

Settlement Transformation – A Pillar of Social Justice

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About VoRAE, HEKS, and Our Mission

A Consortium for Social Justice

VoRAE & HEKS:

- Long-term partnership dedicated to social justice and Roma inclusion
- VoRAE: Empowering Roma communities in Kosovo since 2011
- HEKS: Swiss expertise in sustainable development and human rights

Holistic Approach:

Address Antigypsyism: Tackle systemic discrimination as the root of exclusion

Promote Inclusion Models: Innovative solutions in:

- Education: Access to quality schooling
- Housing: Upgraded, inclusive settlements
- Employment: Job opportunities and economic empowerment

Policy Dialogue: Advocate for institutionalizing inclusive models at local and national levels

Our Commitment:

- Sustainable, community-driven transformation for lasting change

Addressing Key Factors of Exclusion

Antigypsyism:

- Government Recognizes Antigypsyism as a Key Factor of Exclusion
- Amendment of the Anti-Discrimination Law
- Development of Working Group on Anti-Discrimination
- Development of Working Group Against Early Marriages
- Development of the National Platform to Report Cases of Discrimination
- Amendment of School Books and School Curricula
- Promotion of Roma Rights and Values



Closing the Gaps in Various Outcomes

- **Education:**

- **Learning Centers (LCs):** 33+ centers for 1,200 children to reduce drop-out rates and improve education quality
- **Secondary School Program:** Scholarships, mentoring, and tutoring for 500 students
- **University Students Program:** Support for 100 Roma students
- *Impact:* Programs now state-funded with €500,000+ annually; VoRAE/HEKS monitor and guide

- **Employment:**

- **Capacity Building & Internships:** 300+ individuals annually, 40% employment rate
- **Women's Empowerment:** 1,000+ women participated, 20% (200) engaged in activism/employment post-program

Housing: A Barrier to Integration

Why Housing Matters

- Substandard and segregated housing in Roma settlements across Europe:
 - **Rooted in Systemic Issues:**
 - *Antigypsyism*: Discrimination driving exclusion
 - *Ghettoization*: Spatial and social segregation
 - *Poverty*: Limited access to resources and opportunities

Consequences:

- **Education**: Poor living conditions hinder learning
- **Employment**: Barriers to job access and stability
- **Health**: Overcrowding and lack of infrastructure harm well-being

The Cycle: Insecure housing perpetuates exclusion, trapping communities in poverty

Housing Programs in Europe and Western Balkans

Social Housing Initiative Challenges:

- **Ghettoization:**
 - Persistent segregation despite relocation efforts
- **Lack of Co-habitation Focus:**
 - Programs often prioritize physical housing over social integration
- **Inefficiency:**
 - High costs with limited integration outcomes
 - Example: Kosovo's reconstruction faced loose planning, leading to mixed results
- **Outcome:** Costly initiatives often fail to break cycles of exclusion

*Housing alone cannot solve
integration without fostering
inclusive co-habitation*



Settlement Transformation: An Integrated Approach

What is Settlement Transformation?

A holistic strategy to uplift communities by addressing:

- **Housing:**
 - Safe, affordable, and sustainable living spaces
- **Public Infrastructure:**
 - Equitable access to water, sanitation, energy, transport
- **Desegregation:**
 - Breaking down social and promoting integration
- **Behavioral Practices:**
 - Fostering inclusive and resilient community norms
- **Economic Opportunities:**
 - Creating pathways for jobs and prosperity



VoRAE & HEKS: Pioneering Settlement Transformation

A New Initiative for Roma Communities

Unique Approach:

- Reshaping existing Roma settlements, *no relocations*
 - Focus: In-situ transformation for sustainable integration

Key Components:

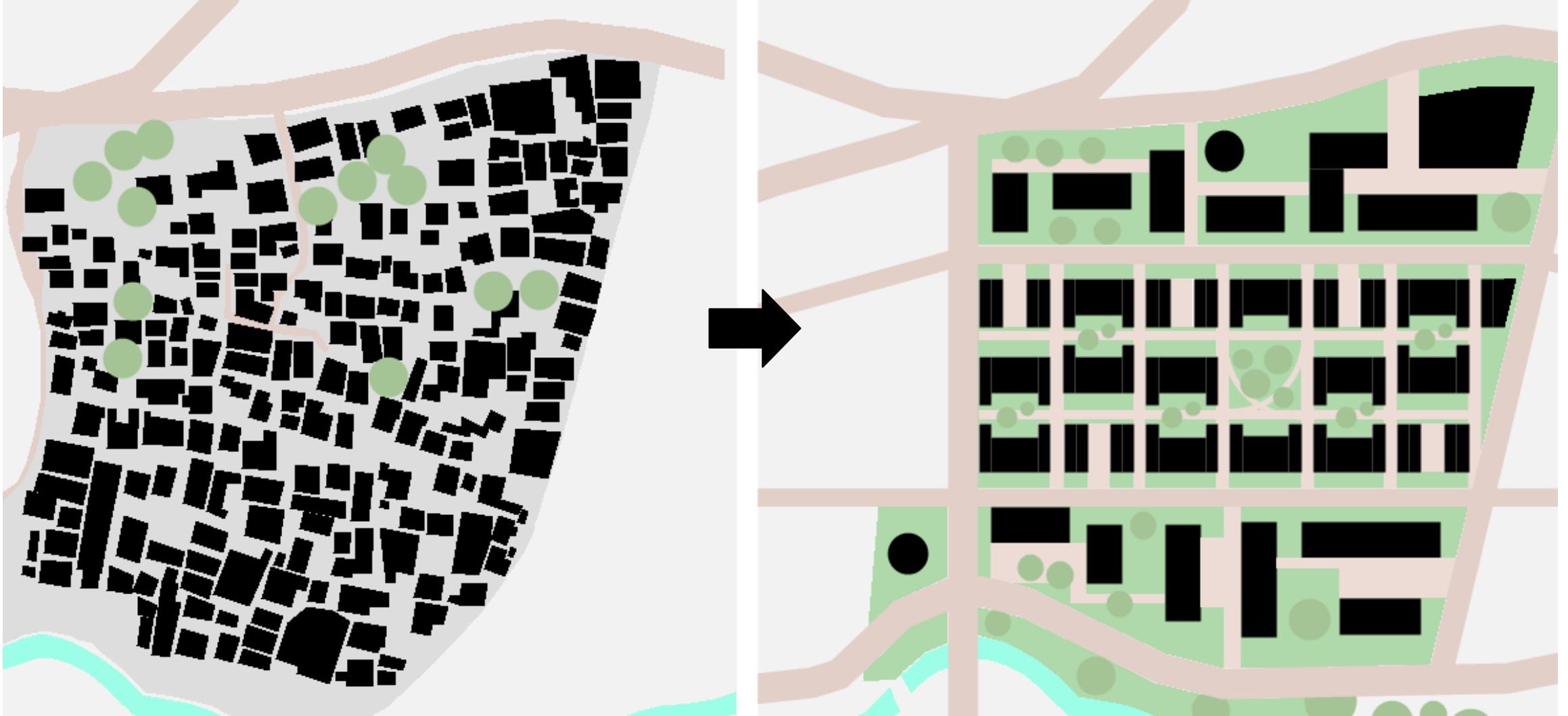
- **House Upgrading:** Modern, safe, energy-efficient homes
- **Infrastructure Improvement:** Legalizing settlements to enable investment in water, electricity, roads
- **Business Opportunities:** Especially in housing sector but also trade industry
- **Affordable Housing:** Attracting non-Roma residents to foster desegregation

Why Innovative?:

- Few similar initiatives in Europe
- Addresses root causes of exclusion through community-centered solutions

Community at the Core of the Process

Physical Transformation Outlook



Settlement Transformation Phases



Key Elements of the Settlement Transformation Process

Community Dialogue:

- Inclusive forums to ensure Roma voices shape the transformation process

Community Involvement:

- Active participation in planning and design to reflect residents' needs
- Prevents displacement by investors, ensuring long-term co-residency
- Roma Builders

Legal Processes:

- **Settlement Legalization:** Formalizing land tenure for security
- **Zonal Mapping:** Defining settlement boundaries for urban integration
- **Urban Planning:** Creating inclusive, sustainable settlement designs
- **Legislation:** Law on Affordable Housing

Budgeting:

- **Local Level:** Municipal funds for infrastructure (e.g., water, roads)
- **Central Level:** Government support for scalable, equitable programs



Challenges in Settlement Transformation

Key Obstacles to Sustainable Integration

- **Land Ownership:**

- In Fushe Kosovo, most residents are factual but not legal owners
- Many homes built on municipal/state-owned land
- *Impact:* Legalization delays infrastructure investment and security

- **Lack of Capital:**

- Residents lack financial resources to access loans for housing upgrades
- Limited economic means hinder sustainable improvements

- **Investor Involvement:**

- Trust issues between communities and investors
- Fear of displacement or exploitation undermines cooperation

Consequence:

- These barriers slow progress toward inclusive, legalized settlements

Pilot Location: Fushe Kosove



Why Fushe Kosove

Housing Density

- According to the analysis:
 - ✓ **Neighborhood 028** has a housing density of **851 inhabitants/ha**
 - ✓ **Neighborhood 029** has a housing density of **539 inhabitants/ha**

These figures exceed the optimal and maximum density standards set by the Administrative Instruction on Technical Norms for Spatial Planning, which define:

- ✓ **Optimal density:** 80–150 inhabitants/ha
- ✓ **Maximum density:** 250 inhabitants/ha

Settlement Transformation Model Building

Surface 900 m²:

10 apartments

Community Center

Cost: 415,000 €



Achievements to date and future perspectives

Progress and Next Steps

- **Achievements to Date:**

- **Community Dialogue:** Initiated land legalization processes, with residents raising expectations and pressuring government for increased settlement funding
- **Government Reforms:** Legal frameworks established to support transformation, including co-financing models (50%+ state-funded) and model buildings constructed
- **Roma Builders:** Identified, trained, and ready to lead large-scale construction projects

- **Future Perspectives:**

- Engage private investors to scale up housing initiatives
- Replicate successful model in other municipalities
- Secure broader government support for sustained funding and policy backing

Impact: Community-driven transformation strengthens Roma inclusion and sustainable development

THE END

Q&A