I: MigRom project coordinator, brackets added)

## 6 Institutional mapping and governance relations

This chapter maps the governance relations surrounding Roma engagement in Manchester and the MigRom project in particular.

Figure 2 displays the main actors that are directly or indirectly involved in Roma engagement strategies in Manchester. The rectangles refer to public institutions, while the circles refer to project activities. The green figures are actors that are directly involved in the MigRom project. The Big Life Group (light green and blue) is not an official partner of the MigRom project but contributes directly by making its Sure Start infrastructure available for the drop-in sessions free of charge. The blue arrows indicate concrete Roma engagement schemes (BHA has two), the direction of the arrow reflects the nature of the relationships between the involved actors: outreach (going to the community), drop-in (making the community come to the sessions) and the dialogical approach with the leadership group.

**Fig. 2: Mapping actors and their relationships in Roma engagement strategy in Manchester**



Source: Our elaboration on basis of desktop analysis and interviews

The oval figures without colour display the Roma community (a collection of families that is open to changes, families moving in and out) and the Manchester City Council (a collection of public institutions). The team of the University of Manchester that coordinates and implements the MigRom project has a partnership with Manchester City Council through the Regeneration department. There is a direct line of communication with Regeneration and communication with other departments of MCC goes through Regeneration (I: MigRom research associate). Regeneration contributes to the engagement scheme by providing information about opportunities for community members in their area (mainly job opportunities, but also for instance information about how to set up a community group), but is not directly involved in the operational aspects of it. Regeneration is actively involved in the steering group of the project. The partnership started mid-2013 when the MigRom project started. As mentioned before, MigRom is an international consortium funded by the European Commission through the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. Besides the consortium partners the University of Manchester has access to an international network of academics, policy makers and Roma representatives.

The International New Arrivals, Traveller Education Service and Supplementary Schools Team (INA/T/SS) of the department of education have been working on school related issues for migrant communities for several years. Concerning the engagement with the Romanian Roma community the Education department (through the teams mentioned) has worked with the third sector organisation BHA for Equality (BHA). Their approach included outreach work and appointing and supporting classroom assistants<sup>33</sup>. There has been a strong relationship between the INA/T/SS and BHA as one of the coordinators working for the MCC today used to work for BHA (I: Education & Skills A, BHA Director). The organisations describe their approach as “holistic”, “a multi-agency approach”, and “assertive outreach”. The approach is based on getting or keeping children in school, while recognising that the reasons for non-attendance can result from many pressures so linking up parents and children with services and providing practical support according to the assessment of their needs (I: Education & Skills D, Outreach worker BHA). BHA has two Roma engagement schemes today. The first is an outreach work scheme (two outreach workers for three days a week based in schools) commissioned by the Education Caseworkers Children and Families directorate, which is part of the group of actors identified earlier in this report as INA/T/SS. The second is a scheme to ensure that young Roma have equal access to education and a component of this is to engage young Roma (girls) who may be at risk of leaving school early because of early marriage and teenage pregnancy<sup>34</sup>, which is seen as both an educational and a safeguarding issue. The MCC Equalities Funding Programme commissions this project<sup>35</sup>. BHA and INA/T/SS also have experience with EU funded projects and entertain professional contacts with researchers of the Salford University. Salford University is involved in Roma Matrix, a big Roma inclusion programme working with two universities (of Salford and York) and a variety of non-academic partners across 10 EU member states<sup>36</sup>. BHA and Salford University are currently developing new Roma engagement schemes in Salford and other areas (I: BHA Director).

The police was involved in the multi-agency approach under the Roma Strategy because there were concerns about civil unrest and in 2009 there were also suspicions of criminal activities (such as child trafficking) raised by national and international intelligence, which later proved to be ungrounded (Mills & Wilson, 2013). Schools in Manchester educate Roma pupils and employ(ed) classroom

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<sup>33</sup> Representatives of the education department (interview) explain that the strategy of employing bi-lingual support workers and classroom assistants was not new for Roma. It had been part of their approach to support newly arrived migrant groups before, mainly within the Routes programme (<http://thebha.org.uk/routes>). What was a bit different is that they recruited young people with limited reading and writing skills, to become support workers. Demographically the Romanian Roma community is rather young, which explains that young people were selected. More importantly, compared to other communities most members of the Roma community had a rather limited educational background at that time. Some of the youngsters had little experience in going to school and limited English reading and writing skills. The representatives of the education department say they wanted to give opportunities to these youngsters, who then could function as a role model for younger Roma children. They stress that a lot of support was needed to explain protocols and communicate with schools in order to make it work and the results are evaluated positively.

<sup>34</sup> BHA Final report of the pilot scheme; The University of Manchester received this from the Manchester City Council Equalities team on 27.06.2014. It is available online: <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/BHA%20FINAL%20REPORT%20Jun%202014.pdf> (last accessed 20-03-2015).

<sup>35</sup> The Grant application form can be accessed online: [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5134/equalities\\_funding\\_programme\\_grant\\_application\\_form](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5134/equalities_funding_programme_grant_application_form) (last accessed 02-05-2015).

<sup>36</sup> <https://romamatrix.eu/about-us> (last accessed 20-03-2015).



assistance and translators. The police and some of the schools also received information and advice about Roma from the University of Manchester. We added a light green rectangular with 'schools' to figure 2 to make visible the schools with Roma pupils across Manchester that have established working relationship with the Romani project since 2008.

From the interviews, it emerged that – especially after mid-2013 when MigRom started – Roma engagement in the Manchester area has been undertaken by two distinctive clusters of actors, which are both supported by MCC, through different departments. One is executed by BHA (a regular partner of INA/T/SS), with funding from the Equalities Funding Programme. The other Roma engagement activities are mainly performed members of the MigRom team, who has Regeneration as a consortium partner. Both clusters of actors include outreach work and contacts with academic and non-profit actors (such as schools). The two 'strands' are not in competition with each other over funding, but we noticed some competition over legitimacy and influence. The tension between these different approaches and clusters of actors will be further discussed in chapter seven, in particular when analysing the challenge of avoiding fragmentation in the local welfare mix (challenge #2).

## 7 Governance challenges

In this chapter, we identify the governance challenges to social innovation in the project. They are described as they emerged from the document analysis and the field research, using the ImPRovE definition and operationalization of the governance challenges (Oosterlynck et al., 2013).

### 7.1 *Mainstreaming social innovation*

In the ImPRovE research the concept of mainstreaming is adopted to capture the evolution from a localized, particular solution to unmet social needs in a specific context to a more broadly accepted and applied idea and/or instrument that represents and enables a 'better, alternative way of doing things'. In the Manchester context, the actors involved in the Roma engagement strategy have adopted a specific understanding of mainstreaming, namely engaging with Roma and encourage them to engage with society in various ways (like education or neighbourhood activities) to bring them within the remit of the institutions of mainstream society so as to make specific Roma support trajectories redundant (I: Education & Skills D).

Mainstreaming in this context is hence not about the need for upscaling and expanding of activities targeted at Roma, as they aim to make specific interventions for Roma redundant. Nevertheless, apart from the mainstreaming strategy discussed above, there are also attempts at disseminating experiences of Roma engagement in Manchester, both academically, in policy circles and in popular media<sup>37</sup>. One example of dissemination of a good practice is the attempt of the MigRom project to replicate the drop-in sessions in Oldham. Local authorities were interested in a similar engagement. The MigRom project accepted to get involved as Oldham is within the Greater Manchester region.

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<sup>37</sup> In reaction to the rather negative picture of Roma integration in the media, there have been press releases in the national and local media that display the Manchester case as a positive example of Roma engagement and integration. See for instance: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-25559645> (last accessed 17-04-2015) and <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/press.html> (last accessed 17-04-2015).

The engagement scheme clearly depends on local learning experiences and bottom-up engagement from community members, which makes top down replication both undesirable and impossible. By spreading the word and capacitating people these methods and experiences might “trickle sideways” and create a chain effect inspiring local actors to set up similar projects and build on the Manchester experience (I: MigRom project coordinator).

Much broader than the Roma engagement in Manchester, the MigRom project and its collaborators aim to contribute to rethink the role of universities in public engagement, taking up social responsibilities and changing people’s attitudes in particular in the areas of ethnic diversity, migration and globalisation. As such the project aims to contribute to the mainstreaming of engaged research and transdisciplinary endeavours through knowledge alliances between academics, policy makers, practitioners and representatives of deprived communities (I: MigRom project coordinator).

## **7.2 Welfare mix: Avoiding fragmentation**

Driven, amongst others, by a marketization of services and a localization of responsibilities, all in context of austerity politics, local welfare mixes (the configuration of local actors involved in service provision) risk to become increasingly complex and competition driven. This can hamper the possibility to share policy strategies and aims among stakeholder, which limits possibilities of social innovators to impact broader systems of governance and welfare provision.

The description of this challenge matches fairly well with the discussion about the two clusters of actors involved in Roma engagement in Manchester: the engagement activities of BHA and partners and their links to academic expertise and European networks on the one hand and the activities coordinated by the MigRom project, in cooperation with Regeneration and with their links to international partners and networks on the other hand.

Their recent appearance as distinct networks or alliances does not mean that there have been no contacts and exchange between them. Quite to the contrary, actors in both strands were in contact with each other several times before in relation to previous Roma engagement trajectories. Two of the MigRom outreach workers worked for BHA and there are informal relationships between the staff of the different organisations. Relations between the City Council and MigRom got a more fraught with tensions after the MigRom project critiqued BHA. The MigRom project questioned the legitimacy of certain MCC statements on early (and/or forced) marriage and teenage pregnancy in council minutes and in the report of the pilot scheme to engage with Roma girls, executed by BHA. Together with Roma leadership group volunteers the project took issue with what they claimed are badly informed assumptions about Roma culture and the evidence provided in these documents to prove that early marriage and school disengagement is disproportionately large in the Roma community. Based on the statistical data about school attendance that the project received, they were unconvinced that a case could be made for a disproportionate dropout rate among Roma girls (Matras et al., 2015). The researchers and outreach workers therefore argued that it is wrong to frame this issue as a ‘Roma problem’ and fear that the scheme would contribute to segregation in schools and stigmatization of Roma culture. They pointed out that, historically, safeguarding Roma against their own culture has been used before as a strategy to stigmatize Roma culture.

The MCC partner of the MigRom project pointed out that Roma-specific approaches to school attendance and safeguarding are in contrast with the MCC's commitment to mainstreaming, i.e. addressing all groups with the same procedures instead of developing group specific approaches (I: Regeneration). On the other hand, she claims it is legitimate of the city council to commission a project that investigates the issue of early school leaving because of marriage and/or pregnancy, given its responsibilities in the area of safeguarding children. From the perspective of MCC, the aims of Roma engagement are self-reliance and self-organisation<sup>38</sup>. Concerns were expressed that the emergence of competition between different mediating actors might go against this aim, with actors talking on behalf of the Roma community. This episode reflects how knowledge alliances are not devoid of (external) relations of power, which complicate their operation. As with all 'alliances of knowledge' the integration of different actors is a continuous challenge at the operational and management level of the MigRom engagement scheme. This challenge is further complicated by other activities and decisions of other MCC departments outside the MigRom partnership. While it is a goal of the MigRom project

*"to assess policy measures targeting migrant Roma communities in an integrated way that takes into consideration both the articulated views and needs of the Roma migrants and the position of the local authority."*<sup>39</sup>

The universities' critique on other MCC partners and previous MCC decisions has led some of these actors to contest the universities' role (I: Regeneration).

The University of Manchester made it part of the MigRom activities to subject these documents to scrutiny of the Roma community and academics. They went about this in two ways. The first is that MigRom made council minutes available to the 'Roma leadership group'. The Roma youngsters felt offended<sup>40</sup> by the documents and wanted to respond to it. The MigRom Research associate assisted the youngsters in their contact with councillors and with writing out questions for discussion in advance when a meeting was arranged (documented by both researchers and volunteers in MigRom, 2015). Secondly, MigRom research staff wrote an evaluation of the BHA engagement with contributions of a range of academic experts (MigRom, 2014a). They also wrote an article about the BHA and INA/T/SS approach titled 'Roma Education as a lucrative niche: ideologies and representations' (Matras, Leggio & Steel, 2015), which recently appeared in an international academic journal. The first document scrutinizes the presentation of evidence with regard to the success and legitimization of the interventions and points out some erroneous assumptions and possible misunderstandings (for instance Roma use the words husband and wife also for boyfriend and girlfriend). The second argues that the BHA and its partners depict themselves as Roma experts while using romanticized, wrong and culturally essentialist images of Roma in order to legitimize funding

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<sup>38</sup> BHA commented that they also subscribe to this vision and they reject any assertions or insinuations that their social work practice and vision does not support Roma empowerment self-reliance and self-organisation (Personal communication with management of BHA for Equality 22-07-2015).

<sup>39</sup> <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/objectives.html>

<sup>40</sup> The MigRom research associate (interview) explains that this is partly due to unfortunate formulation and the fact that the topic of early marriage in the Roma community was mentioned in the same sentence as female genital mutilation, reasoning that both are "cultural problems" rather than crimes.

applications for new interventions concerning this group, in a context where these actors suffers from budget cuts<sup>41</sup>.

In the interviews (BHA Director and BHA outreach worker) BHA staff commented that although it is true that early marriage is not a 'Roma problem' per se, this does not make it illegitimate to investigate this issue in the Roma community. They suggest that MigRoms' commitment to the Roma community and culture risks overshadowing legitimate concerns about safeguarding and individual rights of young girls. They question what they perceive as the use of an academic position and networks to influence local politics and claim that MigRom is here focussing on symbolic issues rather than on the holistic approach of supporting communities that is

*“about much more than only safeguarding - that is the legal part we are obliged to respond to if needed – but the bulk of our work is in supporting families.”* (I: Director BHA)

The significance of this episode of (ongoing) disagreement on how to approach Roma in Manchester lies in how knowledge, the position from which it is produced and its relationship to practice can become heavily contested. The intricate intertwining of knowledge, legitimacy and power is a very real challenge for the development of a knowledge alliance. It suggests that when academic institutions engage with societal actors and professional intervention strategies, they give up an 'external position' and their work becomes an integral part of the socio-political dynamics around the issue, which may lead to their position and rationale getting questioned. At the time of writing this report (March 2015), the discussion between MigRom and the city council has not produced a shared understanding of the issue at hand. During the discussion with the Roma leadership group, representatives of local authorities stressed the importance of 'looking forward' and engaging positively in the future instead of fighting over the content and wording of discussions in previous minutes (MigRom, 2015). The MigRom project from their part stress both the necessity and added value of engaging in in-depth debates on the knowledge used to construct particular social problems and associated interventions and the populations being targeted.

In their forthcoming extended survey, the MigRom project portrays its approach to Roma outreach work in a way that positions their approach opposite to the other 'strand' of Roma engagement in Manchester. While BHA and INA/T/SS describes their approach as “holistic”, “a multi-agency approach”, and “assertive outreach” (I: Skills & Education B, BHA outreach worker)<sup>42</sup> the MigRom project states that their drop-in consultation sessions have “unique and distinct features” (Matras et al., 2015: p.2-3). Their approach is “Roma-led” in the sense that it led by members of the Roma

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<sup>41</sup> These documents and the portrayal of Roma education as a lucrative niche are controversial amongst the Manchester actors. BHA and INA/SS/T reacted that they do not agree with the analysis in these documents and they refute any insinuations about their interest in securing funding (personal communication with respondents July 2015).

<sup>42</sup> After reading this case study report representatives of the INA/T/SS react that they do not agree with how this comparison is made because the drop-in is compared with one specific outreach programme with aims that are different from the drop-in (following up on issue related to school attendance and not informing and supporting the community based on their needs and questions). These respondents (Skills & Education) feel that it is portrayed as if they would not subscribe to capacitating and demand-led approaches. They refute such a portrayal of their overall approach (personal communication with respondent on 15-07-2015).

community and run in Romanian and Roma. It is “responsive” meaning “deliberately non-assertive” as it only responds to needs raised by clients during the drop-in sessions. It is “purposefully non-holistic, as it does not seek to elicit information from the client beyond what is required to understand and respond to the specific issue that the client wishes to consult on”. Lastly, the outreach approach is described as “client-centred”. Other agencies are only involved when relevant to the clients’ demands (outreach workers often refer clients) while maintaining strict data protection protocols. “In this respect the service does not subscribe to a ‘multi-agency’ approach” (Ibid.).

The disagreement between these clusters of actors and their different approaches should be problematized for undermining the coherence of the welfare mix, as different Roma engagement activities start from diverging conceptions of the issues that need to be addressed, and also hampers strategies for mainstreaming.

It has been mentioned before that the position of MCC in coordinating engagement with migrant minorities has been challenged by cuts to local funding. MCC is exploring new ways of providing services and rethinking its own role by mainstreaming service provision (see governance challenge #1) and devolving responsibilities to communities (i.e. expecting communities to come to them for help and support rather than the other way around). It seems that MCC and MigRom find each other in their focus on self-reliance and self-representation. Both seem to share the same vision of balancing equality and diversity (see #4), i.e.: that Roma can access services and other institutions of mainstream society as every UK resident, while being able to exercise cultural practices and defend the interests of their community. However, this alliance might be a porous one if the discussion would shift the questions about how much engagement and resources are needed to capacitate the Roma community and develop a platform for self-representation and which actors are responsible for providing these resources (see also #6 on avoiding responsibility). As the process of developing a Roma consultation forum are in a relatively early stage, it is too early to say anything about this new balance between responsibility (accountability) and autonomy.

### **7.3 Welfare mix: participatory governance**

Social innovation for social inclusion aims to bring a participatory governance style to the existing welfare mix. The challenge here is to design a framework for localized forms of welfare provision that includes decentralized participatory (deliberative) institutions in a way that the social needs and interests of excluded groups are represented and recognized and makes institutions more responsive to them.

This challenge is central to the MigRom experience. It is reflected in the goal to set up a community group and/or Roma consultation forum that would be a platform to deliberate on issues that concern Roma and to communicate to local authorities and the media. This is a big challenge; previous attempts to identify natural leadership did not work. A well-functioning community forum and representation also needs community cohesions and recognition of this representation. The Roma community is very diverse, especially when looking beyond the group of 350 Roma living in the south of Manchester. The ones who are setting up this platform face several questions: Only Romanian Roma or all Roma? Also English Gypsies or only Roma? Who to involve? Who is mandated and which mandate can we give to

representatives? Should this be organised at the Manchester level? What to expect from councils in supporting this platform? At the moment of observation this process is still on going.

Roma are only partly involved in the process of defending their interests, communicating with policy makers and scrutinizing decisions that have impact on their community, but they are being involved. The project creates unique opportunities for Roma to scrutinize policies and broaden their networks. Given its expertise and previous engagement it appears that the University is very well placed to do this. The position of the outreach workers is important in this regard. Being members of the community they are actively involved in subjecting policies and decision to scrutiny through the research and related activities. The fact that European Roma and Traveller Forum is part of the MigRom consortium is also relevant in this regard. This organisation is mandated to pursue equal rights and democratic representation of Roma in Europe<sup>43</sup> and has an input in the research project from that perspective.

The project also aims to give people of the Roma community access to scrutinize policies and debates by disclosing information to them. For instance, by signalling decisions or by writing accessible documents on matters that are in their interest. The researcher point out that it is still up to the community members to choose what to do with it. The engagement with volunteers in the leadership group offers an example. The researchers made council minutes available to young Roma. The young men who took issue with some of the statements about early marriage in the Roma community went to meet local councillors and asked questions about this, amongst other things. It was the first time those Roma community members did this. A meeting was organised. While it did not go entirely in the way the leadership group hoped (MigRom, 2015) it was an important experience. The young men that engage in the leadership group do experience it as empowering that they are able to meet councillors and have some power as spokesman of their community (I: Outreach worker A). Together with representatives of the local authorities and elected members the youngsters discussed possibilities of future engagement and it was proposed to them to become involved in the Youth Forum. At the time of data collection (March 2015) this did not yet results in concrete participation to this or other forums (I: MigRom research associate, Regeneration).

The development of participatory governance is also challenging in this context because there is a continuous risk of defining priorities on behalf of the community, as there is no established leadership in the community and members are in need of support if they want to take on a leadership role in the relationships with public institutions. The university draws on its access to the community and its scientific expertise to take on this – temporary – supporting role, but some Manchester actors have voiced concerns to the Regeneration partner about how this is done (I: Regeneration).

#### **7.4 Equality and diversity**

Migration challenges the welfare systems to adapt and be more sensitive to the recognition of diversity in ethnic background. Manchester prides itself for being a diverse city and it has developed fairly well functioning procedures to include newly arriving communities. Identifying community leadership and supporting community platforms is at the centre of their strategy.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.ertf.org/index.php/about-us/about/our-mission-goals> (last accessed 22-07-2015)

Post 1989 Roma migration has distinctive features (Matras, 2000), which help to explain particular challenges to the social inclusion of Roma at the local level. The University of Manchester takes up the role of clarifying misunderstandings and culturally essentialist images of Roma culture to smoothen this two way process between the Roma community and mainstream society institutions. MigRom takes on these challenges by focussing on participation and representation of the (formerly) excluded group.

MigRom and the MCC share a vision about balancing equality and diversity which is related to a particular understanding of 'mainstreaming', namely engaging with Roma to bring them within the remit of the institutions of mainstream society so as to make specific Roma support trajectories redundant (see also challenge #1). The encouragement of communities to organise and represent themselves is part of this vision. MigRom equally supports this strategy, as they are sceptical of public programmes that specifically target Roma, since these are often grounded in culturally essentialist understandings of Roma and tend to reproduce these cultural clichés. Social inclusion means that Roma can engage in a two-way relationship with local authorities in the same way that other citizens and communities can. The Roma drop-in session is a specific Roma programme, but it puts forward an explicit focus on self-reliance and demand led support, which fits with the idea of mainstreaming (see also #1). It differs from other schemes in that it ties in with research activities that are part and parcel of the attempts to capacitate members of the community (see also chapter five of this report).

### **7.5 *Uneven access***

The governance challenge 'uneven access' as described by the ImPRovE-project focusses on balancing universal access with subsidiarity. It has been documented throughout the report how the MigRom engagement schemes towards the Romanian Roma community in the south of Manchester ties in with Manchester context and the broader MigRom project. It is clear that the interaction with the local context, the discretionary power of the local authorities and relationships with member of the local community is important to understand the MigRom experience. The governance challenge 'Uneven access' did not emerge as an important challenge or concern to the engagement scheme of the MigRom project. However this challenge is becoming increasingly relevant with regard to the development of a supra-local Roma forum (see also challenge #3 on participatory governance).

It did emerge from the interview that the relatively good access to housing, education and healthcare are very important factors for Roma inclusion at the local level. This realisation of basic social rights in practice is an important condition to develop such advanced engagement strategies.

### **7.6 *Avoiding responsibility***

This challenge relates to the position of socially innovative activities in the context of retrenching welfare states and austerity and the challenge faced by social innovation initiatives of being used as a vehicle for governments withdrawing from earlier responsibilities.

Faced with budget cuts the MCC changed its strategy of engaging with citizens and communities. Over the last years, it has become increasingly important for citizens and communities to come to the city's departments themselves instead of the other way round. The city council has also terminated the job of several mediators and translators. The MCC support for the idea of a Roma forum or leadership group matches well with the idea that the city can no longer provide the same outreaching services as it did before.

However, addressing the need for Roma self-representation also requires resources for capacity building and support of the volunteers. The University of Manchester brought in European money to do this, which helps to explain the partnership between the University and Regeneration. However, this does not mean that the attempts to develop a consultation forum should only be problematized for contributing to scaling back public responsibility. Strengthening the capacity of the community and their instruments for representation and intervening in the public debate fits within the vision of empowerment that enables communities to articulate their needs and to scrutinize policy interventions that affect them. In that sense the Roma consultation forum could become an example of advocacy and activist networks strategically appropriating key elements of neoliberal reasoning for different than neoliberal ends (van Baar, 2012: p. 294). At the moment of observation (January – March 2015) there is no noticeable friction between the academic and policy partners of the MigRom project on this issue. On the contrary, these partners share a vision on mainstreaming and promoting self-reliance. However, this issue might emerge later as a challenge when the project is ending and insufficient capacity has been built in the Roma community to represent themselves and articulate their own needs.

### **7.7 *Intra-organizational tensions***

Socially innovative initiatives face the challenge of seeing their mission reflected in the structure of their internal organisation. This can create tensions between the different interests involved. The MigRom engagement scheme clearly tackles this challenge as it is set up as a 'knowledge alliance' between local authorities, outreach workers, employees and volunteers from the Roma community and academic experts on Roma issues.

During our research, we did not come across internal tensions, apart from those following from the disagreements described under the second governance challenge (fragmentation of welfare mix). In the day-to-day operation of the drop-in session, the leadership group and other activities, no big tensions are reported about the relationship between the main partners (academics, Regeneration, outreach workers and volunteers). These partners have a clearly defined role and communication channels are set up to coordinate the different roles. As explained at length before, the objective of MigRom to scrutinize local policies does occasionally cause tensions between actors at the Manchester level, although it seems that both partners to the MigRom project have been able to maintain a good and stable relationship.



## **7.8 Enabling legal framework**

It is obvious that the change in rights for A2 nationals (Bulgarians and Romanians) does change the opportunities for the social inclusion of Romanian Roma in Manchester. Since January 2014, they can become employees, broadening their opportunities to generate an income through the labour market. However, these formal changes in citizenship status do not entirely explain the positive experiences with Roma engagement in Manchester. A combination of economic opportunities (the accessible housing market), engaged local authorities (Manchester has a history of promoting the engagement with migrant minorities) and UK specific juridical/administrative procedures (the fact that people with an address can access the NHS and the fact that self-employed people with a low wage can receive income tax breaks) help to explain the comparatively comfortable and stable position of Romanian Roma compared to other countries where MigRom consortium partners see their respondents for example struggle against evictions. For instance, in Manchester the combination of access to the private rental market via migrant landlords and access to healthcare based on having an address creates an enabling situation.

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## Appendix

As established in the ImPRovE methodological paper on social innovation (Kazepov et al., 2014) the field research aims to analyse the conditions influencing the development of innovative experiences on poverty problems and their potential of mainstreaming in different welfare models. Following the established protocols for the fieldwork, the actions conducted for the case study by the University of Antwerp team, between January and March 2015, are:

Analysis of documents, data and publications concerning the innovative experience, aimed to individuate useful information about its working and development. Analysis of institutional documents data and researches (e.g. local social plans containing needs analysis, implementation programs and evaluation reports).

Seven qualitative interviews involving eleven people:

- The project coordinator of the MigRom research project (I: MigRom project coordinator).
- The research associate of the MigRom Manchester team (I: MigRom research associate).
- A Roma outreach worker who also worked as a classroom assistant before (I: Outreach worker A).
- A Roma outreach worker who worked in different outreach, training and support jobs and who is very active in international networks on Roma representation and policy development (I: Outreach worker B).
- Four coordinators of different teams that work for the MCC Directorate for Children & Families and have years of experience on working with minorities and migrant newcomers on education related matters (I: Education & Skills A) (I: Education & Skills B) (I: Education & Skills C) (I: Education & Skills D)
- Two staff members of the Black Health Agency (I: BHA Director) (I: BHA outreach worker)
- A representative of the Regeneration department, the MCC partner in the MigRom consortium (I: Regeneration).

The interviews aimed at describing in depth the project, its genesis and potential, its organization and network, the characteristics of the local context and Roma engagement in Manchester.

In the context of the tensions between several of the involved actors at the time of observation, we decided not to organise a focus group because (1) not every involved actor was willing to participate; (2) the basic level of trust to have an open and productive focus group discussion was not present with all involved actors and; (3) we wanted to avoid that a focus group discussion would impact negatively on the relation between the actors.

Supplementary to and complementary with the usual ImPRovE methods, the researcher took up the option presented by the MigRom team to attend MigRom team meetings at the University of Manchester.

## **ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe. Social Policy and Innovation**

Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE) is an international research project that brings together ten outstanding research institutes and a broad network of researchers in a concerted effort to study poverty, social policy and social innovation in Europe. The ImPRovE project aims to improve the basis for evidence-based policy making in Europe, both in the short and in the long term. In the short term, this is done by carrying out research that is directly relevant for policymakers. At the same time however, ImPRovE invests in improving the long-term capacity for evidence-based policy making by upgrading the available research infrastructure, by combining both applied and fundamental research, and by optimising the information flow of research results to relevant policy makers and the civil society at large.

The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?

How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?

The project runs from March 2012 till February 2016 and receives EU research support to the amount of Euro 2.7 million under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. The output of ImPRovE will include over 55 research papers, about 16 policy briefs and at least 3 scientific books. The ImPRovE Consortium will organise two international conferences (Spring 2014 and Winter 2015). In addition, ImPRovE will develop a new database of local projects of social innovation in Europe, cross-national comparable reference budgets for 6 countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain) and will strongly expand the available policy scenarios in the European microsimulation model EUROMOD.

More detailed information is available on the website <http://improve-research.eu>.

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