

**MOVING
OUT
OF
POVERTY:**

**From
Waste
Picking
to
Sustainable
Mobility**



**Cargo Cyclists and Secondary Raw Material Collectors in Belgrade
-project brochure-
Belgrade, October 2016**

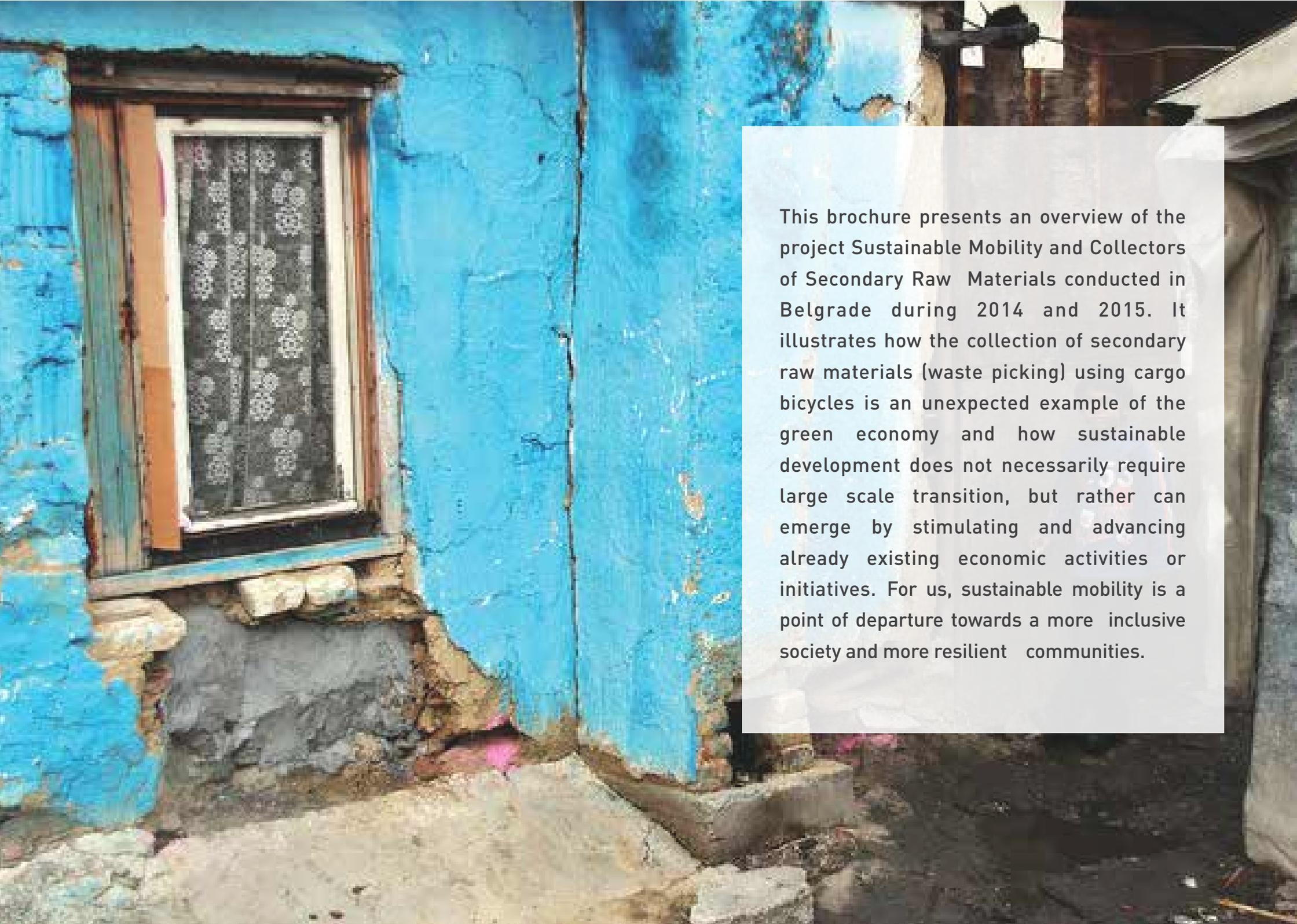
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This brochure presents an overview of the project Sustainable Mobility and Collectors of Secondary Raw Materials conducted in Belgrade during 2014 and 2015. It illustrates how the collection of secondary raw materials (waste picking) using cargo bicycles is an unexpected example of the green economy and how sustainable development does not necessarily require large scale transition, but rather can emerge by stimulating and advancing already existing economic activities or initiatives. For us, sustainable mobility is a point of departure towards a more inclusive society and more resilient communities.

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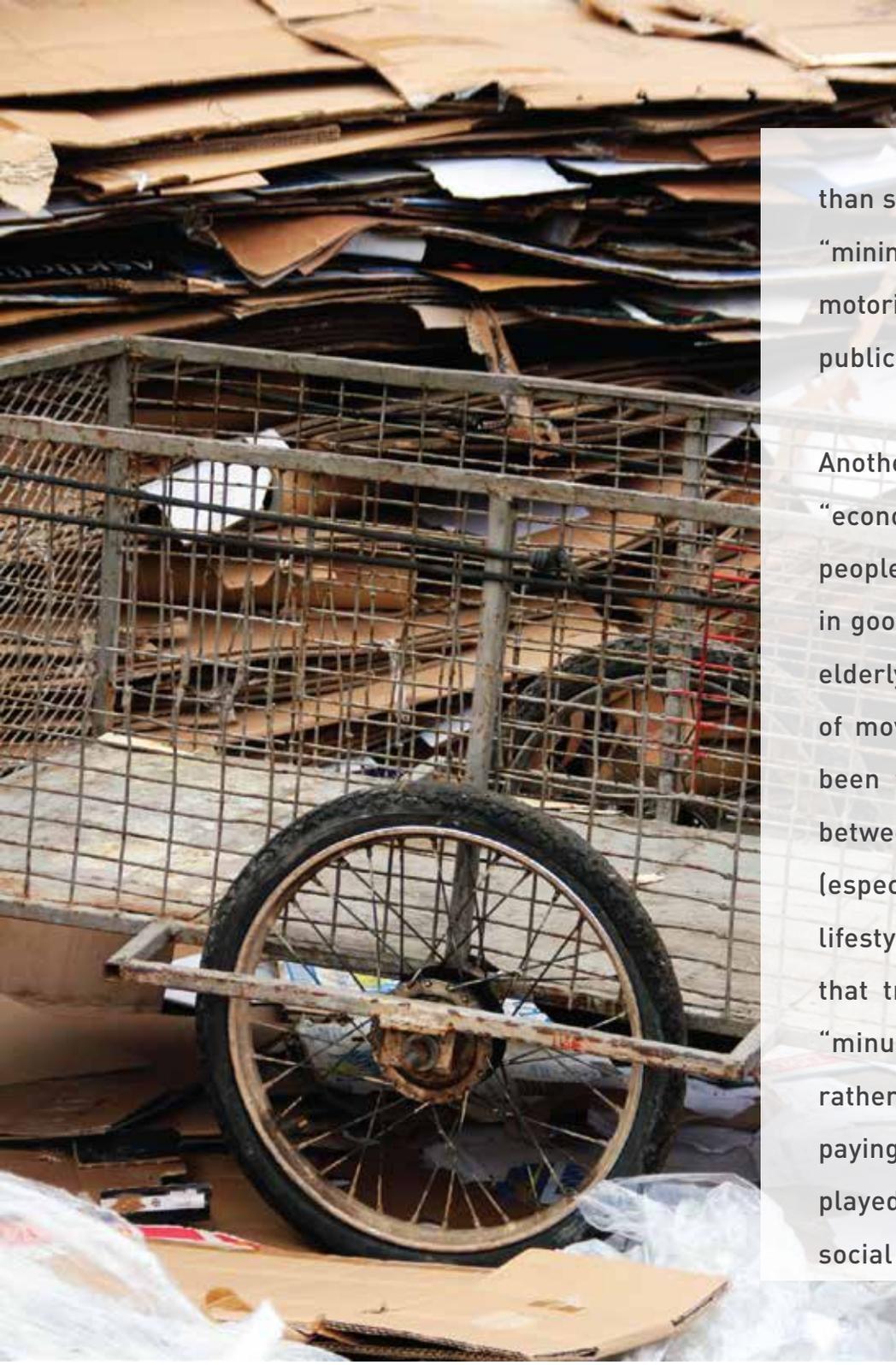
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Introduction – Inclusive Mobility

When thinking about movement in urban contexts, a theoretical shift from “transport” to “mobility” is important – it sets the ground for a new perspective on urban development and city life. The notion of mobility highlights the importance of non-motorized movement and other neglected aspects of modernist urban planning based on automotive road transport.

Sustainable mobility, as defined by David Banister [1] is an alternative paradigm for reviewing and creating transport policies for carbon-neutral cities, in which people would (ideally) not need a car. Sustainable urban mobility takes into account economic, social and environmental sustainability of movement. The contribution of traffic to pollution, environmental degradation and climate change is well documented. Urban traffic directly causes air and noise pollution, and, of course, contributes to global warming, both locally (heat islands) and globally. Economic sustainability entails the price and profitability of a transportation system and it is this specific aspect at which we directed most of our attention.

There are, however, aspects of movement that cannot be classified in relation to price or profitability, despite their importance – one of these aspects being, for instance, road traffic related deaths. Where transportation is fast and motorized, there is a greater chance of a traffic accident happening. Researchers investigating sustainable movement in cities advocate for slowing traffic down, rather



than speeding it up; they speak of “reasonable travel times”, rather than “minimal travel times”; they propose cycling and walking instead of motorized transportation, and when motorized is used, they promote public transportation in place of cars.

Another aspect, often neglected and neither “environmental” nor “economic”, is accessibility: Is infrastructure physically adjusted for the people who are supposed to use it? Are roads cleared, clearly marked and in good condition? Is public transport available – and accessible – to the elderly or persons with disabilities? These issues are the “social” aspects of movement. Many other social and cultural aspects of mobility have been the subject of research and theorization, including: Interaction between passengers; the accessibility of transport; prestige and image (especially related to car use); gender aspects; motivation for travel; and lifestyle as a determinant of the manner of movement[2]. Research shows that travelling, that is to say movement, is never solely a matter of “minutes spent between the points of departure and the destination”, but rather that it includes a series of social practices. Taking a bus or a taxi, paying for a ticket, giving up one’s seat or social stigmatization can be played out as completely different everyday experiences depending on the social context.

Spatial movement is therefore always linked with social movement, or rather mobility, and therein with social stratification. It is based on these findings that Vincent Kaufmann introduced the term motility, defining it as a “link between spatial and social mobility”[3]. Motility, according to Kaufmann, implies interdependent elements that relate to people’s ability to access and take part in a certain form of transport. A classic example of this link is the historical relation between suburbs and city centres in major American and European cities, where the middle classes work in city centres but live in suburbs. Changes in transportation technology (e.g. reliable and fast railway systems, internet as precondition for working from home) have also brought about changes to the daily movement of people (e.g. nowadays the middle class commonly live in city centres). Distance from school represents another good example. Children who do not live in major cities or close to educational and cultural centres, and have no means of commuting, have less chance of upward social mobility by means of education, due to their physical remoteness from “knowledge”. Another form of traffic – the internet – can, to a certain extent, compensate for inadequate transport, again assuming that the necessary infrastructure is available to everyone.

It is not by accident that some of the biggest problems related to Roma housing are those related to the location they “occupy”. Formally, many informal Roma settlements in Serbia were located close to urban centres, where residents can generate income; however, because they occupy valuable land residents have been subjected to forced evictions and relocated far from the city centre, isolating them from opportunities for social mobility.

In recent history, “movement” was also a basis for discrimination. The Nazis particularly emphasized a stereotype about Roma that they are constantly moving; travellers, nomads without a home, an unsettled community; and on these grounds the Nazis deemed the Roma to be without moral foundation. This extreme historical example shows how movement in geographic space is always correlated with movement in social space. Today, in Serbia and in the wider region, Roma still face discrimination, and are engaged in a different form of movement, which was the focus of our work.



Belgrade – a City in Motion

Belgrade is (officially) moving towards Europe (politically), and the main driver of positive changes is the process of the EU integration. Unlike many European capitals, which are often more advanced in their sustainability agendas than their respective states (e.g. Stockholm, London), Belgrade is in almost all aspects on the same level as the rest of the country. Unlike other big cities in Europe, environmental politics in Serbia and consequently in Belgrade are still far behind the standards of the European *acquis*, as confirmed by the annual European Commission Progress Report(s).

Moving within Belgrade is not without “bumps in the road”, both figuratively and literally. Belgrade is changing not only politically, but also in terms of climate and population. Currently, the metropolitan area of the city is home to about 1,800,000 people, of which 1,200,000 live in the city’s 10 “urban” or “inner-city” municipalities. In terms of population, Belgrade can be compared to central European capitals like Prague, Budapest, or Vienna. In terms of wealth, however, with an average income of around 400 EUR, Belgrade is significantly worse off than these cities. As a consequence, socio-economic factors are an overwhelmingly harsh reality for any policy-making.

Air pollution in Belgrade has consistently exceeded the prescribed limits, which is only one of many indicators that transportation in Belgrade is not sustainable. To date, traffic pollution has been addressed in practical terms through promoting cycling and walking as ecologically more sustainable and healthier forms of movement, as well as the sporadic introduction of slow traffic zones and hybrid buses. These attempts were, however, very modest and resulted in almost no effect on the modal split. The official data show that only 0.55% of journeys undertaken in Belgrade are by bicycle and that cycling in Belgrade (for purposes of commuting rather than recreation) is still considered by many to be an “extreme sport”.

One of the economic activities in Belgrade firmly linked to cycling is the collection of secondary raw materials. This activity is not only environmentally and climate friendly, but also provides employment for some of Belgrade's most deprived residents.

If we apply the presented concept of motility in the case of collectors of secondary raw materials in Belgrade, the link between spatial and social mobility, despite not being precisely measurable, is apparent. Collectors of secondary raw materials in Serbia are mostly ethnic Roma that live in informal settlements[4]. They are among the country's poorest citizens. They often experience discrimination. They live on the periphery of the city (often against their will). And in their case, the activity of collecting secondary raw materials is inherently linked to movement. For the most part, they do not move far from their place of residence. Both geographically and socially, these are marginalized citizens with little possibility to move away from the margin.





Their economic activity is conducted in parts of the city they are familiar with and the distances they travel are relatively short. The collectors' movement is linked to bicycles primarily because of their lack of economic power. However, the nature of the work suits a cargo bicycle, which provides a high level of mobility in urban spaces.

The everyday mobility of secondary raw material collectors is perfectly sustainable from an ecological perspective and represents an extraordinary example of the "green economy". Nevertheless, this job is also a source of discrimination against Roma: collecting secondary raw materials is perceived as "dirty" work and a cargo bicycle is a token of poverty, while their presence in traffic is perceived as almost illegitimate.

Roma in Serbia – Between Inefficient Public Policies and Social Discrimination

The status of Roma in Serbia is a well-covered topic – harsh poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, and the inability to exercise fundamental rights are common issues covered in discussions about the status of Roma. Year after year the annual report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia has stated that Roma “are discriminated against in almost every field, and particularly in employment, education, healthcare and housing”[5]. Despite government policies that aim at improving the status of Roma and the implementation of numerous measures to improve the realization of their fundamental rights, markedly little progress has been made.

A considerable number of activities envisaged by public policies pertain to the area of employment of Roma and their access to the labour market. Due to harsh poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, and frequently low qualifications, the status of Roma in the labour market is highly disadvantaged. In its Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma, the Government of the Republic of Serbia states that: “the area in which Roma are most frequently involved as workers is the grey economy”[6], and that “the majority of Roma [are] outside of the employment system, they are not legally economically active and, for the most part, are accounted for as unemployed persons. When present in the labour market, they perform the most difficult and dangerous lowest-wage labour. Collectors of secondary raw materials are among the most exploited categories of workers, with the lowest pay rate”[7].

However, notwithstanding the frank appraisal made in the most important documents for the inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, little has been done in order to alter the situation. One of the objectives highlighted in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma is the “formalization of the employment status and employment of secondary raw materials collectors”, which should be implemented by “introducing the occupation of secondary raw materials collector in the uniform nomenclature of professions” and by “classifying the occupations of recycling and collection of secondary raw materials”. The second action plan, which was in effect until January 1st 2015, also included measures for the improvement of the status of Roma collectors of secondary raw materials. These measures included “organizing Roma men and women collectors of secondary raw materials in cooperatives and professional unions”, “additional trainings on health protection”, as well as “the use of simulative measures for collectors in the framework of the realization of waste management plans at the local level”. However, the action plan did not envisage any budgetary funds for these activities[8].



The newly adopted National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025 identifies some of the most pressing issues related to Roma employment. This document also prescribes operational objectives, which include: “Legalize work of informally employed Roma men and women, and especially individual collectors of secondary raw materials and introduce them in the waste management system at the level of local self-governments”[9]. However, it remains to be seen how this operational objective will be implemented as the Action plan for the implementation of the National Strategy hasnot yet been adopted.



Aiming at providing an answer to the harsh poverty and social exclusion of Roma in Serbia, the implementation of measures contained in public policies have had varying success. Those measures that require more considerable financing and long-term implementation (housing and employment)are being implemented at a very slow pace. As a result of this slow pace of implementation an alternative answer, created by the Roma community itself, has emerged: Independent construction of settlements (recognized by the authorities as informal) and working in the “grey economy”, including the usage of cargo bicycles as work equipment and the collection of secondary raw materials as a means to generate income.

Roma as Collectors of Secondary Raw Materials

Recycling in Serbia is still in the early stages of development. The road to adopting EU waste management legislation is slow and long: Data show that only 10% to 15% of waste in Serbia is recycled. Further, only 60% of the households dispose of waste in an organized and legal way and there is no common practice of separating waste from recyclables.

In this context, the status of Roma as collectors of secondary raw materials once again illustrates their standing in society – despite their work being socially beneficial, it is extremely underpaid “dirty work” that is subject to prejudices and to open or concealed discrimination. Additionally, cargo cyclists/collectors of secondary raw materials are not part of the “cycling community”, which mostly does not perceive them as cyclists, but rather identifies them as waste pickers.

According to findings by the YUROM Center, around 8,000 families in Serbia are engaged in the collection of secondary raw materials, with a quarter of workers aged under 18. A collector’s life expectancy, ca. 46, is much shorter than of other members of the Roma population[10]. A workday lasts on average 11 hours and a kilogram of recyclable paper, which is the most common item collected, pays between 1.5 and 4 Serbian dinars (0.0081 and 0.032 euros).

Cargo Cyclists from the Informal Settlement Grmeč

A survey on the fulfilment of fundamental human rights by beneficiaries of the project “Sustainable Mobility and Collectors of Secondary Raw Materials” has shown that the majority have no other sources of income other than from collection of secondary raw materials. This situation is closely linked to their inability to fulfil their fundamental rights, particularly the right to health care and social care, as well as the right to adequate housing. The beneficiaries of the project are the most marginalized among the most marginalized groups living in Serbia.



The site of the project’s implementation – the informal settlement Grmeč in Belgrade – is almost exclusively populated by internally displaced Roma from Kosovo. Housing conditions in this settlement are extremely poor. Homes lack sanitation and a legal connection to the electricity network. The community is built on public land, for which residents lack permits; as a consequence they live in constant fear of forced eviction.



The fact that these are informal settlements has brought about a series of existential challenges for collectors of secondary raw materials. Without a registered place of residence, Roma who live in informal settlements cannot exercise their right to social protection. This is due to the fact that the right to monetary social assistance, as a form of support to “an individual or family whose work, property income or income from other sources generates income less than the amount of monetary social assistance as determined by law”[11], is exclusively exercised according to a place of dwelling, i.e. the place of residence of the person submitting the request[12].

Given that internally displaced Roma from Kosovo living in informal settlements are, as a rule, not registered as residents in the municipality in which they live due to the settlements not having an official address, they also live outside the system of social protection, i.e. deprived of possibility to receive support despite the harsh poverty they live in.

There is a similar problem concerning the realization of the right to healthcare – possession of personal identification documents is a precondition for fulfilling this right. The latest UNHCR surveys show that the “share of domicile Roma households in which all the members are covered by health insurance is 95%, with Roma IDPs it is 85%”[13].

Finally, the problem concerning registration of residence influences the use of services provided by the National Employment Service. Internally displaced persons can obtain an employment record book at a municipal administrative office in the place of their registered residence or employment; as a result, in order to use the National Employment Service, internally displaced people must either travel to Kosovo to acquire an employment record book at the municipality they were displaced from or remain outside of the support system of active employment policy measures.

None of the beneficiaries of the project “Sustainable Mobility and Collectors of Secondary Raw Materials” are formally employed and the vast majority live in multi-member households of at least four members in which only males are active in collecting secondary raw materials. Women continue to be excluded from this form of economic activity and are very often closely tied to the home, responsible solely for their children's upbringing.



Condition of Cargo Bicycles used by Collectors of Secondary Raw Materials



Our survey of project beneficiaries found that collectors of secondary raw materials have assembled their bicycles specifically for this activity, with materials and parts costing on average 150-200 EUR. These bicycles are not equipped with brakes and lights, nor are they regularly maintained, which makes them unsafe. Although these bicycles are crucial for a family's income generation, they are also hazardous for those who use them.

Furthermore, the condition of the bicycles impacts on the efficiency of the collection of secondary raw materials itself – as these are technically defective or semi-functional bicycles, the collectors are unable to cover further distances from their place of residence and they are frequently forced to push the loaded bicycles because they are unable to ride them when carrying cargo. An additional problem is caused by the fact that the collectors cannot afford to regularly maintain their bikes, and local bicycle shops cannot repair them. Therefore, they are left to their own devices regarding cargo bicycle maintenance, repairs and modifications.

The Process of Secondary Raw Materials Collection

The collection of raw materials is in itself also problematic: the types of materials collected by collectors is determined by what they find on any given “run”, so collectors are unable to collect the most valuable materials all the time, e.g. PET packaging or aluminium. Indeed, what is collected depends on the circumstances of each “ride” and what can be found in containers and at other waste disposal sites along the way. In addition, the route is not predetermined. For example, during the collection process the collectors do not go to the furthest point first and gradually load up their cargo bicycles on the way back. Instead, they are focused solely on what they manage to find en route. It was explained to us that this is because there is no guarantee that any material they pass by will still be there later.



In response to our questions, all collectors stated that they use cargo bikes on a daily basis and that they normally use them for the collection of secondary raw materials throughout the year, regardless of weather conditions. Due to the poor state of their cargo bicycles, the distances covered by the collectors are relatively small – a maximum of 6-7 kilometres in one direction; they compensate for the short distances of each “run” by making multiple trips per day. According to the collectors, this work can generate a monthly profit of about 4,000 dinars (32.7 Euros) from recyclable paper and cardboard, while other raw materials (e.g. PET packaging and aluminium) are more profitable.

Using Bicycles for Other Purposes

Less than 30% of collectors of secondary raw materials we spoke to use their cargo bikes for other purposes. Besides collecting secondary raw materials, they tend to use their cargo bicycles mostly to go to the store, the market or public institutions. The reasons for not using cargo bicycles for non-work related purposes were mostly stated to be because the bicycles are not fully functional, that they are dirty and that the baskets used to transport cargo cannot be used for anything other than cardboard and other secondary raw materials. Even though those bicycles are not fully functional, the vast majority of cargo cyclists who responded to our survey stated that they did not have any problems with other road users and that the only problem they face is bad weather – rain and snow.

Collectors of Secondary Raw Materials and Recycling – Legal and Institutional Framework

Generally speaking, it is clear that environmental protection is low on the priority list of public policies in Serbia, as is waste management and recycling. Excluding industrial waste, which is of no significance to the collectors of secondary raw materials, some research has shown that citizens produce around 2.5 million tons of waste per year and, as previously described, only a small fraction of this waste is recycled. Up to three quarters of collected secondary raw material are collected by individual collectors[14]. The European Commission states in its 2014 Serbia Progress Report that “other forms of waste management need to be developed in order to use landfilling only as a last resort”[15]. Also, this document states that “new investment in this area of waste should focus more on waste separation and recycling”[16], which are the very activities performed by collectors of secondary raw materials. The 2015 Progress Report emphasized that additional investment and improvements are needed to address “systemic weaknesses in the implementation of environmental projects” and that the “enforcement of waste legislation needs to improve”.

The most important umbrella regulation in the area of waste management is the Law on Waste Management[17]. As an objective of this Law, Article 2 stresses the importance of “re-usage and recycling of waste, separation of secondary raw materials from waste and usage of waste as an energy-generating product”. The law also prescribes that both legal and natural persons can be a waste collector. Article 59 of the Law on Waste Management stipulates the types of permits are issued for the performance of one or several activities concerning waste management. These permits can relate to collection, transportation, storage, treatment and disposal of waste. The permit that is of greatest importance to collectors of secondary raw materials is the permit for collection and transportation issued to “a person registered to perform the activity of collection, or a person licensed as transporter pursuant to laws governing public transportation, i.e. local transporters”, except in cases involving natural persons, i.e. individual waste collectors who collect separated non-hazardous waste on the territory of a local self-government unit.

The Waste Management Strategy for the period 2010 – 2019 [18] determines the conditions for rational and sustainable waste management at a national level in Serbia. The Strategy states that, of total waste, “plastic waste makes up 12.73%, whereas the total amount of cardboard amounts to 8.23%, followed by glass (5.44%), paper (5.34%), textiles (5.25%), disposable diapers (3.65%) and metal (1.38%)”[19]. The document also specifies that 60% of municipal waste is collected predominantly in urban areas, which are of greatest importance to cargo cyclists/collectors of secondary raw materials. Given that “disposal of waste in landfills is the only manner of organized procedure”[20], there is an obvious need for waste to be sorted and secondary raw materials to be collected for the purpose of recycling, which is, in fact, the role played by Roma collectors of secondary raw materials.

It is further stated in the Strategy that “public services and utilities in the Republic of Serbia [are] mainly under the jurisdiction of public utility enterprises founded by the local self-government”[21] and that “there is no motivation to increase efficiency, nor to improve the quality of services”[22].

The Law on Utility Services[23], in Article 3, prescribes that municipal waste management is part of public services and utilities. In Article 18 the law prescribes the obligations of users of a public utility service. This provision stipulates that the user of a public utility service is obligated to use it in a manner which:

- Does not hinder other users and poses no threat to the environment;
- Does not endanger structures and equipment used for the purpose of performing a municipal service.

A misdemeanour fine ranging between 20,000 and 50,000 dinars is to be levied against a natural person using a public utility service in a manner contrary to the aforementioned Article 18 of the Law on Utility Services. This implies that collectors of secondary raw materials that collect raw materials in locations designated for waste disposal could be fined for hindering other users with his/her actions, posing a threat to the environment or to structures and equipment used for the performance of a certain municipal service.

At a local level, i.e. the level of the city of Belgrade, the Local Waste Management Plan 2011 – 2020 states that only 5% of municipal waste in Belgrade is recycled and that this recycling is carried out independently of the city municipal service. However, despite this state of affairs, improvement of the existing system through public investment or more active involvement of the private sector is considered to be the most effective means of increasing the low percentage of municipal waste being recycled in Belgrade. The Local Plan highlights “a major problem is the informal sector [collectors] which ‘takes over’ recyclable waste directly from containers outside of legal schemes and scatters the rest of the waste, thus posing a health hazard to the population”[24].

The Ordinance on Hygiene Maintenance[25] adopted by the City of Belgrade confirms the status of collectors of secondary raw materials as highly marginalized within society. Despite the work they perform, which is often their sole source of income and of benefit to all citizens, collectors have been effectively outlawed, as the exercise of their activities may represent grounds for initiating a misdemeanour procedure. Namely, Article 34, paragraph 1, point 11, of the Ordinance stipulates that in order to maintain and protect hygiene in public areas it is forbidden to “scavenge or collect waste from garbage disposed of in plastic bags and containers”. The penalty for the violation of this provision is 10,000 dinars. Although these penalties have been prescribed, it is unknown whether any collectors of secondary raw materials have been fined for this type of misdemeanour.

Although it is quite clear that collectors of secondary raw materials are mainly Roma who live in informal settlements, with no or insufficient support from adequate services to overcome the harsh poverty and social exclusion they experience, the city plan for waste management views the problem of waste collection and economic profitability of these activities exclusively from the perspective of municipal order.



There are some initiatives looking at how to integrate the informal sector with the formal recycling sector, but so far this has not been official policy. There is, therefore, an imminent danger that the informal sector will be squeezed out from waste management services altogether, pushing raw material collectors deeper into the social margins and deprivation.

Obstacles

Difficult economic circumstances and marginalization, as well as a frequent lack of other options to fulfil back needs, significantly influence the process of secondary raw materials collection and the perspectives for the further development of this economic activity. As previously mentioned, the bicycles used by Roma collectors of secondary raw materials are very often in poor condition, the collection process is not organized, and cargo bikes are often used only for the collection of secondary raw materials, rather than as a means to increase urban mobility, all of which hampers development of this informal sector.

Obstacles influencing the development of this activity and better usage of bicycles as a means to generate income can be classified as:

- Institutional obstacles;
- Financial obstacles;
- Organizational obstacles.

Institutional obstacles to the further development of bicycle usage as means to achieve more inclusive mobility and the green economy are mainly manifested through the stigmatization of this occupation, poor implementation of public policies with regard to improvement of the status of Roma secondary raw materials collectors, and the aforementioned provisions of the Law on Utility Services and the Ordinance on Hygiene Maintenance. These obstacles are closely linked with [a lack of] “political resolve” and were not directly addressed or affected by our project activities.



Alongside organizational obstacles, financial obstacles to more efficient use of bicycles for generating income are the most serious and overcoming this problem would represent important progress. In this regard positive development is plausible, as significantly improving the condition of the bicycles does not require much investment. Nonetheless, these are extremely poor people, and even limited investment is beyond their means, therefore, at least initially, in order to improve the condition of the bicycles, it is necessary to secure some form of financial or technical support.

As part of the project “Sustainable Mobility and Collectors of Secondary Raw Materials” we organized a workshop for cargo cyclists/collectors in their settlements. The cargo bicycles were serviced, including small interventions and replacement of parts. Most bicycles were made properly functional, which resulted in increasing the efficiency of the collectors and raising their income. The collectors observed their bicycles being repaired, which allowed them to see firsthand how specific mechanical or other problems were being resolved, which in turn has had a significant impact on their capabilities regarding independent and sustainable maintenance and repair of their bicycles.

Through additional support and further development of the workshops, project beneficiaries could be trained to independently maintain their bicycles, which would also raise their qualifications in the labour market. Although these would be informally acquired qualifications, it could increase the employment of Roma collectors of secondary raw materials[26]. So far, similar concepts have proved to be successful. For example, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization implements projects for the improvement of informal Roma settlements where beneficiaries have the opportunity to acquire transferable skills, raising their qualifications in the labour market.

A further significant problem in the improvement of secondary raw materials collection is represented by the necessity to secure funds for the procurement of basic tools and spare parts. A very practical solution to this problem surfaced during the project's implementation, in the form of establishing a joint fund within the group of collectors. The establishment of the joint fund, given the potential risk of its unequal usage, represents a seed of cooperation and trust upon which further organizing and greater coherence within the group of collectors can be developed. Success in this field could bring about the next phase in improving the organization of the entire collection process – establishing a cooperative, union or some kind of social enterprise to bring the collectors together and increase their efficiency and competitiveness.

Organizational obstacles mainly pertain to preparation for and undertaking the daily collection “run”. Namely, due to a lack of certainty about which locations collectors should cover in the course of a “run” (due to the lack of steady suppliers of secondary raw materials), collectors do not plan their route – instead, the chosen route depends entirely on the raw materials they manage to collect along the way. The introduction of a higher level of certainty in the collection process itself, be it through a guaranteed steady supply of secondary raw materials or other methods, would save time and increase efficiency in the collection process.

Another serious obstacle is the spatial segregation of Roma. Roma settlements are frequently located quite far away from other structures and public services of the community of which they are a part. This leads to additional problems concerning the collection of secondary raw materials, specifically the distance that needs to be covered by the collectors from their settlements to places where they can find secondary raw materials. Recycling centres and other enterprises trading in secondary raw materials are also normally not located in the vicinity of Roma settlements, so the collectors are forced to store secondary raw materials within their settlement and wait for traders to visit in order to sell the collected secondary raw materials. In this way, the Roma collectors are “condemned” to the worst status in the chain of secondary raw materials recycling, because they are unable to deliver the raw materials directly to the recycling centers.

A further problem has arisen as a result of the eviction of Roma collectors from informal settlements and their relocation to official “container settlements” on the outskirts of Belgrade. In such cases collectors become disconnected from places to collect secondary raw materials, both due to the distance of these settlements from sources of secondary raw materials and because storage of secondary raw materials is prohibited in the newly-established container settlements. The problems affecting evicted collectors are best illustrated by a statement of a Roma man following the eviction of the Belvil informal settlement in 2012: “Belvil to me was a father and mother, a brother and sister. I made two runs around the settlement and collected enough cardboard to be able to provide for my family. Now we are far away from work”[27].

Possibilities for Further Development



Further development of secondary raw materials collection performed by Roma cargo cyclists, as well as researching possibilities for other methods of income generation using cargo bikes, is of utmost importance for the further economic empowerment and social inclusion of collectors. Collection of secondary raw materials through usage of cargo bicycles is an extraordinary example of economic sustainability and the green economy, which originated in the Roma community, with little or no support from other actors. However, the development of these activities is limited by the collectors' poor economic standing, lack of infrastructure and other factors.

It is necessary to provide conditions for the further development of income-generating collection of secondary raw materials using cargo bicycles. Economic activities in which cargo bicycles can be used do not necessarily need to be linked to the collection of secondary raw materials. It could also include bicycle delivery, small-scale moving services or similar activities.

The use of cargo bicycles in other countries is much more widespread than in Serbia – and not only in countries with rooted cycling traditions or developed infrastructures. Cargo bicycles are equally used in both Germany, for personal and economic purposes, and in African countries, e.g. for the purpose of improving access to healthcare services.

The National Cycling Plan 2020 adopted by Germany states the following: “By using a pedal cycle, couriers can achieve a high level of productivity, especially on the ‘last mile’ in urban traffic, provided that there is appropriate cycling infrastructure. But municipalities also benefit, because the problems associated with traditional distribution operations (e.g. double parking, noise and pollutant emissions) are reduced”[28].

In Ghana, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda and Kenya there are numerous projects that promote cargo bicycles and their use for various activities – from going to the market and shortening routes between remote villages and urban centres, to improving access to healthcare. FABIO, the African Institute for Sustainable Transport and Development Solution [29], has designed ambulance cargo bicycles that act as ambulance vehicles in some African countries. The non-governmental organization CA Bikes [30] has spent years carrying out similar activities in Uganda, as well as other countries such as Rwanda and Kenya. Their specially-designed cargo bicycles are used by villagers for trips to medical centres and maternity hospitals. With a lack of infrastructure and only a small number of ambulance vehicles available in rural areas in these countries, the use of ambulance cargo bicycles facilitates better access to healthcare, both in terms of time efficiency and organizational efficiency, and has decreased maternal mortality rates, which were much higher in rural areas prior to this project’s implementation.

Improved Organization and New Partnerships

The aforementioned problems concerning a lack of certainty and planned routes taken by Roma collectors of secondary raw materials during the collection process, as well as the linkage with and dependence on locations in which waste is disposed of – containers or similar vessels – could be overcome by creating a partnership between collectors of secondary raw materials and the public and private sectors, respectively. As a number of companies and public sector institutions in Belgrade produce large amounts of recyclable waste, which is disposed of by professionalized companies dealing with collection and recycling, often for payment, Roma collectors are a logical alternative for such operations.

Companies that “get rid” of their waste in this fashion would not only take part in the recycling process, their partnership with Roma collectors of secondary raw materials would also include an aspect of social responsibility. In this way, a greater level of certainty with regard to generating income would be secured for entire Roma families that very often depend solely on the quantity of secondary raw materials they collect, as they would no longer rely only on refuse containers. In this case, collectors would be more efficient, with a prepared schedule for collecting raw materials, which would enable them to collect more raw materials and, ultimately, earn more money for their families.

Currently, Roma collectors act individually in regard to bicycle maintenance, collecting raw materials, contacting intermediaries to deliver raw materials to recycling centres and other affairs. Associating collectors would bring about better work organization and joint funds could be used for buying tools to maintain the cargo bicycles. Moreover, better organization and cooperation would enable collectors to undertake more “runs” each day and to cover a wider area –which would contribute significantly to increasing the efficiency of their work and, in turn, the income they can generate.



It is local initiatives like these, enhancing cooperation among collectors or social enterprises stemming from informal settlements, which could bring about the establishment of an entire network of collectors who together could jointly demand, through the Union or other initiatives, improvement of their status and solutions to some of the key problems in this field.

To date, the only initiative aiming at associating of raw materials collectors has been the establishment of the Union of Secondary Raw Materials Collectors. The Union is a non-governmental and non-profit citizens' association with the aim to protect the collective interests of raw materials collectors as individuals who are not officially employed. The Union's objectives are of a general nature and relate to "strengthening of mutual solidarity and assistance; improvement of the social standing and status of workers in the informal sector, promotion of the employment status, inclusion of raw materials collectors in social dialogue at the local and state level, respectively".

Associating collectors could and should also influence the involvement of women in this sector, as the gender perspective has been completely neglected until now. The degree of autonomy of women in many Roma families is extremely limited, both in regard to education and employment, and in regard to relations with other family members and family planning. Government data show that Roma women constitute 70% of the total number of unemployed persons who have been seeking employment for more than two years[31]. However, despite this situation, women commonly do not engage in the collection of secondary raw materials, nor has the possibility of their involvement been recognized thus far. Therefore, the establishment of a social enterprise, cooperative or similar entity that would involve Roma men and women alike, in addition to the aforementioned advantages, could significantly influence the improvement of the status of women, their economic empowerment and decreasing their dependency on male family members.

One alternative to secondary raw materials collection is the possibility of finding other ways of generating income using cargo bicycles. Recently, major fast food chains in Belgrade have begun using bicycle deliveries. Bicycle delivery in Belgrade and in other cities in Serbia is in its infancy and this, too, could be a good opportunity for experienced, willing and knowledgeable Roma cyclists to become involved in pursuing other, more profitable activities using cargo bicycles. The possibilities for using cargo bicycles for various purposes are potentially very broad. It seems that the marginalization of cargo cyclists in Serbia, as well as the lack of an inter sectoral approach, along with other factors, has led to the use of cargo bicycles not being viewed as an opportunity for introducing a new “greener” and more sustainable ways of doing business (the question of whether these issues are in the “strategic domain” of the fulfilment of Roma rights, sustainable mobility, environmental protection or some other sector, is also yet to be resolved).

Conclusion

The existing system of secondary raw materials collection using of cargo bicycles has developed without any significant or systematic support. This “concept” has been developed individually by the people who needed it most. The use of cargo bicycles provides an income for thousands of Roma families in Serbia. The collection of secondary raw materials represents a true example of the green economy, which could, at the same time, enhance the social inclusion of the most marginalized citizens.

Further development of the use of cargo bicycles for economic purposes and the creation of a well-rounded institutional framework that supports the activities of cargo cyclists/collectors is necessary in order for the collection of secondary raw materials to become more than simply means of survival and a solution to basic existential problems. If the employment of Roma is to be tackled seriously, it would be logical to expect the creation of a stimulating environment in which Roma using cargo bicycles for economic activities are recognized as significant actors for the achievement of employment as well as sustainable mobility and sustainable urban development. Furthermore, development of cargo bicycle usage for the purpose of work would additionally encourage an increase in the use of bicycle as a mode of urban mobility.

We must not forget our starting observation: Sustainable development often does not require a major transition; sometimes it only requires recognizing and supporting the already existing practices and the communities around them.



[1] Banister, D., 2008, The sustainable mobility paradigm, *Transport Policy*, 15(2), pp. 73-80. Banister, D., 2005. *Unsustainable transport: city transport in the new century*. London, Routledge.

[2] See, e.g., Urry, J., 2007. *Mobilities*, Cambridge: Polity.

[3] Kaufmann, V., B., Bergman, M. M., Joye, D., 2004, *Motility: Mobility as capital*. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(4): 749.

[4] The term “Roma” in this publication refers to the community of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.

[5] Annual Report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality for 2013, p. 55, online, available at:<http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs/sr/izve%C5%A1taji/izve%C5%A1taji>.

[6] Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, p. 25, online, available at:<http://www.inkluzija.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Strategija-SR-web-FINAL.pdf>.

[7] Ibid.

[8] For more information, see, in particular, all hitherto activities and initiatives of the YUROM Center and the Republic Union of Secondary Raw Materials Collectors.

[9] Government of the Republic of Serbia, National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016 - 2025, pp. 42-43, available online at: <http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/en/roma-inclusion-strategy-adopted/>

[10] Data from the presentation by the YUROM Center: “Status and Rights of Roma in the Traffic of Modified Vehicles and Carts –Problem Solving” at a conference held on 5 July 2014 in Belgrade.

[11] See Article 81 of the Law on Social Welfare, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia” No. 24/2011.

[12] See Article 99 of the Law on Social Welfare, “Official Gazette of RS” No. 24/2011.

[13] Cvejić S, Assessment of the Needs of Internally Displaced Roma in Serbia, May 2015 (UNHCR, Joint IDP Profiling Service, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of Serbia), p. 44.

[14] Cited: Eva Schwab - “They are hoarding rubbish and burning tires wherever you put them...”: Displacing and Disciplining Roma Waste Pickers in Belgrade, online, available at:http://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/roma-waste-pickers/#_edn10

[15] European Commission – Serbia Progress Report, October 2014, p. 58, online available at:http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/sr_rapport_2013.pdf

[16] Ibid.

[17] "Official Gazette of RS", No. 36/2009 and 88/2010

[18] "Official Gazette of RS", No. 29/2010

[19] Waste Management Strategy for the period 2010 – 2019, p. 23

[20] Ibid, p. 33

[21] Ibid, p. 45

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Official Gazette of RS", No. 88/2011

[24] City of Belgrade, Local Waste Management Plan 2011 – 2020, p. 94.

[25] "Official Gazette of the City of Belgrade", No. 27/2002, 11/2005, 6/2010 - other decision, 2/2011, 10/2011 - other decision, 42/2012, 31/2013 and 44/2014

[26] Similar experiences are shared by the non-governmental organization Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization from Novi Sad, which deals with the improvement of Roma housing conditions. During the implementation of its project activities, this organization makes sure to provide additional qualification programmes for project beneficiaries in which they are trained in trades particularly concerning repair of their own structures. For more information on this project see:<http://www.ehons.org/romacenter/vesti/229-publikacija-socialna-inkluzija-i-poboljsanje-uslova-stanovanja-u-romskim-naseljima-u-ap-vojvodini-republici-srbiji>

[27] Praxis – Analysis of the Main Obstacles and Problems in Access of Roma to the Right to Adequate Housing, p. 80, online available at:http://praxis.org.rs/images/praxis_downloads/lzvestaj_pravo_na_adekvatno_stanovanje.pdf

[28] Federal Republic of Germany, Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development – National Cycling Plan 2020, p. 48.

[29] Website:<http://www.fabio.or.ug>.

[30] Website:<http://www.ridesforlives.org/#why>.

[31] Data stated in the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma.

