

***Going beyond Political Commitments: Explaining
Diverging Outputs in the Use of European
Structural Funds for Roma Inclusion Strategies
in Spain and Slovakia***

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Submitted to
Central European University
Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International
Relations

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no materials accepted for any other degrees, in any other institutions. The thesis contains no materials previously written and/or published by any other person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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January 15th, 2015

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the use of European Structural Funds during the 2007-2013 funding period for the development of Roma inclusion strategies in Spain and Slovakia. It addresses the question of why there has been a substantial variation in the SF implementation outputs between the two countries. The research challenges the Europeanization and European cohesion policy theories by demonstrating that factors such as domestic compliance, institutional experience and administrative capacities of the implementation bodies fail to explain the Spanish success and Slovakia failure. Instead I argue that policy outputs are strongly influenced by mechanisms embedded in the implementation process. My thesis engages in an analysis which considers the structuring potential of the overarching action strategies - the way they guide and constrain the behaviour and procedural workings of the implementation process. I contend that despite an ongoing devolution of modern governance and a growing influence of non-governmental actors, the hierarchical character of policy-making has not been fully obliterated and the central policy decisions continue to shape public interventions.

The empirical findings strongly support this claim. Nevertheless, the adopted analytical framework also demonstrated that top-down policy implementation process is neither strictly rationalist nor sealed from exterior pressures and procedural routines. First, the focus on policy design unveiled that public problems (Roma exclusion) are “framed” by policy-makers who act upon their own perceptions and consolidated norms. As such, it is the very representation of the problem rather than its objective assessment that legitimizes a set of adopted solutions (objectives and measure). This approach demonstrated that framing of Roma exclusion as a structural issue, free of ethnic underpinnings, is conducive to effective outputs. Second, the analysis of participatory dimension of modern governance showed that in fact overarching strategies are strongly influenced by a growing number of stakeholders, working in different configurations of partnership and located at different stages of the implementation process. However, it was also unveiled that this influence is strongly constrained by the willingness of the government to cede authority and enable participatory policy-making. Thus effective outputs were driven by fairly corporatist partnership arrangements opened to carefully selected experts and organizations. Finally, while top-down strategies and partnership arrangements are considered the main

“shapers” of policy implementation effective outputs are also contingent on administrative coordination and programmatic synergies. The findings showed that linking SF programming with national and regional policy activities reinforced effective outputs - by preventing overlaps, incongruities and conflicts of interest.

This work contributes to and challenges existing scholarly discussions about implementation of the SF and social inclusion policies. It also offers a new perspective on normative claims about the general character of policy implementation by highlighting that policy outputs continue to be strongly contingent on the macro level variables that structure the entire process.

Acknowledgements

This work represents the culmination of 5 years of research. I am grateful to all those who stood by me during this time, who supported my efforts and provided encouragement. Without them I would not have been able to complete this dissertation.

I own particular gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Andrea Krizsan, for her enthusiastic support and guidance through every step of this project and for all she has taught me. I am also grateful to those who have taken time in their busy schedules to read and criticise my work - notably to Dr. Nick Sitter and Dr. Martin Kahanec, for keeping an eye on things, and restraining my inclination to abandon all that is simple and rational. I owe special thanks to Dr. Tommaso Vitale from Sciences Po University, for his constructive comments and genuine support in time of great “intellectual” crisis. Enormous thanks also go to my colleagues, Zbigniew Truchlewski, Stefan Roch and Andrey Demidov for providing clarifying and tenacious comments and to Artak Galyan for his quantitative input and last minute reassurance that what I wrote in fact does make sense. I would also like to thank Deanna Cadette, Tymeia Sarkozy and Kristin Makszin for a sensitive and precise edit and for making me laugh at my many mistakes. And finally I owe big thanks to Maciej Piszczalka for his unwearied assistance with all the technical aspects and tortuous computer issues.

I would also like to express my immense gratitude to all the organizations and activists who shared with me their insights and experiences. Their bravery, strength and determination to fight for social justice have been a great inspiration. Big thanks go to the Roma Access Programme and all its deeply committed students who showed me all kinds of fresh ways for thinking about social progress. To Roma Education Found for giving me an opportunity to participate in exciting projects. To Marek Hojsík for patiently explaining all the intricacies of Slovak bureaucracy. And to Agata Ference from Nomada Association for her genuine encouragement and unyielding belief that we can make a difference.

This dissertation would not be possible without a strong support of all my fantastic friends. I have been extremely lucky to be a part of an enticing, intelligent and dedicated community of people who made my stay in Budapest (all four seasons) truly exhilarating. Special thanks to Renata Kralikova, Tymeia Sarkozy, José Santos, Fanni Barbiro, Timea Pal, Zoltan Dujisin, Bruno Mesquita, Aleksandra Lis, Ian Cook, Livi Barts, Karla Koutkova, Artak Galyan, Lela Rekhvashvili, Erna Burai, Zbig Truchlewski, Iza Surwillo, Natalia Peral, Lisa Wewerka, Olga Loblova, Livi Barts, Renira Angeles, Charlotte Thausing, Tina Magazzini (and many more). Thank you for all the fantastic parties, mutual whining sessions, existential disputes, cigarette breaks, all-night political discussions, shared greasy lunches, Portuguese feasts, football cheers, and contagious laughs.

I also need to thank the Poznan and Luboń “crew” for making my stay here surprisingly entertaining. And all my friends around the world for their motivation, trust, love, and for feeling so close despite being so far.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unconditional love and incessant belief in me. To my husband Damian for his devotion, ‘angelic’ patience, and endless support, but most of all for his generosity, integrity and brilliant intelligence. I know that together we can win many battles and live our life according to our own rules. To my sister Kamila for her spiritual guidance and a strong dose of positive energy and to my nephew Paweł who turned out to be a fantastic young man always ready to stand up for the weak and unfairly treated ones. To Bunio for his faith in me and to my incredible mom for her loving support, kind words of encouragement, financial assistance and countless prayers to Saint Tadeusz (I guess he also deserves many thanks).

To my parents, Wanda and Antoni who always stand by me and have faith in everything I do

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List of abbreviations

AC	Autonomous Communities
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
FSG	Fundación Secretariado Gitano
HP MRC	Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Communities
IB	Intermediate Body
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committees
MRC	Marginalized Roma Communities
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPG	New Public Governance
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
OP	Operational Programme
OP E	Operational Programme Education
OP E&A	Operational Programme Employment and Adaptability
OP E&SI	Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion
OP FAD	Operational Programme Fight against Discrimination
OP RD	Operational Programme Regional Development
OP TA	Operational Programme Technical Assistance

OSF	Open Society Foundation
SDF	Social Development Fund
SF	Structural Funds
TEP	Territorial Employment Pacts

Chapter 1 – Structural Funds and Roma inclusion

In the last decade, the European Union (EU) has placed Roma issues on its political agenda, demonstrating its willingness to take a leadership role in addressing the marginalization of “the largest European ethnic minority” (EC 2004:1)¹. Interest in the Roma as “policy problem” has accelerated dramatically since 2004 when the Central and Eastern European countries, which house the majority of the Roma population, joined the EU². A growing concern with the deteriorating socio-economic standing of the Roma communities³ and the ineffectiveness of existing integration policies (EC 2004:1) has encouraged the European Commission (EC) to seek and promote new-fangled policy responses. The official statements called for creation of an institutional framework that would complement and reinforce the EU’s equality legislation and policies (EC 2004; 2008; 2010a; 2011). In this framework, the EC has pressed the member states to ensure that “national, regional and local integration policies focus on the Roma in a clear and specific way, and address the needs of Roma with explicit measures to prevent and compensate for disadvantages they face” (EC 2011:4). To safeguard development and implementation of effective Roma inclusion policies, the EC has advised the member states to make full use of the EU’s instruments, in particular the system of financial transfers, the Structural Funds (SF) (EC 2004:42).

The SF are part of European cohesion policy, the EU’s strategy to reduce the significant economic, social and territorial disparities that exist between its member states and regions. Traditionally, cohesion policy was based on the logic of intergovernmental redistributive bargaining organized around aggregated measurements of disparity, mostly GDP per capita and unemployment rates. However, the escalation of intertwined socio-economic problems across the

¹ “Roma” is a political term used as an umbrella name for all members of the Romani ethnic community. Its usage in political and sometimes academic discourse demonstrates a strong tendency towards treating the extremely ethnographically diverse Romani communities as a largely homogenous group, overshadowing the various appellations preferred by the individual groups and subgroups (i.e. Sinti, Kale, Rudari, Boyash, and Travellers). This research is aware that from an ethnographic point of view, the Romani community is extremely diverse and all Romani groups, subgroups and metagroups have their own ethnic and cultural features (see Acton & Gheorghe 2001; Marushiakova & Popov 2001). Nonetheless, this project considers the use of “Roma” as an umbrella term practical and justifiable in the context of European cohesion policy, which deals above all with issues of social exclusion and discrimination not with cultural identity.

² In 2004 the EU welcomed 10 countries as new members. In 2007 membership was extended to Bulgaria and Romania. Subsequently, in the EU the population that identifies itself as Roma has increased by 75%.

³ “Living conditions for Europe’s Roma are worsening and all European states, including Western ones, are responsible for changing that”. See: Popkostadinova (2011).

European Community (raising rates of unemployment, skills shortages, an increasingly strained welfare state, youth poverty, and escalating discrimination aimed at ethnic and racial minorities) prompted the EU to re-think and re-shape its “business-as-usual” approach. Consequently, the articulation of thematic tailoring of SF, less contingent on spatial dimensions, has penetrated the regional development agenda of the EU (EC 2003b). In particular, the European Social Fund (ESF) was designated as the main mechanism for channelling money directly at human resources, with special attention given to vulnerable people at risk of poverty. These strategic alterations meant that the Roma could now become one of the main beneficiaries of the ESF.

The first official recommendation to use SF for development of Roma inclusion measures appeared in the landmark report prepared by the EC, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union* (EC 2004). The EC stated that “*SF could make a very significant difference to the situation of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers in Europe*” and that “*member states should place a priority on this issue and commit adequate counterparts funds*” (EC 2004:14). Since 2004 the EU has systematically reminded member states to “make use of available financial resource to tackle Roma exclusion” (EC 2008; EC 2010a; EC 2011; Council of the EU 2010; EP 2005, 2008). In 2009 the Council of Ministers in charge of Social Affairs annexed the *Ten Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion* to their conclusions, in an effort to provide a framework for successful design and implementation of actions to support Roma minorities. Principle 7 explicitly recommends that the member states make full use of Community Instruments, including the SF. In 2010, the *Progress Reports on Economic and Social Cohesion* for the first time made an explicit reference to the Roma– “deemed especially susceptible to social exclusion” (EC 2010b) and denoted the SF as a key instrument for addressing Roma exclusion. Finally, the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*, ratified in 2011 (EC 2011) has also endorsed the SF as a means to develop domestic Roma inclusion strategies in the area of employment, education, housing and healthcare⁴. As a consequence of these commitments, it has

⁴ Although, the EC had stated that EU funding alone could not solve the “Roma quandary” it recalled that anti-discrimination and integration strategies need substantial financial support to be fully implemented. It reminded that €26.5 billion has been programmed in 2007-2013 funding period, with the specific purpose of supporting the efforts of member states in the field of social inclusion, including support for the Roma (EC 2011:9).

been estimated that between 2007 and 2013 €12.65 billion was allocated towards Roma inclusion initiatives, an amount exceeding any previous financial provision⁵.

The unprecedented allotment of SF has not delivered the anticipated results. An increasing number of situational reports began to reveal a widening gap between strategic planning and implementation (EURoma2010; EC2012). Roma activists and non-governmental organizations (NGO) insisted that while EU funded projects looked nice on paper, the money has had little real effect in addressing Roma circumstances. Existing data confirms these concerns, showing that a great percentage of money earmarked for Roma integration has systematically failed to reach the most vulnerable Roma communities (Grambličková 2010:8; UNDP 2012:9). A joint report on the use of SF for Roma inclusion drafted in the context of ESF Learning Network, *Reinforcing Policy Learning for Roma Inclusion* (2014), demonstrated that earmarked SF were either not absorbed or were re-directed to other priorities. Moreover, it showed that a major fraction of the available budget was consumed by consultation services and planning activities, leaving diminutive amounts for the implementation of concrete Roma inclusion measures. Finally, numerous commentators have argued that the financial transfers were simply too limited to address the multidimensional exclusion of Roma in a comprehensive and lasting manner (EurActiv 2012; Guy 2011).

Faced with mounting criticism, the EC admitted that SF measures have failed to develop comprehensive integration programmes, carefully pointing out, however, that the problem was not the lack of money but the absorption capacity of the member states (EC 2010a). In a speech delivered during *High Level Event in Bratislava*, László Andor, the EU Commissioner for Social Affairs, Employment and Inclusion stated that the member states have not put forward a sufficient number of Roma projects suggesting that the available funding has gone unused⁶. According to the report prepared by the Roma Task Force (2010c)⁷, strong and proportionate measures were not in place to tackle the socio-economic problems of a large part of the EU's

⁵ Data on exact expenditure is imprecise given the problems with accounting for beneficiaries with Romani background. Nevertheless, earmarking of EU funds has increased. The assessment of the 2000-2006 funding period shows that only €2.92 billion was spend on measures targeted at Roma inclusion (CSES 2011a).

⁶ Bratislava 23.05. 2011.

⁷ The Commission Roma Task Force was created on 7 September 2010 to streamline, assess and benchmark the use (including the effectiveness) of EU funds by all member states for Roma integration.

Roma population. The report concluded that the SF were in principle appropriate and suitable for generating effective Roma inclusion programmes, however, they were largely mismanaged at the national and sub-national level. The European Parliament (EP) echoed this viewpoint, calling the use of SF a “policy failure” in need of critical examination and immediate action by the national and regional polities (EP 2010).

1.1 Variation in outputs

Despite a widespread conviction that SF have failed to deliver expected outputs in the area of Roma inclusion, there has been a substantial variation in the implementation of SF across the EU. The 2011 evaluation reports *Support for Enhancing Access to the Labor Market and the Social Inclusion of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities* and *Roma Thematic Report* demonstrated that certain countries have made considerable progress developing concrete Roma inclusions measures with the use of SF, while others considerably lagged behind (CSES 2011a,b). The empirical data collected from 15 member states indicated Spain as the most successful country in terms of absorption and allocation of available funding towards social inclusion and integration initiatives targeted at the Roma. In turn, the reports indicated Slovakia as the country with the weakest performance, falling behind Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Similar conclusions emerged from the study commissioned by the EP *Measures to Promote the Situation of Roma EU Citizens in the EU* (2011). The evaluation of 12 member states showed that Spain allocated more ESF budget per capita directly targeting social inclusion of Roma citizens than any other member state⁸. Slovakia appeared at the other end of the continuum allocating the least amount in the evaluated sample. The Decade Watch Survey (2009) which measured the impact of relevant government policies over the span of five years also placed Spain at the top of the ranking list while giving Slovakia the lowest score. The survey unveiled that the “Spanish model” has been effectively promoting high quality inclusion projects, most pronounced in the area of employment. According to the situational study conducted by the EURoma, Spain has collected concrete quantitative data demonstrating a growing number of direct Roma beneficiaries (EURoma 2010). In Slovakia such data has been largely absent,

⁸ The per capita measurement took into consideration the size of the Roma population in each country.

making it difficult to assess who benefited from the SF inclusion initiatives. The 2012 UNDP study, *Uncertain Impact: Have the Roma in Slovakia Benefited from ESF?* confirmed this shortcoming, demonstrating that in the current allocation system, evaluation and cost-benefits are impossible to analyze.

In light of this evidence, the EU presented Spanish implementation of SF as a “best practice” example and a model for other countries to follow. During the 2nd *European Summit on Roma Inclusion* held in Córdoba Spain (2010) Viviane Reding, the EU Commission Vice President and Justice Commissioner stated that “*the Spanish model shows how to use EU funding most effectively and how to use it to promote social cohesion and combat poverty in the Roma communities*”. In the concluding session of the 2011 *High Level Event on the Structural Funds Contribution to Roma Integration* in Bratislava, Nicholas Martyn, a Deputy Director General of the Directorate-General for Regional Policy highlighted Spain’s achievements, stating that “*Spain has already developed good solutions, and the examples are worth following*”⁹. Similar views were expressed by the representatives of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, Roma Education Fund and other major Roma stakeholders including the UNDP.

At the same time, Slovakia’s ineffective use of SF has sparked criticism. In Bratislava, Nicholas Martyn stated that “*Slovak authorities are unable to establish links between inputs and outcomes and even outputs*” and stressed that “*new approaches are indispensable if SF are to make any concrete impact*”. Viviane Reding called Slovak SF allocation to Roma inclusion a “strictly tokenistic endeavor”, while Rudolf Niessler, a Director of the Directorate General for Regional Policy, expressed his disappointment with the “*persistent reluctance to put political will behind Roma integration programmes*”. Criticisms were also intensifying at the local level, as NGOs and Roma representatives complained about rampant practice of re-directing funding away from those who need it the most¹⁰.

⁹ A report prepared by The Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia and The EMIGR Group (2012) has challenged the success of the “Spanish Model”. Although the report presents valid concerns it has not assessed the utilization of SF nor did it expand its scope to the entire country. As such, it mainly challenges the effectiveness of one strategic plan, the *Comprehensive Plan for the Gitano Population in Catalonia*, and not the nation-wide inclusion initiatives.

¹⁰ Thematic Discussion Skalica 14.5.2011

While the reports outlined the variation in the usage of SF, they provided a largely descriptive picture with little analytical enquiry into the causes of the diverging outputs. As a result, it is difficult to determine why Spain has been able to use SF effectively and why Slovakia has not managed to realize the stipulated objectives. Given the urgency of the Roma predicament and volatile performance of European cohesion policy there is a need to ardently analyze all the possible reasons encumbering or facilitating the designated course of action. The aim of this dissertation is to identify and explain the causes of diverging SF outputs in the field of Roma exclusion. I also hope that my expansive and rigorous analysis will generate questions applicable to the performance of SF in other member states and in other policy areas.

1.2 Research question and existing explanations

The research question posed by this dissertation is:

What are the causes of diverging outputs in the utilization of SF for Roma inclusion in Spain and Slovakia?

The question is pertinent given that the performance of SF in Spain and Slovakia defies theoretical expectations stemming from Europeanization and cohesion policy scholarship. It also does not reflect general perceptions about the functionality of EU's financial allocations in different member states.

What follows is a review of existing theoretical and empirical arguments which account for the variation in the use of SF. The aim is to demonstrate why they fail to provide a plausible explanation of the research question.

- A. EU pressure:** The rationalist accounts of EU integration argue that strong supranational pressure, supported by incentives or coercive mechanisms, will trigger member states' compliance with the EU law, especially if the expected conformity lowers the transaction costs of domestic policy-making (Moravcsik 1998; Majone 2000). Only then will member states be willing to transpose EU directives and implement them accordingly. Following

this logic, it could be expected that given the pressure the EU exerts on the member states to address Roma exclusion and the financial incentives it provides for that purpose, domestic actors will be compelled to act in accordance with the European expectations. However, the behavior of Spain and Slovakia does not reflect this assumption.

EU pressure to address the situation of vulnerable minorities has been particularly strong in Slovakia, at one point threatening Slovakia's aspiration to enter the EU¹¹. Provided incentives, including the pre-accession funds and perceived benefits deriving from the EU membership, generated some degree of attention to Roma exclusion, at least at the highest political level. However, despite the formulation of a national Roma action plan, all of the Commission's assessment reports (1994-2004) clearly showed a continuous implementation gap¹². Empirical research has further demonstrated that despite an increase in European funding following the accession, and ongoing pressure to earmark it for Roma inclusion, implementation efforts continued to stall. In fact, the socio-economic standing of the majority of Slovak Roma continued to deteriorate (UNDP 2012). In short, while EU pressure has prompted the Slovak authorities to formulate an official stance on the Roma issues, it has not been instrumental in translating these commitments into concrete measures and on-the-ground practices.

The Spanish case further confirms the negligible impact of EU pressure on the way member states exploit SF. First and foremost, during the accession talks with Spain and Portugal, minority issues were not addressed or elaborated on. In fact the "silent treatment" of minority rights characterized the EU's relations with the Iberian Peninsula for the next two decades. Even after 2000, the EC has refrained from pressuring the Spanish authorities to accelerate their anti-discrimination and integration efforts. Nevertheless, the absence of supranational conditionality to address exclusion of ethnic

¹¹ Although the EU appeared more concerned about the treatment of the Hungarian minority the situation of the Roma was pointed out as an obstacle to Slovak accession (EC 1998).

¹² The 2003 Comprehensive Country Monitoring Report for Slovakia stated "*Despite continuous efforts across all sectors, the situation of the Roma minority remains very difficult. The majority of the persons belonging to the Roma community are still exposed to social inequalities, social exclusion and widespread discrimination in education, employment, the criminal justices system and access to public services. Living conditions, including housing and infrastructures, as well as health status, are essentially far below the average*" (2003a:34).

minorities has not prevented Spain from taking advantage of the EU funds during the development of public initiatives targeted at vulnerable groups¹³.

Perhaps more indicative of the fact that the EU pressure has not been a leading factor in prompting Spain to address Roma issues, was the formulation of the *National Program for the Development of Roma* and its regional counterparts (*i.e. The Andalusian Plan for the Roma Community*). Introduced already in 1989, it constituted an antidote to the state-sponsored discrimination of the Roma during Franco's dictatorship. According to the 2000 annual report of the Service Unite of the National Program (Villarreal 2001), an average of 100 projects has been implemented annually since 1995, directly benefiting an estimated 50,000 persons. Thus, it could be argued that Spanish integration initiatives were more reflective of domestic interests and priorities than of the burgeoning ideas about social inclusion endorsed by the EU.

Looking at these developments it is clear that factors other than EU pressure determine the diverging implementation of SF towards Roma inclusion in the two countries.

B. Institutional capacities and experience: A common argument for Spanish success is based on the perception that Spain as a “richer country” has a stronger institutional capacity to absorb and allocate EU funding more efficiently (Leonardi & Nanetti 2011). Allegedly, the experience with the EU procedures made Spain more adept at optimizing available opportunities to address a wide range of issues including social exclusion of the Roma. However, the correlation between administrative efficiency and enhanced equity of undertaken measures is extremely weak. Although efficiency might improve overall public governance, it is highly unlikely that on its own it will promote equal treatment and tackle social exclusion. In fact, numerous studies demonstrate that the drive towards efficiency in cohesion policy has actually pushed aside the interests of the most vulnerable and weakly organized groups (Bailey & De Propriis 2002; De Rynck &

¹³ Structural adjustments were often implemented to channel funds toward gender equality initiative (a priority of the Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, strongly supported by his party, the PSOE) and benefited Roma only indirectly. However, it could be argued that equality measures served as an umbrella for claims by other discriminated groups, including the Roma.

McAleavey 2001). The capacity argument is also weakened by the fact that Slovakia has received substantial financial and technical support during the pre-accession period, aimed precisely at building policy expertise. The EU endowed Slovakia with close to €34 million from its PHARE assistance programme, earmarked for the development of administrative capacities, social inclusion expertise, and Roma inclusion pilot projects (it is important to note that similar financial support was never provided to Spain¹⁴). Yet, despite the creation of specialized units to foster inclusion strategies - the Social Development Fund (SDF) - introduction of European training programmes for public bureaucrats and strengthening of managerial capabilities of the Managing Authorities (MA) and Intermediate Bodies (IB) the channeling of SF towards Roma inclusion has not improved. What is especially interesting is that in Slovakia the rate of absorption and allocation of SF has varied dramatically across policy sectors and policy issues, however, interventions in the area of Roma inclusion have consistently demonstrated the lowest results (Frank 2011).

The argument that countries with a longer EU membership status are more likely to use SF effectively also does not provide a plausible explanation. Most pronounced in sociological debates about integration, the experience argument assumes that with time member states acquire knowledge about European rules and procedures and internalize European values (Dąbrowski 2010). Regular interactions between the EU and domestic actors are thought to set in motion a policy-learning process, which with time reduces integration costs, administrative discrepancies and resistance. It is assumed that with time domestic actors become familiarized with the procedures and supranational expectations what helps them navigate better through the system and optimize all its potential benefits (Ezcurra et al, 2007). This argument, however, fails to explain why countries with similar membership duration are not equally effective in utilization of SF¹⁵ or why despite proven effectiveness they do not channel SF towards social inclusion issues (i.e. France and Italy). More importantly it cannot explain the particular circumstances of the Spanish and Slovak cases.

¹⁴ Spain did not receive pre-accession funds. Although substantial sums were spent on administrative re-structuring after the accession, Roma integration has entered the Spanish SF agenda only after the 2000 Lisbon Treaty.

¹⁵ See <http://insideurope.eu/taxonomy/term/35> for absorption and allocation data.

Spain has commenced to use SF for Roma integration only a decade after its accession, meaning it had approximately the same amount of time as Slovakia to develop Roma inclusion strategies within its SF programming. Hence, the experience variable does not explain why Spain would learn “faster and better” than Slovakia, especially if one takes into consideration the impressive institution building process undertaken by Slovakia following the transition period.

C. Post-accession scrutiny - European integration literature argues that upon accession new member states tend to lower their commitment to the EU’s conditionality (Sasse 2005). Following this line of thought, Slovak shortcomings could be explained by a diminishing attention to Roma integration (both at the EU level and national level) in favor of other pending issues. Considering the scope of institutional and economic reforms undertaken by Slovakia, it is not difficult to visualize how policies addressing “unpopular” Roma issues could have been postponed or overlooked. However, the political salience of Roma exclusion at the supranational level has hardly subsided after the 2004 accession was completed. Evidence shows that the EU has continued its advocacy for Roma issues (EC 2004, 2008, 2010a, 2011, 2012) and in fact it has progressively accelerated its promotion of Roma integration strategies (EC 2011)¹⁶. The EU’s anti-discrimination directives have been used to drive Roma integration initiatives, in many ways solidifying the attention and commitment to Roma issues across the Community. In fact, at the national level Slovak commitment to Roma integration has been quite pronounced and has clearly reflected the EU recommendations. Nevertheless, the unceasing attention to Roma integration has not generated expected results, which demonstrates that sole scrutiny and visibility of Roma issues at a political level is not enough to generate effective SF outputs.

It should also be mentioned that while, with time, the EU began to be more critical of minority treatment in old member states, the new member states with substantial Roma

¹⁶ A paramount factor responsible for the acceleration of EU’s attention to the “Roma Question” was the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. With a large and severely impoverished Roma population these two countries began to be perceived as a threat to economic and social stability by Western member states. A major surge of immigrants from Bulgaria and Romania to Germany, France, the UK and Spain met with a rather surprising political hostility and escalating anti-Gypsism. In face of these developments and the inability of existing policy frameworks to contain let alone resolve the issue, the EU is in no position to relinquish its role in facilitating inclusion and anti-discrimination.

populations (i.e. Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary) by far received greater attention and scrutiny (EC 2004; EC 2008; EC 2011; Council of the EU 2009). Thus, it is rather difficult if not misleading to explain the diverging patterns of SF implementation by relying on the “EU scrutiny” argument.

D. Targeting of Roma (compliance with EU recommendations) – Slovakia’s low performance in utilization of funds is especially puzzling given its compliance with the EU recommendations. Widely-held perceptions that authorities of the new member states tend to ignore EU equality demands and show little political will to address Roma inclusion are largely challenged by the developments visible in Slovakia. In the context of cohesion policy, Slovakia was the first member state that included a specific horizontal priority *Marginalized Roma Community* in its SF programming (EURoma 2010), which required each Operational Programme (OP) to designate a section describing how general measures will contribute to Roma integration. In line with the EU recommendations it also proceeded with the development of the “integrated approach” to Roma exclusion, based on combining resources from different OPs and allocating them to Roma inclusion projects. In the 2007-2013 funding period €200,000 was earmarked for various local demand-driven projects targeted at the Roma communities. The Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (hereinafter the Plenipotentiary) was designated as the main coordinator of the horizontal priority and the main overseer of the integrated approach. As such, Slovak authorities have faithfully transposed the EU vision and its recommendations, in fact going beyond expectations.

Spanish effective implementation of SF is also puzzling as the compliance with the EU recommendations has been quite selective. The Spanish authorities appeared to be “hand-picking” ideas and EU recommendations, opting for those that suited the ongoing domestic approaches to social inclusion and equality (i.e. often placing Roma issues under endogenous equality approaches). Specific references to the Roma as a target group in the SF programming were scarce, confined to the multi-regional OPs, Fight Against Discrimination (OP FAD), and Technical Assistance (OP TA) (even inside these strategic documents reference to ethnicity as a target of SF interventions was articulated with

caution). The regional OPs and project-calls refrained from targeting funds at ethnic groups, preferring to adhere to territorial and sectoral indicators. Moreover, the Spanish SF programming has not adhered to the integrated approach, so strongly promoted by the EC. Instead, individual OPs addressed a single and clearly defined public issue (i.e. unemployment, secondary education, vocational training). Although there was some coordination among the ESF and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) measures, single projects benefiting from both of these funds were rare. As such, the “Spanish-model” has not been strongly aligned with the EU vision, thus challenging the causal relationship between compliance and domestic performance.

E. Civil Society Involvement – The success of the “Spanish-model” has often been attributed to the well established Spanish civil society and a long-standing tradition of charity work maintained mainly by the Catholic Church and its confederate Caritas organizations (Fernandes 2012). Whereas, the ineffectiveness of Slovak inclusion initiatives has been blamed on a frail NGO sector, weak civil involvement, and reluctance of the authorities to engage in a meaningful social dialogue (UNDP 2013). However, a closer look undermines the plausibility of these explanations.

Although in the last twenty years Spanish civil society has grown substantially, the autonomy of NGOs and their ability to shape policies has been highly contested (see Fernandes 2012). While in the context of European cohesion policy, public consultations with civil society have been on the rise, the opportunities to implement and manage European funding continue to be restricted to expert organizations and designated authorities. The actual number of Roma NGOs involved in the management of SF projects has been excessively low, while critics have argued that no efforts were made to use SF as an empowering tool for excluded groups and localities (Bereményi & Mirga 2012).

Similar dynamics could be observed in Slovakia. Following the separation from the Czech Republic, the Slovak state has witnessed an unprecedented growth and activism of civil society, including a growing number of Roma-led associations and local NGOs.

Political disenfranchisement of the Roma has pushed numerous advocates and local leaders into the third-sector. Consequently, local NGOs became the most pronounced form of representation of Roma collective interests. Roma-led NGOs received substantial support from international donors, advocating for Roma rights and often acting as sole providers of services to the marginalized communities (Mušinka & Kolesárová 2012). Nevertheless, these new ‘representatives’ have been unable to influence public policies and SF programming. Although, like in Spain, consultations with NGOs have been on the rise, their voice has rarely been translated into actual objectives and measures. Moreover, an introduction of highly competitive system of open-calls has placed smaller and less organized interests at a disadvantage, preventing them from acquiring funding.

Thus in both countries the rapid development of civil society has neither translated into greater influence over policy-making nor did it secure greater allocation of SF towards the Roma. Moreover, the dramatic increase in Roma-led organizations has in fact led to the fragmentation and diffusion of collective interests (perhaps more so in Slovakia than in Spain). As noted by Trehan (2009) cooperation efforts were seriously hindered by the competitive nature of grant seeking and a high level of mistrust between Roma and non-Roma communities. In view of these developments, the civil society argument on its own only partially explains the empirical puzzle.

F. Gravity of the Problem - European theorists contend that member states are more likely to channel EU resources to the areas where the social costs of reform is high, the so-called ‘blame avoidance’ phenomena (Waver 1986). However in both countries the on-the-ground situation challenges these theoretical arguments. The Roma in Slovakia make up almost 10% of the entire population¹⁷ while in Spain the Roma represent only 1.8% (not including the migrants). Having a large Roma population should be a strong incentive for Slovakia to use available funds to alleviate exclusion, especially given that the deteriorating situation of the Roma population entails social instability and represents a

¹⁷ Although official data indicate that the Roma minority constitutes only 2% of the Slovak population, the reality appears very different. For instance the London-based Minority Rights Group NGO estimated the total number of the Roma in Slovakia to be 480,000 to 520,000 or 9 to 10% of the entire Slovak population (Liegeois & Gheorghe 1995). A similar assessment was provided by CSES (2011b).

predicament in economic terms (Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009). Although Spanish Roma face many similar problems to their Eastern counterparts, particularly in accessing opportunities on the labour market, education, housing and living conditions (Ringold et al, 2005:155), the small size of their population makes it ‘easier’ to overlook their exclusion, especially given a lack of strong political representation of the Roma (at all levels of government), absence of social mobilization and lobbying leverage. In this light, the argument about the effect of the gravity of the problem does not provide a viable explanation to the puzzle.

In sum, the above arguments largely fail to provide a valid explanation of the diverging SF outputs in the two countries. The reason for their weak explanatory power could be attributed to the adopted methodologies, which by and large neglect to analyze the course of implementation processes.

European cohesion policy has been mainly analyzed by Europeanization scholars who utilize the “multilevel” character of cohesion transfers as a testing ground for theoretical propositions about European integration (Marks & Hooghe 2004). However they pay surprisingly little analytical attention to what happens during the implementation of European grants, thus failing to identify different domestic patterns, structures and interactions.

The major question posed by Europeanization scholars is why governments comply with the rules of supranational regimes, even when these rules appear in conflict with domestic interests or values (Keohane 1984). Different approaches provide different explanations of this phenomenon (i.e. “external incentive”, “goodness of fit”, “rule specification” or “norm internalization”) however, the majority of established theoretical models conceptualize compliance in terms of sole transposition of EU regulations into national legislations (Falkner et al, 2008; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005; Börzel 2005; Börzel et al, 2007). In effect, an inquiry into what happens after the enactment of the EU rules and incorporation of EU instruments into national policy-making streams is largely overlooked. While changes in domestic statutes and establishment of new administrative bodies are put forward as indicators of “successful compliance” little analytical attention is given to the performance of this new institutional

landscape and its aptitude to generate behavioral change on the ground. Thus it becomes impossible to explain why despite the transposition of SF regulations, the performance of Spain and Slovakia in this policy field differs substantially.

The sociological perspective on Europeanization focuses more on the role of domestic actors and their leverage in shaping the “usages of Europe” (Jacquot & Woll 2004; Graziano et al, 2011). However, the inquiries also take legislative statutes as a dependent variable, thus neglecting to analyze the relationship between a statute and its subsequent implementation. While, it is possible to identify the “presence of Europe” in national legislation, it is difficult to see to what extent and purpose this presence has been exploited on the ground. Although the scholarship argues that national interests tend to shape and re-shape EU objectives, it neglects to assess whether these interests are in fact legitimate or reflective of domestic needs. Thus questions pertaining to equality, sustainability and legitimacy of stipulated objectives are largely left unanswered. Moreover, because the role of administrations, local agents and project managers is rarely clarified, attention is averted from the possibility that EU resources may actually contribute to deepening existing inefficiencies at the domestic level¹⁸.

Extensive cohesion policy scholarship is more attentive to implementation processes, as it aims to analyze the impacts of EU cohesion regulations on domestic institutional landscapes – the patterns of regionalization and creation of the so-called multilevel governance. Authors exploring the institutional aspect of the SF’s impact focus on the ongoing re-definition of relations between regions and central governments (Marks & Hooghe 2004; Ferry & McMaster 2005) as well as the beneficial role of the SF in terms of constructing administrative capacities (Bafoul & Hibou 2003; Adams et al, 2011). While these inquiries offer important insights on power relations they tend to focus on macro-level developments, with the consequence that there are relatively few empirically “thick” accounts of how cohesion policy is actually implemented in practice. Moreover, the analytical focus falls primarily on efficiency – whether administrative frameworks and practices are capable of ensuring an efficient and rapid distribution of the SF

¹⁸ Some analysts describe the EU as akin to a colonial power that exploits its superior bargaining power to the disadvantage of socioeconomic and democratic developments. These studies however pertain to pre-accession period of the Central and Eastern European countries and rarely investigated the actual implementation of EU conditionality (see Bohle 2006; Hughes 2001).

(Begg 2008; Dall’Erba et al, 2009; Eckey & Türcck 2006). As such the degree of absorption of SF is equated with implementation success, a conceptualization that dramatically neglects to account for the way absorbed funds have been utilized on the ground.

On the other hand, analyses rich in empirical detail tend to focus on single country, region or project. Where work drawing on several cases is undertaken, it is, as Vink and Graziano (2008:18) commented “restricted to such usual suspects as Germany, France and the United Kingdom”. Although these case studies shed light on the dramatically under researched role of bureaucracies in managing EU resources, they largely fail to couple the findings with a critical analysis of surrounding policies and institutional arrangements. In this vein, cohesion policy is conceptualized as a type of technocratic decision-making undertaken largely outside strategic politics and power asymmetries (Bache & Olsson 1991; Olsson 2003; Scott 1998). Moreover, the case studies are often so immersed in the detail of program implementation, that they rarely problematize the content of overarching strategies and consolidated institutional norms. As such, success or failure of a SF project is essentially pinned on the implementers who are expected to adapt to existing institutional norms – which are not in themselves problematized.

In light of these shortcomings, my research ventures beyond national legislation and examines what happens after the transposition of cohesion regulations takes place. The focus is placed on the implementation process and variables which affect the way official strategies are adopted and realized. My starting assumption is that the existing research too often blames the failure of poorly fashioned public intervention upon the implementer without engaging in critical analysis of the underlining strategies. For that reason I adopt a top-down analytical approach to study of implementation arguing that investigation of diverging outputs must commence with specific political decision (the SF programming), which is likely to be manipulated at the center level. One of my central theses is that the design of the overarching action plan (both its instrumentality and ideational dimension) structures the entire implementation process and drives the diverging SF outputs in Spain and Slovakia.

1.3 Research design

This dissertation employs explanatory research design based on a comparative analysis of the SF implementation process in Spain and Slovakia. In this section I present an overall strategy for integrating the different components of the study in a coherent and logical manner. Firstly I discuss and operationalize my dependent variable – success and failure of SF outputs in the area of Roma inclusion. Subsequently I outline my analytical framework and present the hypotheses central to my research question. In the end I describe the scope of the research and method of data collection and analysis.

1.3.1 Operationalizing dependent variable – success and failure

The dependent variable adopted in this dissertation is *policy output* understood as actions taken in pursuance of policy decisions and a tangible result of all the constraints, compromises, and conflicts within the policy-making. Given that the research question concerns success and failure of implementation outputs, it is necessary to explain and operationalize these broad concepts.

Operationalizing success and failure is difficult given the lack of standardized evaluation of SF outputs in this policy area. Existing quantitative data on the outputs of SF in different countries is often measured against an indigenous and highly diverse set of indicators. This makes it difficult to compare the situation between countries. Moreover, numerous cross-country studies rely strictly on efficiency indicators thus obscuring the effectiveness of implemented SF initiatives (i.e. meeting the stipulated objectives). On the other hand, investigations smaller in scope often put forth only a limited number of indicators. Given the various purposes and aims of SF programming such parsimony is highly constraining, running the risk of biases (i.e. reliance on allocation indicators is often not measured against the absorption rate which gives a false impression about the actual outputs on the ground).

In light of these shortcomings I propose two sets of indicators for measuring the success and failure of SF outputs. These indicators were derived from a number of well-founded official quantitative studies and EU data bases, and reflect adopted evaluation standards in public policy (Heidenheimer et al, 1990).

The first set of indicators pertains to inputs (the resources states channel towards social inclusion goals):

- allocation of SF to social inclusion measures (budget for social inclusion measures)
- absorption rate by final beneficiaries (selected projects, reimbursements, final Roma beneficiaries)
- management of SF programming (streamlining, timely implementation)

The second set of indicators pertains to outputs (what is achieved with these resources):

- sustainability of the SF initiatives (operation beyond the SF funding time-frame, scaling up)
- legitimacy of introduced priorities/measures (addressing the identified needs, meeting expectations of the beneficiaries)

While I consider the weight of these indicators to be relatively similar, the inputs are deemed most significant, given that earmarking and exploitation of funds provides the clearest picture regarding commitments, priorities and management. Nevertheless, the contention is that successful outputs are those that reflect all the indicators.

It is important to note that the aim of this work is not to determine which country achieves optimal outcomes for Roma inclusion. Such normative judgment is difficult to make given a lack of ontological agreement on the optimal way to address exclusion dilemma (against which ongoing practices could be adequately measured). At the same time the absence of longitudinal, comparative studies on Roma inclusion, and a lack of reliable data desegregated by ethnicity dramatically limits apposite assessment of any long-term impacts. Hence the investigation ends with SF outputs (actions taken in pursuance of policy decisions) rather than their broader outcomes (policy's societal consequences after the policy has been implemented). This is not to say that this research is not relevant or its integrity has been compromised. Returning to the classical questions of public policy research (Dye 1976), implementation output is policy at its most operational level thus it lends itself to an insightful analysis. Without first understanding what affects variation in policy outputs, the study of outcomes seems rather incongruous.

According to empirical data, both countries perform very differently on the selected indicators.

Table 1. Dependent variable

Country	Total expenditure (in mill. €)	Targeted expenditure (% of total expenditure)	Absorption level	Beneficiaries (in thousands)	Sustainability (% of continued project)
Slovakia	0.297	16.8%	20%	8	11%
Spain	2.112	44.1%	50%	55	80%

Allocation

The CSES Reports (2011a, b) estimates show that in the 2007-2013 funding period Spain has allocated €2,112 million to social exclusion measures (the highest amount among the sampled countries) while Slovakia allocated only €297 thousand (exceeding only Slovenia and Italy). While this disparity can be accounted for by the difference in the overall population size, the Slovak allocation still appears excessively low. Moreover, within this budget Spain has earmarked 44.1% of the SF to specific measures targeted at the most vulnerable groups (including the Roma) while Slovakia earmarked only 16.8%. This difference is unexpected particularly because the Spanish Roma account for only 1.8% of the total population, while in Slovakia for 10%.

Absorption/ Management

According to the EC Strategic Report on Implementation (2013) in Spain the selection of social exclusion projects reached 70% while the percentage of paid expenditures stood at around 50% (above the EU average). While in Slovakia the selection of projects was also quite high (around 65%) the percentage of paid expenditures reached only 20%. Moreover, Slovakia unlike Spain has experienced excessive delays in launching proposals under many priorities (the social inclusion proposals commenced only in 2010) (CSES 2011b). The low rate of contracting and withdrawal in the initial years for ESF OPs was marked as an urgent issue resulting in residual absorption of funding (KPMG 2014).

Collecting data on the final beneficiaries is extremely difficult given the lack of data disaggregated by ethnicity. In the 2007-2013 period data collection on participation according to

whether participants have an ethnic minority background has improved as a result of the new reporting requirements introduced by the Commission (Annex XXIII of the Implementing Regulations). Nevertheless, numerous problems remain, and existing estimates should be viewed with caution.

That stated, Spain has demonstrated a much higher number of Roma beneficiaries than Slovakia. By 2011 the Spanish initiatives benefited close to 55,000 Roma while the Slovak ones reached only 8,000¹⁹ (EURoma 2010; CSES 2011a, b). However it must be highlighted that Spain under its OP FAD has created programmes directed at institutional changes (close to 75%) – including awareness campaigns, thematic networks and institutional assistance which benefited Roma indirectly. Similarly, all the other ESF OPs have outlined measures within the general approaches to target the most vulnerable people (EURoma 2010). Moreover, in Andalusia the Integrated Territorial Plans for Employment were introduced in the most excluded localities, where the Roma population was often concentrated. Thus it could be expected that the number of Roma beneficiaries was much higher²⁰. According to the UNDP study (2012), in Slovakia vulnerable people and communities were not included in the general measures, which substantially limited their ability to benefit. Only 1/5 of projects were located in the most segregated and underdeveloped Roma localities. Also, the highly anticipated Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Communities, which aimed to mainstream Roma issues in all the OPs, was not fully implemented, which further led to lower absorption.

Sustainability

Spain also performed better on sustainability of the SF projects. The evaluation of the OP FAD (2013) showed that close to 80% of the projects continued beyond the stipulated funding period. The national social inclusion project Acceder will enter the 3rd SF funding period, while regional Integrated Territorial Plans for Employment will continue beyond 2013. It is worth noting that

¹⁹ This low number can be attributed to the delay in launching measures targeted at the Roma. While updated data is still missing, according to my interviews with SDF conducted in 2011, the number of direct Roma beneficiaries is estimated at 15 to 20 thousand.

²⁰ In an interview with Fundación Secretariado Gitano and Caritas both organizations claimed that close to 50% of Roma living in Spain had a chance to benefit (directly or indirectly) from programmes introduced in the framework of SF.

allocations to these initiatives have been increasing and local measures have been scaled-up. Slovak country reports and a UNDP study (2012) clearly identified the lack of sustainability. While explicit data is not available, the interviews with the MAs confirmed that less than 5% of introduced projects were sustained beyond the time-frame of grant payments. It is important to highlight that the co-financing of social-inclusion projects was set at the minimum 15%, with no extra public funding made available for sustaining operation of the initiatives.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy of SF outputs extends to the way SF projects account for the needs and expectations of the final beneficiaries. While quantifying legitimacy is difficult given the lack of survey data and opinion polls undertaken among the Roma communities, existing evaluation reports provide substantive insights on the legitimacy issue. Thus the UNDP study in Slovakia comprehensively illustrated the “lack of legitimate” responses to the Roma issue (see UNDP 2012:8)²¹, pointing out that they neither address most pressing need of the communities (particularly high unemployment rate) nor are considered useful or needed by the participants. The evaluation of OP FAD (2013) in Spain demonstrated that the majority of the European funding was concentrated on issues identified as the greatest impediment to meaningful social inclusion (EURoma 2010; CSES 2011b). The interviewed NGOs were largely in agreement that the available financial support was indeed useful and needed.

1.3.2 Arriving at an analytical framework

To explain these differences I constructed an analytical framework that encompasses and integrates the macro world of policy-makers with micro world of individual implementers. The framework builds on arguments inferred from implementation, governance and metagovernance literature, which will be reviewed and discussed in chapter 2.

²¹ Lack of legitimate responses to Roma issues was also addressed during EC High Level Event held in Bratislava and Košice, where stakeholders agreed that not enough funds were being invested in programmes tackling rampant unemployment among Roma, and that social field assistance has not addressed prevailing structural barriers to inclusions (Bratislava 2011). Moreover the CSES report (2011b) identified instances where SF actually reinforced segregation of Roma in schools (SF were used to build schools in segregated settlements, often without providing quality education).

I conceptualize implementation as the carrying out of a policy decision—by statute or executive decision; whereas the authoritative decisions are “centrally located” by actors who seek to produce the “desired effects” (Matland 1995:146). Ideally, the decision identifies the problem(s) to be addressed, stipulated the objective(s) to be pursued, and tools for structuring the implementation process (designation of responsibility, provision of budgetary and coordinative mechanisms). In the case of SF the implementation process normally runs through a number of broad stages – beginning with formulation and adoption of basic statute the National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF) and the Operational Programs (together comprising SF Programming), creation of criteria for SF allocations, issuing of project-calls, selection of beneficiaries, execution of SF projects, evaluation and finally important revisions (or attempted revisions). In my view, the analysis of implementation outputs needs to identify the factors which affect the achievement of statutory objectives throughout all these stages.

These could be divided in three broad categories: content of statute; participatory processes; and administrative coordination. Below I introduce the component variables and their potential effect on SF outputs.

1.3.2.1 Top-down approach to implementation – policy design

This work adopts a top-down analytical approach to implementation, which looks at the way statutes (in the context of this work conceptualized as SF programming) structure implementation process and contribute to policy outputs (Mazmanian & Sabatier 1989). The adoption of top-down approach has a clear rationale. The SF programming is centrally created (even if with input from “outside” stakeholders) and constitutes the focal political decision and blueprint for the implementation of SF. In this sense it structures and bounds the behaviour of stakeholders and implementation bodies. Thus the way it defines public problem(s) and stipulates solution(s) will likely affect the behaviour of implementation agencies, inform allocation criteria and legitimize selection of projects. I conceptualize this variable as *policy design*.

Central to the policy design variable is my assumption that statutes are not always designed in a rational manner – whereby policy-makers seek the most effective means to achieve specific goals. Thus my research moves away from strictly rational-choice approach to policy-making

and incorporates constructivist argument that the decisions of policy-makers are often guided by normative convictions and settled routines, particularly when public problems are difficult to “assess” objectively (Edelman 1984; Béland 2005; Bacchi 1996). Following this rationale I argue that the design of SF programming is shaped by normative ideas about public problems (social exclusion of Roma) and expectations about how to resolve them (mainstreaming or targeting). To capture this relationship I first examine the diagnostic of the problem embedded in SF programming, paying attention to “frames” underlying the identified dimensions and causes of social exclusion. I expect that the very articulation of the problem will shape and legitimize the adopted solutions. Subsequently I scrutinize whether the design of SF programming provides necessary tools for materializing the proposed solutions - unambiguous objectives, clear priorities, financial resources etc.

I hypothesize that framing social exclusion of Roma as a structural “phenomenon” will prompt policy-makers to design interventions aimed at promoting systemic “transformation” (i.e. mainstreaming approach). If such strategy will be “backed” by adequate tools successful SF outputs will be secured. The concepts of social exclusion and mainstreaming will be discussed in chapter 3 to provide normative basis for the empirical analysis.

1.3.2.2 Governance approach to implementation – partnership design

While my analysis adheres to top-down approach to implementation, I recognize that the implementation of SF programming is not hermetic and does not follow strict vertical chain of command. The move from government to governance across the globe has been well-documented (Newman 2001; Kooiman 2003; Osborne 2010). The multi-level character of European cohesion policy together with an ongoing decentralization of public authority, have opened up spaces in which a variety of actors are now engaged in governing. This means that the input from lower tiers of government and social actors can substantially inform and/or mediate authoritative decisions and interventions. I expect that the form and strength of such inputs will depend on the way participation in SF programming is conceived and constructed (or institutionalized) by the authoritative decision makers (in accordance with the partnership principle regulation). However, it will also rest on the capacities of local and social actors to – contribute, interact-with or challenge the overarching strategic design. Thus who participate,

through what means and to which effect will likely influence SF absorption and allocation but also their legitimacy and sustainability. I conceptualize this dynamic as partnership design.

The analytical focus on partnership design is particularly important in the context of social exclusion of Roma. In general terms, partnership design has been favouring contribution of professional experts and well resourced organizations; as such the scope for communities to exercise influence has been limited. However, in recent years the EC has emphasized that the involvement of Roma people (both experts and constituencies) in the design, implementation and evaluation of SF initiatives is indispensable for effective outputs and outcomes. In addition, it endorsed the argument that Roma representatives should be offered tailored and efficient capacity building assistance for making them competent and empowered partners in policy-making. These calls correspond with theoretical arguments for an enhanced involvement of vulnerable groups and communities in policy decisions that directly affect them (Fung 2004, Geddes 2006). Thus it could be assumed that without the presence of an empowered voice of Roma representatives, SF implementation outputs will be severely undermined especially in terms of their legitimacy and attention to equality.

In line with these arguments I hypothesize that successful SF outputs are contingent on partnership design that accounts for a) the involvement of local experts and legitimate Roma representatives b) granting of decision-making opportunities to partners, and c) provision of capacity building mechanisms. The concept of legitimate representation will be discussed in chapter 4 to help infer its normative meaning and capture the way it functions inside partnership design.

1.3.2.3 Metagovernance approach to implementation – programmatic coordination

An issue that has not been captured by top-down policy implementation research and governance literature focused on participation pertains to what some call bureaucratic over-congestion (Barca 2009) characterizing SF programming. This stems from the fact that SF programming by definition is managed alongside an array of domestic programmes and action plans. As such it is not fully integral to domestic reform plans (although it aims to compliment them). This means that the management of SF is pursued by specialized institutions (i.e. MA, IB) which are guided

by internal procedures and priorities (not necessarily reflective of a wider domestic administrative framework). This may lead to procedural incongruities, which can severely impact implementation efficiency. Hence there is a need for coordinative mechanisms to support creation of synergies between SF and domestic programmes. The failure to do so may countervail the stipulated SF objectives leading to ineffective management, low absorption and allocation. I conceptualize this dynamic as programmatic synergy.

The growing research on “governance of governance” (Peters 2010:37) undertaken by metagovernance theorists argues that effective implementation of public programs is contingent on the strength of coordinative tools and consolidation of joined-up government based on strong inter-departmental collaboration adhering to common goals. I expect that in the context of SF programming efforts to create synergies between SF and domestic policies will be influenced by domestic interests and perceptions regarding the overall aim of cohesion policy and SF interventions. While some countries may view SF as a reinforcement of domestic policies other can see it as a means to facilitate institution building and innovation. However, the most important factor is whether these approaches will be well “steered” and whether they will in fact contribute to the development of common social inclusion goals. It is these administrative undertakings that can promote efficient management of SF, increase absorption, allocation and deliver sustainable SF outputs.

I hypothesize that successful SF outputs are contingent on the scope of programmatic synergy-alignment of SF goals and procedures with national/regional social inclusion programmes, and facilitation of joined-up government dynamic. The concept of joined-up governance will be discussed in detailed in chapter 4, to identify potential challenges of coordination and complementarity, mainly its negative effect on policy innovation.

1.3.3 Operationalizing analytical framework

The above section presented the three variables which will be used to explain the research question. To maintain analytical rigour I will analyze SF implementation process against each of this variable, individually. This is a conscious choice, dictated by the complexity of the SF implementation process, and intention to get a more in-depth picture of potential causal

relationships. Thus I first assess the influence of the content of SF programming, then of partnership processes and finally the coordinative efforts.

a) Analysis of SF Programming content

- Diagnostic of social exclusion (definition, underlying causes)
- Prescriptions (adopted approaches)
- Ability of SF Programming to structure implementation (designation of priorities, objectives, tools, measures)

b) Analysis of partnership design

- Who participates (public bureaucrats, experts, authorities, communities)
- Through what means (consultations, co-production, consensus)
- Ability of partners to influence implementation (decision-making, managerial implementation capacities)

c) Analysis of programmatic synergies

- Motivations to exploit SF (additionality versus novelty)
- Type of coordinative tools

Nevertheless, to gain a comprehensive understanding of what drives diverging SF outputs there is a need to measure the combined effect of these three variables, which are highly interconnected and reinforce one another. To show this influence I examine the three variables in the context of 6 case studies of implemented projects. I will look how each individual SF project frames the problem it aims to address and through what methodology; who participates in the project and in what capacity and finally whether the project is aligned with domestic action plans and legislation. The assumption is that all three variables need to be present for the outputs of the project to be successful. This in-depth micro-level focus will allow me to measure the influence on individual SF interventions rather than the entire complex implementation apparatus.

1.4 Method of data collection

This section describes in detail the chosen method of data collection and its analysis. It outlines the scope of the analysis and its time frame, and rationalizes the reliance on diverse data collection, which includes content analysis, semi- structured interviews and case studies.

1.4.1 Comparative logic and unit of analysis

My research focuses on the implementation of SF in two countries - Spain and Slovakia. The selection of these two cases stems from the nature of the research question and empirical data identifying Spain as a success and Slovakia as failure. While these two countries are quite different in terms of institutional and political conditions, the previous section of this chapter demonstrated that these differences do not influence the variation in the dependent variable. I argued that the variable affecting variation of SF outputs is embedded in the implementation process. Thus it could be stated that my comparative analysis reflects a loose application of Mill's method of the "Most Similar Systems Design".

Nevertheless, to control for the difference in the institutional set-up of the two countries (decentralization in Spain centralization in Slovakia) the scope of the investigation is narrowed to specific regions: Andalusia (Spain) and Eastern Slovakia (Slovakia). Both of these regions fall under NUT 1 convergence priority stipulated by cohesion regulation, and thus are the main beneficiaries of SF (both ERDF and ESF). Additionally, the majority of Roma communities and settlements are concentrated in these two regions (approximately 43% of Roma in Spain live in Andalusia while almost 80% of Roma in Slovakia reside in Eastern Slovakia) which also exhibit the highest level of social exclusion and unemployment (EURoma 2010). Finally both of these regions have implemented the highest number of SF projects aimed at Roma inclusion (CSES 2011b).

1.4.2 Focus on ESF

The European SF are made up of the ERDF and the ESF. Upon close consideration I decided to focus explicitly on the implementation of the ESF. My choice is dictated by the fact that Roma

integration goals have been largely confined to the ESF, both in terms of stipulated objectives and the actual amount earmarked and spent (EC 2004, 2010c; EURoma 2010; NSRFs 2007 Spain and Slovakia). The ESF focuses on four key areas: increasing the adaptability of workers and enterprises, enhancing access to employment and participation in the labour market, reinforcing social inclusion by combating discrimination and facilitating access to the labour market for disadvantaged people, and promoting partnership for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion. Data outlining Spanish success and pointing out Slovak under-performance is predominately focused on the ESF activities, with only limited references made to other funds. Nevertheless, in an effort to avoid biases (for example Slovakia's inclusion efforts could rely more on ERDF) the project also takes a look at relevant goals and activities stipulated by ERDF programming²².

1.4.3 Time frame

The time frame of the research consists of two funding periods, 2000-2006 and 2007-2013. However, the analytical focus falls predominately on the 2007-2013 programming period. The reason for this limited time frame is twofold. First, Roma issues came onto the European political agenda in full force only in 2004 and in the context of cohesion policy Roma inclusion priorities crystallized and expanded only in the 2007-2013 funding period. Second, Slovakia entered the EU in 2004 thus participating in the first programming period for only two years. While Roma inclusion priorities were articulated already by then, their expansion and in particular the adoption of Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Community took place only in 2007. As such it is considered more viable for comparative purposes to focus on objectives, priorities and measures developed and implemented in the 2007-2013 period.

²² The ERDF supports programmes addressing regional development, economic change, enhanced competitiveness and territorial co-operation throughout the EU. In May 2010 the ERDF was amended to limit the segregation of marginalized communities living in poor housing conditions. Also new amendments allow for the so-called integration approach whereby individual OPs can provide for interventions financed from both ESF and ERDF.

1.4.4 Data collection

This dissertation builds on qualitative method of data collection, which includes content analysis of strategic policy documents and statutes, semi-structured interviews conducted with major SF and Roma inclusion stakeholders and case studies of 6 implemented SF projects. Using the conceptualization of Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007), I contend that there are two major goals for using multiple sources for collecting data, namely representation and legitimation. Representation refers to the ability to extract adequate meaning from the information at hand. In terms of legitimation, using multiple source types allows the researchers to combine the information from various sources in order to understand the phenomenon better. In other words, using multiple source types allows the researcher to get more out of the data, thereby (potentially) generating more meaning and, in turn, enhancing the quality of syntheses. This method is considered most suitable for extracting information about severely under-research topics. I consider this method necessary and useful to explore my research question, which does far have received limited analytical attention.

1.4.4.1 Content analysis

The first set of data was collected through content analysis of the official SF programming documents. In the realm of social science content analysis is “codified common sense, a refinement of ways that might be used by laypersons to describe and explain aspects of the world about them” (Robson 1993: 352). In public policy research it is a method used for deconstructing policy texts (legislation, procedures, reports, evaluation etc.) according to pre-established analytical categories (often based on theoretical assumptions) and a set of standardized questions.

The analysis of policy content usually focuses on two dimensions: a) instrumentality – identifying objectives, priorities, tools and regulatory provisions, and b) the discursive elements – policy framing, i.e. an “organizing principle that transforms fragmentary or incidental information into a structured and meaningful problem, in which a solution is implicitly or explicitly included” (Verloo 2005: 20). Given my hypothesis that both instrumental and ideational aspect of SF programming will affect implementation, I analyzed the documents along these two dimensions.

The first step in content analysis is the identification of relevant documents. Given that SF programming is central to cohesion policy I evaluated NSRF and OP which were chosen on the basis of their commitment to social-inclusion and Roma integration.

- Spain - OP Fight against Discrimination , OP Employment and Adaptability and Regional ESF Andalusia
- Slovakia - OP Employment and Social Inclusion, OP Regional Development and OP Education.

While this work focuses mainly on SF programming, the analytical focus on synergies necessitates exploration of other policy documents. While it is helpful to map the scope and nature of such texts, it is rarely possible to examine them all in similar depth. Thus I identified a feasible number of key texts that represent the policy assemblage. These include;

- National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Inclusion 2004-2006 and 2008-2010;
- National and regional Roma-inclusion strategies;
- Regional development plans;
- Legislation pertaining directly to exclusion (social, employment, education).

Given that in Spain responsibility for social policies and education policies rest mainly in the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Communities (AC), the statutory provision as outlined by the regional authorities in Andalusia were analyzed. An effort was made to cross-examine the collected data within each country, in order to determine the level of congruity among the objectives, tools and commitments and infer any possible discrepancies and contradiction.

The analysis of these documents follows methodology developed by equality research in the framework of Quing research project (2012). While I do not employ the coding method I examine the text along questions proposed by Quing methodology and then triangulate the findings with interviews and in-depth case-studies.

The text analysis is twofold. First the diagnostic section was scrutinized. The questions guiding the analysis sought to identify how the strategic documents identified and defined social exclusion as a public problem:

1. What is defined as a problem? (*behaviour of actors – institutions, individuals, groups*)
2. What causes or reproduces the problem? (*socio-economic processes, individual or institutional behaviour*)
3. Is there a specific Roma dimension articulated inside the problem? (*direct reference to collectives or communities*)
4. Have specific policy sectors been identified?
5. Is the problem definition supported by scientific research?

Subsequently the prescriptive section was analyzed. The posed questions aimed to demarcate the intended course of action for elevating social exclusion and Roma marginalization.

1. What are the proposed objectives and measures? (*what will be done and how*)
2. What is the target group? (*institutions, individuals, communities*)
3. What are the main priorities? (*innovation, continuation, specific activities*)
4. Is there a specific Roma dimension articulated in the objectives and measures?
5. Have equality and anti-discrimination been incorporated into objectives and measures?

However, it should be noted that it is critical to not simply “read off” a policy text and assume what will happen: as researchers we need to see how they are taken up, where, by whom and to what ends. For that reason I triangulated text analysis with interview based investigations and case studies, which helped me to ‘see’ policy effects more clearly.

1.4.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews for data collection was considered essential given that existing data offers little insight into the implementation processes of SF. Although in the last decade the attention to SF performance in the area of Roma inclusion has dramatically increased, the examination of the situation has been largely confined to report literature. While helpful in

generating attention to variation in the use of SF the report literature delivered a rather descriptive picture that lacked analytical depth or sound comparative dimension.

The use of interviews as a data collection method is based on the assumption that the participants' perspectives are meaningful, knowable, and can be made explicit, and that their perspectives affect the success of the project. As such they are well suited not only for gathering "descriptive" data but also for exploration of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives (Richardson et al, 1965; Smith 1975). The questions used in the semi-structured interviews were developed using the suggestions of Patton (1990) and my pre-assessment of the SF programmes and analysis of contextual factors relying on secondary data. They sought to generate factual knowledge about existing administrative procedures, departmental responsibilities, and institutional interactions. Efforts were also made to inquire about stakeholders' perceptions about effectiveness and legitimacy of SF approaches. The interviewees were also asked to describe their role and experiences in the specific projects and when possible provide expert comments about the general workings of SF programming and other domestic social inclusion strategies.

I conducted 73 semi-structured interviews with the SF and Roma inclusion stakeholders at the national, regional and local level. These included Managing Authorities of ESF OPs, Intermediate Bodies, and Monitoring Committees. I also spoke to project managers (both public agencies and social actors), independent evaluators and Roma representatives (including NGOs and Civic Associations). Finally I spoke to public authorities not directly involved in managing SF but operating in social policy sector. The majority of the interviews were conducted on location in Spain and Slovakia between June 2011 and October 2011. These were supplemented with phone interviews and interviews conducted via Skype²³. All the participants were fully aware of the purpose and aim of the interviews. In some instances they requested that only their affiliation to a specific organization be publicized while their names remain anonymous.

Moreover during the five year span I attended 10 conferences and workshops as active participant and observer. Information received during thematic discussion groups and focus groups was

²³ For the list of all interviewed stakeholders see Annex A.

recorded and transcribed with full knowledge and consent of the participants²⁴. When relevant, information was gathered through minutes from the meetings and post-ante publications. In this way I was able to verify if the opinions gathered through the semi structured interviews were reflective of the official statements.

1.4.4.3 Case studies

All case study research starts from the same compelling feature: the desire to derive an up-close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of “cases,” set in their real-world contexts (Bromley1986:1). The closeness aims to produce an invaluable and deep understanding—that is, an insightful appreciation of the “case(s)”—hopefully resulting in new learning about real-world behaviour and its meaning. For the purpose of this research this method aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation at its final stage – individual SF projects. I argue that examining the context and complex conditions related to the implementation of individual projects is integral to better understanding of the posed research question. Keeping this in mind I employed a case study method to gather data from 6 individual SF projects (three implemented in Spain and three in Slovakia).

The culling of the cases was preceded by a review of over thirty social inclusion projects implemented in both countries in the 2007-2013 funding period. Data was accumulated through examination of national databases, projects’ fiches, monitoring accounts and external evaluation reports. Given the lack of uniform evaluation schemes, the information regarding projects’ performance was also obtained through the examination of secondary data (EURoma reports, UNDP and EC situational and evaluation reports) and interviews with stakeholders and project managers. To maintain analytical rigour and provide some grounds for comparison, the selection relied on descriptive indicators: territorial reach (national, regional, local); project size (aggregated funding); duration; and target group/area²⁵. Attention was also paid to whether the project accounted for Roma population – either through explicit or indirect targeting. The main aim was to comprehensively demonstrate the effect all three variables have on SF outputs.

²⁴ For the list of attended conferences see Annex B.

²⁵ It is important to note that I disqualified cases which were affected by documented corruption. Although corruption has been documented in both countries, it often constitutes an isolated incident and thus has not been considered as an explanatory factor throughout the entire course of this work.

1.5 Summary of the contribution

My thesis reveals the crucial causal relationship between the mechanisms embedded in the implementation processes and policy outputs. The findings clearly demonstrate that public problems (Roma exclusion) are constructed by policy-makers, a dynamic that structures the consecutive implementation process (adopted objectives and measures). Thus, diverging outputs are by and large influenced by the strategic “master” plan. Nevertheless, the findings also show that the implementation process is strongly influenced by a growing number of stakeholders, working in different configurations of partnership, located at different stages of the implementation process. These agents exert some form of authority over adopted strategies and their realization by adding their own experience, knowledge or convictions, in that who participates and to what extent constitutes a vital factor in driving effective outputs. Finally, while top down strategies and involved participants are considered the main “shapers” of the implementation process, the mechanisms that further ensure that their influence translates into effective outputs are coordination and programmatic synergies. It is the ability of the authoritative public bodies to link SF programming with national and regional policy activities that reinforces its effective outputs - largely by preventing overlaps, incongruities and conflicts of interest.

This thesis makes several important and innovative contributions in both analytical and empirical terms. Firstly it offers a novel approach to study European cohesion policy. The analytical framework elaborated and tailored for the study of such complex arrangements as European financial transfers renders it possible to overcome weaknesses found in existing literary accounts, namely the lack of focus on implementation processes resulting in an inability to explain why compliance with EU recommendations does not generate expected outputs on the ground. By focusing on factors that structure domestic implementation process, the analysis goes beyond isolated explanations and allows for meaningful inter-country comparison. The resulting empirical data in many ways challenges the accounts provided by report literature and widely held perceptions about the functioning of SF programming in the area of Roma inclusion. By problematizing the very concept of Roma exclusion and Roma representativeness it generates

new ways of thinking about marginalization of Roma and methods which can be used to effectively address it.

Analytically, the thesis builds an important conceptual bridge between implementation research and equality perspective. By reinforcing standard implementation variables (i.e. clear objectives, policy tools, discretion) with clearly conceptualized factors such as equal opportunity, inclusion and empowerment, the research confronts an argument that efficient management of SF (i.e. prompt absorption, institutional allocation capacities) is enough to tackle exclusion, marginalization and inequalities. The findings clearly show that the way policy-makers “frame” exclusion is strongly reflected in the adopted SF strategies. As such not only political will and strong managerial capacities are responsible for effective outputs, but also ideas and perceptions about what the problem is and what needs to be addressed. While this might appear as common sense, this perspective has been largely absent not only in the accounts on cohesion policy and Roma inclusion, but also in general examination of policy implementation and its outputs.

The analytical framework also allows for looking at the way policy design influences and is influenced by an increasingly devolved system of modern governance. The analysis of partnership arrangements rise questions about the potential of non-state actors and local agencies to inform SF programming and generate more adequate and legitimate interventions. At the same time it tackles the normative convictions about the “positive” aspect of greater participation by accounting for its potential shortcoming (i.e. fragmentation of interests, accountability dilemma). By demonstrating that the “enabling state” is necessary to form, maintain and manage effective partnership with social actors, the research proves that implementation process continues to bare a top-down character and is not easily penetrated by weaker interests. Moreover, by showing that effective SF outputs are more contingent on co-productive arrangements than on an all-inclusive partnership the research sheds critical light on the common understanding of representation and challenges normative convictions regarding practices of “good governance”.

Finally, the analytical framework brings attention to the administrative apparatus and its potential impact on policy implementation. By opening the “black-box” of public administration the research shows that procedures and bureaucratic routines can strongly affect the way central

objectives are put in motion. While cohesion research identifies “procedural complexity” as the main impediment to effective exploitation of SF the concept is rarely operationalized, which leaves the causal relationship largely unexplored. By focusing on coordinative tools and programmatic synergies, this research unveils pervasive tensions between policy innovation and policy continuation. Given that the cohesion purpose is to “add” to rather than replace domestic policies, focusing on these tensions appears extremely timely and relevant.

Nevertheless the most important contribution lays in the empirical findings that challenge “common truths” about the functioning of SF in the field of Roma exclusion. The notion that SF have been widely ineffective in tackling the dire marginalization of Roma communities is widely spread and anchored in the ongoing public debates. The policy experts and community leaders alike tend to ascribe this shortcoming to a lack of political will, insubstantial participation of Roma representatives in the SF programming, and inadequate financial allocations. As a response the EU together with Roma advocacy groups has called upon the member states to improve their compliance with cohesion recommendations, target SF directly at Roma minorities and create mechanisms which would empower and activate Roma communities (preparing them to take active part in policy-making process). The findings greatly challenge these contentions, demonstrating that in fact ineffective outputs are a product of inadequate overarching strategies and their inability to condition the implementation process. It also appears that ineffectiveness is much more contingent on the array of bureaucratic shortcomings than on political decisions and reluctance to channel funding towards Roma communities.

Shedding new light on policy action in the area of Roma exclusion not only adds to the growing body of Romani studies, but also presents a new way of thinking about the role of SF in creating social inclusion policies. While the thesis adopts a critical perspective, its scope, analytical rigor and accumulation of expansive and timely empirical data makes it a comprehensive ‘information sheet’ which can effectively inform public policy research and practices.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the main theoretical arguments embedded in implementation and governance literature with an aim to construct a parsimonious theoretical model for studying SF programming outputs. As such it infers the main explanatory variables and rationalizes their explanatory potential. Chapter 3 commences with a theoretical discussion on the concept of social exclusion and ideational character of social inclusion strategies. It then investigates empirically the Spanish and Slovak SF programming, focusing the structuring effect of policy design. Chapter 4 deals with partnership design. It provides a theoretical account on different aspects of legitimate representation and measures empirically how the consolidation of specific arrangements partnerships affected SF outputs. Chapter 5 analyzes programmatic synergies. Following the theoretical discussion on policy coordination and innovation it scrutinizes empirically the influence that the creation of synergies between SF programming and national/regional development plans has on SF outputs. Chapter 6 presents 6 case studies of individual SF projects, and makes an attempt to demonstrate empirically that successful outputs are contingent on the presence and interaction between the three main explanatory variables. Chapter 7 provides concluding remarks and returns to the theoretical model.

Chapter 2 - Implementation and governance: theoretical framework

As illustrated in the introduction, the research puzzle cannot be comprehensively explained with the arguments put forward by Europeanization and cohesion policy scholarship. I argued that to fully capture the causes of diverging outputs, there is a need to explore implementation dynamic that take place after the transposition of European regulations into legislative framework. The literature on policy implementation, governance and metagovernance lends itself as an expedient tool for scrutinizing the complexity of domestic policy-making and the way official statutes and objectives are realized on the ground. This chapter reviews the main theoretical arguments developed by this broad body of research, with an aim to infer main arguments and integrate them into a comprehensive analytical framework, suitable for examining the research question.

The chapter will first scrutinize the assumptions of policy implementation theory ascribing to the top-down approach that sees policy formation and policy execution as distinct activities (O'Toole & Mountjoy 1984; Pressman & Wildavsky 1983; Mazmanian & Sabatier 1989; Winter 2005; May 2003). In this understanding, policies (i.e. SF NSRF) are set at a higher level of political process and are then communicated to subordinate levels charged with the technical, managerial, and administrative tasks of putting policy into practice (Buse et al, 2012). Public policy scholarship has theorized that the top-down approach requires certain conditions to be in place for policy implementation to be effective. Since my assumption is that SF programming is implementation in a top-down manner the review aims to identify conditions that are most likely to influence diverging SF outputs.

Nevertheless, I consider the abrupt disconnection between formulation and implementation too constraining, because such conceptualization of policy-making does not take into account the role of ideas, norms, and/or political interests that influence policy formulation (Kingdon 1984). I assume that in the context of a highly politicized issue of Roma exclusion (Vermeersch 2013) these factors will have a strong influence on the formulation and implementation of social inclusion objectives. Constructivist approaches are more attentive to the often implicit connection between discursive formulation of policies and implementation outputs (Edelman 1984; Béland 2005). Thus I scrutinize this strand of literature, focusing on the role of “policy framing” and the

arguments about the causal relationship between the construction of policy problems and the adopted solution (Bacchi 1996). In this conceptualization there is an inherent assumption that policy problems are not assessed objectively but rather reflect normative convictions. As such it is important to analyze the potential relationship between ideational construction of public problems and policy outputs.

While this dissertation leans towards the top-down approach to implementation, it recognizes that a vertical chain of command is likely to be mediated by decentralization and power devolution processes, characterizing modern governance (Salamon 2000). Scholars adhering to bottom-up approach to implementation theorize that implementation outputs are the result of interactive process, involving implementers from various tiers of government including street-level bureaucrats (Hjern & Hull 1987; Bogason 2000; Lipsky 1978). While providing important insights on way implementers modify or distort official objectives, this line of research fails to account for the increasing influence of horizontal networks and social actors in policy-making processes (Rhodes 1997). Given the common practice of outsourcing implementation responsibility to non-public actors and the progressing “normalization” of working through partnership (i.e. partnership principle regulation) it is likely that implementation will be strongly influenced by actors traditionally debarred from policy-making.

To capture partnership dynamic and its influence on policy outputs I review main arguments developed by governance theory (Kjaer 2004; Kooiman 1993, 2003, 2010; Osborne 2010). However, rather than focusing strictly on the changing governance structures and the emergence of the so-called “multi-level governance” (Marks 1993) I examine postulation regarding the conditions needed for securing genuine participation of the local and social actors in policy-making processes (Geddes 2006; Fung 2006; Taylor 2007). In the context of cohesion policy the assumption is that expansive institutionalization of partnership inside policy-making, which includes local and social actors, improves the quality and legitimacy of provided SF interventions. There is also a strong emphasis to “activate” the most disenfranchised groups (i.e. the Roma) in order to improve the legitimacy and reach of public programmes. Governance literature provides vital arguments of how this can be achieved, highlighting issues concerning expertise and enabling government but also pointing out potential barriers to meaningful

participation. The review of these factors can help to conceptualize participatory conditions necessary for securing successful outputs.

While this dissertation considers partnership to be the main expression of modern governance, it does not undervalue the gateskeeping ambitions of the central authorities. Research on cohesion policy often demonstrates that the “centre” continues to be the driving force in formulation and implementation of policies, in spite of the presence and lobbying activities of a growing number of stakeholders (Bachtler and Mendez 2007). Comprehensive theoretical analysis needs to account for this gateskeeping dynamic. While top-down implementation scholars provide important insights, there is a need to re-focus the analytical lens from the vertical chain of command to the steering capacity of governments (Osborne & Gaebler 1992). Arguments developed by metagovernance literature provide important insights on the role of administrative coordination in shaping implementation outputs (Sorenson 2006; Peters 2010; Mueleman 2008). The review of the literature focuses on the coordinating tools which are considered essential for streamlining bureaucratic protocols and synchronizing diverse departmental practices (Peters 2010). In the context of cohesion policy, where the objectives and procedures of the SF programming are expected to be managed alongside domestic policies, focusing on coordinative efforts and the way they are exploited by the centre to prevent duplications, overlaps or incongruities may expose factors driving diverging outputs.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows. It starts with the review of policy implementation literature, in an effort to infer the main arguments postulated by top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Subsequently the chapter explores constructivist arguments about the role of ideas in policy-makings with an effort to aggregate the rationalist and constructive postulations. The following section explores theoretical arguments of the governance literature in an effort to capture the normative and practical aspect of partnership and participation. Then the chapter explores assertions of metagovernance scholars, focusing on debates regarding coordinative tools and the relationship between steering and policy outputs. In the end the chapter will present a theoretical model adopted for the purpose of this work, with a brief account on how the inferred variables might interact and reinforce one another.

2.1 Establishing the linking between policy-making and its consequences

Over the last 40 years, the implementation of public policy mandates has been analyzed from many different perspectives, representing different research strategies, evaluation standards, concepts, focal areas and methodologies. As a result, the miscellaneous research endeavours commanded little general agreement on a common theoretical perspective (O'Toole & Mountjoy 1984). In order to circumvent the chaotic and somewhat futile quest for a grand theory of implementation, scholars argued for the acceptance of theoretical diversity (Robichau & Lynn 2009). Winter (2005:151) noted that conceptual clarification and application of comparative research design (rather than reliance on single case-studies) could be instrumental in sorting out the influence of different implementation variables. Some scholars have argued for synthesizing diverse variables into one expandable model (Matland 1995; Sabatier 1988) while others called for incorporating them inside multi-level governance perspective (Robichau & Lynn 2009). The intellectual pursuit of simplicity has clashed with an increasingly complex nature of public policy. The inductive work by implementation pioneers Pressman and Wildafsky (1973) demonstrated that implementation is affected by a multitude of contextual and shifting factors. Their focus on “complexity of joint action” as the key implementation problem, neither relied on central theoretical variables, nor offered a normative perspective on implementation. As such, despite important findings, the methodology was not suited for comparative research. Nevertheless, as the field of investigation continued to grow, concise theoretical models were developed for analyzing implementation processes. The section below provides an overview of these efforts, with an aim to infer and examine the main theoretical assumptions.

2.1.1 Top-down approach – official templates for action

Perhaps the most in-depth exploration of policy implementation has been undertaken by public policy scholars interested in the way legislation structures administrative behaviour. Their strand of research is based on the assertion that “the failure of a poorly fashioned program is too often blamed upon the implementer, under mistaken presumption that success is a product of the program’s adaptability in the field rather than its underlying strategy” (Linder & Peters 1984:254). As an alternative, they adopted a top-down analytical approach arguing that a comprehensive analysis of implementation needs to commence with specific political decision,

usually a statue, which is likely to be manipulated at the central level. The attention to the importance of “adequate causal theory”, a concept coined by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), prompted numerous scholars to agree on the premise that analysis of implementation should not be divorced from policy and should not regard it as a process that takes place after and is independent of the policy design (Pressman & Wildavsky 1973; May 2003; Winter 2005). This gave rise to a long line of research, predominately focused on scrutinizing the content and components of official statues, searching for causal relationships between *policy design* and its consequences.

The best-known top-down analytical framework was developed by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1989) who argued that “many of the case studies which form the bulk of the implementation literature become so immersed in the details of program implementation that they lose sight of the macro-level and political variables which structure the entire process” (1989:538). The framework is composed of 13 variables placed in 3 main groups concerning the tractability of the problems addressed by the legislation, the social and political context and the ability of the legislation to structure the implementation process. In the framework the “structuring effect” is influenced by factors such as unambiguous objectives, clear designation of authority and allocation of financial resources. With time the design of statues have become a core variable explored by positivist public policy research that assumed a rational “control perspective” on implementation. While scholars are not always in agreement about the conditions that need to be in place for policy implementation to be effective, a list of core factors accounts for;

- Clear and logically consistent objectives
- Adequate causal theory (to how particular actions would lead to desired outcomes)
- An implementation process structured to enhance compliance by implementers (incentives and sanctions)
- Committed, skilful implementing officials
- Support from interest groups and legislature
- No changes in socio-economic conditions that undermine political support or the causal theory underlying the policy
- Adequate time and sufficient resources available
- Good coordination and communication

Of course meeting all the inferred conditions is highly unlikely in the unpredictable realm of policy-making. However, in general terms top-down perspective attributes effective implementation to a clear and concise policy design, with that refuting the assumption that it is contingent on skills and capacities of implementing bodies (Mazmanian & Sabatier 1989; Winter 2005; May 2003).

2.1.2 Policy framing – contesting the rational choice paradigm

Although the rational top-down explanatory models offer a parsimonious and optimistic view of implementation, conceptually they ignore the politics of policy-formulation. Hence, policy design is presented as an “ideologically neutral” template for action, while the implementation process appears excessively mechanistic. This conceptualization is challenged by scholars more critical of the rational choice approach to policy-making, who argue that scientific research cannot comprehensively assess implementation outputs without linking them to the process of policy formulation. A wide strand of literature has expanded the analytical focus from rational instrumentality to political interests and values underpinning policy design (among others, Kingdon 1984; Béland 2005; Bleich 2002; Campbell 2002; Hall 1993; Lascoumes & Le Gale 2007). The pioneer of policy formulation studies, John Kingdon, compellingly argues that formulation of strategies does not follow a rational comprehensive model whereby policy-makers define their goals clearly and canvass many (ideally all) alternatives that might achieve these goals. Instead, he asserts that formulation is often driven by political ideologies, institutional values or external pressures that dictate what needs to be done (1984:93). In that sense, normative convictions and settled routines are likely to inform the selection of policy action plans, even in an absence of throughout and empirical assessment of their efficacy and/or proven impacts. This in turn may legitimize objectives and measures that are inherently ill-suited to address problems experienced on the ground.

Policy design is further problematized by constructivist scholars who emphasize the role of ideas and active learning in shaping (or constructing) policy information about the real world problems (Bacchi 1999; Edelman 1985; Kooiman 2003). The assumption put forward is that even the articulation of public problems rarely stems from clearly identified situations or explicit public demands. Instead, they argue that the identification process is strongly contingent on perception

(Kooiman 2003) or political interests and biases (Edelman 1985). Goffman (1974) refers to this phenomenon as “framing”, a concept implying that articulated problems are not simple descriptions of reality but specific representations that give meaning to reality. The basic premise refutes the notion that different individuals can observe the same social and natural phenomena and necessarily arrive at similar conclusions. Bacchi’s (1999) “What’s the problem” approach explores influence of framing in the context of gender equality policies. Her main theoretical input is the argument that “every postulated solution has built into it a particular representation of what the problem is, and it is these representations and their implications that need to be discussed” (1999:21). According to her argument, it is not so much that problems are wrongly assessed or not assessed at all but that they are driven by cognitive and moral maps that orient actors within a given policy sphere. By deconstructing the adopted definitions of a public problem one can capture the rationale behind the selected solutions. It could be speculated that policies that aim to satisfy sole political interest or address purely normative perceptions will run the risk of delivering unsuited, unnecessary, or unwanted public interventions.

2.1.3. Bottom-up approach – re-shaping formal objectives

The attention to the way statutes shape subsequent events is strongly criticized by the scholars who argue that one must take a special interest in “the bottom” of the implementation process, the place where public policies are delivered to citizens or firms (Berman 1978, 1980; Hjern & Hull 1982, 1987; Bogason 2000; Lipsky 1978). The pioneer of bottom-up implementation perspective Michael Lipsky argues that a more realistic understanding of implementation can be gained by looking at a policy from the view of public service deliverers. Following this reasoning Berman (1978) asserts that policy implementation occurs on two levels; at the macro-implementation level, where centrally located actors develop a government program and at the micro-implementation level, where local administrations react to the macro-level plans and subsequently devise their own programs and implement them. Leaning on the insights from the principal-agent theory (March & Simon 1958) he emphasizes that politicians and administrative managers have an extremely limited control over the front-line staffs, a situation driven by different interests and asymmetrical information. Other “bottom-uppers” point out that the contextual factors within the implementing environment can completely dominate rules created at

the top of the implementation pyramid, thus undermining policy designers' control of the entire process (Palumbo et al, 1984). These assumptions led Bogason (2000) to conclude that local level implementers need a certain degree of autonomy in order to adapt the program to local conditions, as without such a leeway for action the program are likely to fail.

In many ways, the bottom-up perspective turns the policy process upside-down, arguing that the goals, strategies and activities of the actors involved in the micro-implementation process must be carefully analyzed in order to understand implementation and predict its outputs (Weatherley & Lipsky 1977; Bogason 2000). The findings of an extensive empirical work conducted by Benny Hjern (1982) and his colleagues (Hjern & Hull 1985; Hull & Hjern 1987) show that central initiatives are often poorly adapted to the local conditions. They argued that the success of a programme largely depends on the ability of local actors and implementation bodies to "adapt" policy design to local conditions. Such stance fully contradicts the assumption and arguments of top-down researches, as such reinforcing scepticism about the possibility to develop a single theory of implementation that is context-free (Maynard-Moody et al, 1990; Bogason 2000).

While the assumptions presented by the bottom-up methodology appear valid, I argue that the degree of local autonomy has been largely overemphasized. I considered this to be a serious shortcoming, given that in a democratic system, policy control is exercised by actors whose power derives from their accountability to sovereign voters through their elected representatives. Hence, while service providers may receive discretion over official objectives, it still occurs within a context of central control. Linder and Peters (1987) points out that the existence of flexibility and autonomy at the local level is often incorporated into the policy design, thus it should not be considered an "uncontrollable factor" beyond the reach and understanding of central officials. They further argue that while central actors do not act in detail or intervene in specific cases, they do actually structure the goals and strategies of those participants who are active. As such, the institutional setting, the available resources and access to implementing arenas are determined centrally. Moreover, the incentives (positive and negative) provided by the centre can effectively restrain local goals and interests, especially if they differ substantially from those stipulated by the centre (Weaver 2009). Thus, even when implementation bodies and

service deliverers are prone to “suffice” and act upon their own interests (and capacities) their behaviours is strongly bounded by protocols and incentives embedded in the policy design.

2.1.4 Policy design - the explanatory variable

What has been deduced from these debates is that the top-down analysis of implementation lends itself as a useful tool for exploring policy outputs, particularly because the structuring effect of overarching policy strategies is difficult to denounce or ignore. Although theoretical assumptions of bottom-up scholars bring attention to the often neglected role of front-line staff, this dissertation sides with the critique that problematizes the amount of autonomy or discretion implementation agents enjoy. While the implementation of SF programming appears to rest in the hands of sub-national actors (in line with the subsidiarity principle) the strategic provisions and official regulations do severely curtail local flexibility (a situation often criticized by cohesion stakeholders themselves). Thus I consider it more effective to concentrate on incentives for cooperation provided by the centre (the capacity of statute to restrain non-compliance) rather than exaggerate the uncontrollability of local interests and sufficing predisposition of lower level bureaucrats.

My research ascribes to the top-down approach that merges the contentions put forward by rational choice and constructivist scholars. I assert that a comprehensive investigation of SF performance in the area of Roma inclusion needs to focus on both, the instrumental as well as the ideational dimension of SF programming. While, I assume that clear cut design of SF strategic documents may facilitate effective realization of stipulated objectives, I argue that the framing of public problems (Roma exclusion) shapes and legitimizes these very objectives and licensed measures. Thus I hypothesize that problem definition, which does not reflect on the ground realities, may dwarf effective outputs even if the strategic design lays out clear objectives, designates responsibilities and earmarks budgets. I expect that the countries under study fashion a distinctive design of their SF programmings that reflects endogenous interpretations of the Roma exclusion problem. Thus, the manner in which the framing of the problem is translated into the strategic plan for action (the solution) and how these action plans are operationalized will be at the core of the empirical investigation.

The examination of the structuring effect of policy design has been fairly neglected in research concerning the utilization of SF for social inclusion programmes. Somewhat surprisingly the inquiries have neither problematized the way cohesion stakeholders define Roma exclusion nor deconstructed the adopted solutions. As such, the impression is preserved that any adopted SF programming in itself is well articulated and reflective of the domestic context. Consistent implementation failure is seen as a product of local mismanagement, weak administrative capacities or blunt racist sentiments among the implementers (EURoma 2010, 2012). The adherence to top-down analytical approach challenges these perceptions by arguing that ineffective policy outputs might in fact be a product of ambiguous design of SF programming and its erroneous articulation of Roma exclusion. Thus it is important to scrutinize how SF programming defines social exclusion and its underlying causes, as these diagnostics are likely to legitimize a particular course of action, even if the managing authorities do not possess adequate mechanisms, resources or knowledge for its realization. Since the very concept of social exclusion is extremely vague and prone to politicization, there is also a need to review theoretical postulations posed by social-inclusion and equality scholars. This analysis will be provided in chapter 3.

2.1.5 Dismantling the chain of command

While policy design variable can shed light on the structuring effect, it is implausible that on its own it can capture the dynamic of a complex system of SF governance. Implementation research is strongly anchored in a set of Public Administration theories that portray government agencies as tightly structured hierarchies insulated from market forces and from effective citizen pressure (Hood 1991). Even bottom-up theorists more interested in the role of front-line workers, have not unpacked the hermetic chain of command, explicitly accepting the vertical dimension of policy-making. As such, the interaction between public officials and non-governmental actors has rarely been considered an important variable for explaining implementation outputs. Given the multi-level character of SF transfers it is expected that the vertical chain of command will be disturbed and the structuring effect will be mediated by the interests and capacities of an increasing number of actors participating in policy-making. To address this dynamic I propose to analyze policy design variable against a wider policy-making context, bringing attention to power dispersion and a growing influence of third-party actors. The scholarship on governance,

accounts for this progressive decentralization and provides some vital arguments of how these novel dynamics affect the implementation process. The next section reviews the main arguments advanced by the governance literature with an aim to infer variables able to further probe and explain the posed research question.

2.2 Governance theory – breaking down the hierarchy

The rise and influence of interagency cooperation began to be scrutinized by scholars who moved away from the Public Administration paradigm (Rhodes 1997; Stoker 1998; Osborne 2001; Salamon 2000; Newman 2001; Kooiman 2003; Swyngedouw 2005; Geddes 2006; Pierre & Peters 2000). Their work has been instrumental in pointing out the fundamental re-thinking of the government's role in coping with public problems. The majority of public policy commentators have agreed that traditional forms of top-down government have been challenge by the growing complexity and disintegration of social and political life. It appears that in the context of globalisation and progressive fragmentation of socio-economic interests, it seized to be possible for the state to govern without the co-operation and input of other actors. New spaces have therefore opened-up to mobilize the knowledge, skills and resources of a variety of actors. Salamon (2000:1613) called this new policy-making landscape “a system of third-party governance in which crucial elements of public authority are shared with a host of non-governmental or other-governmental actors, frequently in complex collaborative systems”. In his view, the “public administration problem” has leapt beyond the borders of public agencies and embraced a wide assortment of parties that became intimately involved in public's business (2000:1613). Subsequently, in public policy literature the term “government” gave way to the more encompassing term “governance” (Kooiman 2003).

The analysis of governance has been conducted by scholars from different disciplines and with radically different normative stances on the role of government, resulting in a highly disparate scholarly discourse. While some scholars contend that the authorities maintain some level of control over decentralization by steering the complex networks of interactions (Osborne & Gaebler 1992) others theorize on the possibility of governing without government (Rhodes 1996). The new-found faith in liberal economic theories prompted some scholars to argue for the

application of private-sector managerial techniques inside public bureaucracies, a vision that nourished the rise of the New Public Management techniques and practices (McLaughlin et al, 2002). However, despite mounting ideas about “the best way of governing public affairs” at its core governance scholarship remains fairly descriptive. The theorists predominately focus on capturing the complexities that underline collaborative system of decision-making (Vangen & Huxham 2012). The all-pervading, normative view that devolution of power is a “miracle cure” for all ills generated by sluggish, centralized bureaucracies and their hierarchical chain of command inhibits an in-depth inquiry into the actual effects devolution has on policy outputs. As such, questions regarding the effectiveness of the new forms of governance in securing optimal policy outputs have been rarely addressed.

2.2.1. New Public Governance – implementation within pluralist framework

The emergence of the New Public Governance (NPG) literature marked a shift in the way devolution of power arrangements was analysed. Posed as a response to a “disillusion with excessively disembodied neo-liberal market forces” (Jessop 2004) the NPG paradigm proposed a “third way” approach to understand contemporary policy-making (Osborne 2010). The attention given to issues of legitimacy and instrumentality of new co-operative arrangements has moved the analysis closer to implementation scholarship. The analytical lens is now placed on the manner in which the congestion of various interests and norms impacts the implementation process (Peters & Pierre 2004; Olsson 2003). Methodologically, the advocates of NPG profess that an active research needs to explore both the efficacy as well as the limitations of the collaborative regime (Osborne 2010). It is now assumed that dispersion of power needs to take a specific shape in order to enhance the implementation process.

The NPG scholarship has embark on a quest to identify a normative model of effective governance. In a span of a few years, the literature has presented various modes of ‘good governance’, including joined-up governance, network governance, co-production and cooperation, all considered a suitable alternatives to privatization of public service provision, particularly in the realm of social policy. In all the presented modes the emphasis is placed on active citizen participation in policy-making and service delivery (particularly in the realm of social policy). Subsequently, partnership with social actors has been put forward as an ‘optimal

tool' for addressing accountability deficit and delivering legitimate public interventions reflective of local needs and expectations. The NPG scholars appear in agreement that in all its forms partnership with social actors fosters policy learning (through knowledge exchange) generates innovation and allows for amalgamation of resources needed to deliver comprehensive programmes (Finn 2000; Taylor 2007; McQuaid 2010). Moreover, partnership with social actors is presented as having the capacity to address concerns about the democratic deficit by re-engaging citizens with the institutions of government (Fung 2004).

NPG theorists also pay extensive attention to the way new modes of governance can tackle social exclusion and promote empowerment of vulnerable groups. Finn (2000) asserts that by engaging local stakeholders with expertise providing social inclusion service and experience working with particularly disadvantaged client groups, the government could expand the reach, diversity and quality of social interventions. Others add, that by sharing of decision-making, budgets and responsibilities at the planning stage, public authorities could engender a sense of shared ownership of delivered services, and legitimize official goals among hard to reach groups and communities (McQuaid 1999; Blunkett 2003). The promotion of societal knowledge and resource inputs is at the core of these assumptions, which share a vision of empowered and active communities, where people increasingly do things for themselves and the state supports and enables citizens to invest their grassroots expertise in policy-making. In the realm of theoretical debates partnership is in fact constructed as a key variable for 'empowering' local constituencies and excluded groups, with that adding to the quality of pluralist democracy and maximizing the appropriateness, quality and legitimacy of policies (Fung 2006).

Nevertheless, the assumptions regarding the positive impact of such partnership are criticized by scholars more sceptical of the "idealised normative model" of partnership. Alberta Sbragia (1992) has long argued that multilevel governance with its non-hierarchical networks continues to be highly constrained by territorial affinities and legislative mandates. Numerous studies have demonstrated that sub-national activities in all phases of the policy-cycle remain tightly structured by a carefully choreographed inter-tier play directed by the centre (or region, in a federalist context) (Stevens et al, 1998; Geddes 2006; Taylor 2007). Such consolidated "interest boundaries" have not appeared conducive to the creation of partnership with groups far-removed

from the sphere of influence. Shirlow and Murtagh (2004:60) shows that policies and programs formulated with the input of community organisations are still more tied to the priorities of the state than to the priorities of the local people. Similarly, work by Geddes (2006) and Taylor (2007) illustrate that local involvement in new governance spaces is most often confined to “micro-politics”, while strategic issues (i.e. social inclusion, urban planning) remain outside their control. Swyngedouw (2005:1994) in turn argues that the predisposition of the governance literature to imply a common purpose and framework of shared values ignores the contradictory tensions in which most forms of governance are embedded; often imposed against a background of widespread mistrust and without accountability. Similarly, Newman (2001) and Gittell (2001) criticise governance discourse for neglecting to address issues of power, agency and the fundamental inequalities in bargaining positions. Their research deconstructs normative aspects of participation, and identifies instances where dispersion of power and responsibility actually reinforces hierarchies and masks underlying power relations. The possibility of such scenarios has been amply discussed by Goetz who notes that “existing patterns of privilege and the uneven distribution of resources are not necessarily altered just because there are new participants in the system” (2009:240).

Growing analytical attention to the participatory dimension of governance further challenges the assumption that collaboration offers the most effective responses to public policy dilemmas. Issues of efficiency and accountability are often raised, highlighting the intrinsic trade-off between efficiency and democratic decision-making (Peters & Pierre 2004). At the same time questions emerge regarding the extent to which public bureaucracies and politicians are actually interested in utilizing local knowledge and resources. Sceptics argue that the willingness of ruling elites to cede power or foster empowerment continues to be extremely weak (Geddes 2006). Empirical research stubbornly demonstrates considerable resistance to community participation and the propensity to relay on standard operating procedures and consolidated bureaucratic norms (Stevens et al, 1998; Taylor 2007; Coaffee & Healey 2003). Researchers working on community empowerment often argue that where communities are given entitlement and status, it is often only a minority of acceptable voices that get heard – and often these are not the ones most accountable to the public they supposedly represent (Trehan 2001; Kröger 2008; Geddes 2006). This dynamic can be ascribed to the confinement of interactive processes to a

dominant value system. In this understanding, new voices that hold a radically different perception of public problems and offer unprecedented solutions are likely to be sidelined in policy-making. Geddes (2006) in turn asserts that partnership is often used to “off-load” responsibilities over service delivery and policy performance onto the local agents without actually allowing for creation of high quality pluralist system of governance. In this way empowerment becomes a simple co-option of local agents, placing them at the services of the ruling elites.

2.2.2. Partnership design as explanatory variable

These debates confirm that implementation outputs need to be analyzed against the ongoing power dispersion processes and consolidation of partnership arrangements among public, private and social actors. However, while NPG extols the normative dimension of partnership, and assumes that it almost automatically improves policy performance, I adopt a more critical view and challenge the rational instrumentality of collaborative arrangements. I treat partnership not only as a tool for channelling local knowledge and expertise into policy-making but also as a highly politicized concept used to manipulate perceptions about the aim of participation and “competency” of partners. Such consideration is vital for exploring participation of vulnerable interests, in both formulation and implementation of SF programming. Incessant disenfranchisement of Roma minorities from political life strongly undermines theoretical predictions that dispersion of power generates “better” policies and facilitates empowerment of vulnerable communities. For that reason partnership needs to be considered more critically.

This dissertation asserts that while partnership regulations adopted inside cohesion policy are conducive to greater participation of non-public actors in SF programming, the SF outputs are largely depend on how such participation is institutionalized – who gets the voice and on what terms. The assumption is that creation of partnership within SF programming is less a result of local mobilization than a conscious choice made by the governing elites. It is expected that in the end it is the top authorities who have the final say in who can participate and though what means. They are the ones who develop, dispense, and legitimize mechanisms which foster, exploit and maintain partnership relations with various non-state actors. The choice and character of these

mechanisms, conceptualized as partnership design, will most likely reflect domestic political interests and power asymmetries, particularly when participants are unable to influence or challenge the systemic hold on power. It is hypothesized that effective SF outputs are contingent on the design of partnership that fosters active participation of social actors and/or localities and facilitates empowerment of disenfranchised groups. Such fostering necessitates an “enabling state” willing to engage in social dialogue, provide necessary capacity building resources to less-organized actors, and cede power and influence. Perhaps more importantly, the authorities need to consider issues of representativeness when searching for “suitable” partners. What should be deemed important is not only the skills and expertise of potential partners, but also their connection and accountability to the communities they stand to represent. The issue concerning legitimate representation and enabling government will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

I expect that the countries under study adapt different partnership designs inside the SF programming, thus the empirical investigation will probe the intrinsic purpose, structure and influence of undertaken collaboration. The investigation will pay close attention to the legitimacy and accountability of participants, to disclose whether authorities promote pluralist decision-making processes and community empowerment or act to congeal the status quo or even exorcise certain groups. It will also examine the instruments dispensed by the authorities to promote an active participation of social actors during the formulation and implementation of SF programming. The main aim is to see whether the adopted decision-making modes were able to translate participation and local knowledge into policy information.

The role of central authorities in facilitating partnership has rarely been thoroughly deconstructed in discussions regarding Roma inclusion. While political-will has often been posed as a leading factor in either promoting or hindering effective Roma inclusion policies, the scholarship appeared more interested in examining the effects of ethnic mobilization or international advocacy (Vermeersch 2009, 2013; Veselý 2002). This by and large has obscured the actual mechanisms used by national government to engage minority groups (or vulnerable groups) in policy-making. Moreover, focus on organizational capacity of Roma communities, and legitimacy of Roma leaders, have been based on rather shallow hypothesis that the mere presence of the Roma in policy-making will automatically prompt needed changes (Jovanović 2013). The

partnership design variable can empirically verify such contentions and may also infer what type of mechanisms are best suited to capitalize on the local expertise and instigate a process of community empowerment.

2.3 Coordinating complexity

Thus far the chapter has extrapolated, from the expansive implementation and governance literature, two main factors which may account for diverging SF outputs – policy design and partnership design. What has been left largely un-problematized, are questions concerning the coordination and administrative oversight of multi-level governance. While SF programming is largely designed by domestic actors, it follows procedures and regulations imposed by the EU. It is a common practice to establish specific managerial bodies (i.e. MA) that specialize in European policies and operate according to different set of rules than the domestic administrative apparatus. As such there are inherent incongruities between national and supranational objectives that may pervade administrative efficiency. It could be argued that to avoid such risk, substantial coordinative efforts aimed at creating synergies between SF programming and domestic policies are indeed necessary. Thus it is important to review arguments pertaining to administrative modus operandi and its influence on policy outputs.

The main body of governance literature takes as its normative starting point the idea that solving public problems is a combined responsibility of the different tiers of government (including the supranational level), market and civil society together – be it in different and shifting combinations of interactions between actors and institutions within and between them (Kooiman 2003). In general, the literature implies that coordination of these complex interactions takes place automatically in a framework of shared values and common purposes. However, empirical research demonstrates that such self-coordination is gravely exaggerated and in fact public policy is prone to departmentalization and entrenched preference of working in silos (Froy & Giguère 2010). Yet precisely “working in silos” has been identified as a serious problem perverting effective policy implementation and ability to address complex problems comprehensively (OECD 2009). To offset such dynamics, scholars ascribing to metagovernance perspective (a strand of research branching out of the governance literature) argue that the coordination of

public administration needs to be prioritized by the central authorities. They claim that governability and oversight of complex institutional inter-workings are crucial variables responsible for creation of effective and multidimensional policy responses. How such coordination can be achieved, is the main research question posed by this line of research. The discussion presented below reviews the main arguments and ideas developed by the metagovernance scholarship.

2.3.1 Metagovernance – the need for oversight

The metagovernance approach commences with the assertion that changes in the traditional working of public administration (i.e. power devolution and working through partnerships) necessitate a new *modus operandi* able to provide direction to the administrative system; a direction that would at once maintain the virtues that have been produced by delegated and devolved forms of governing and secure central direction and control. An overarching argument of metagovernance scholars is that some form of “steering” is indispensable for effective policy-making and program delivery (Meuleman 2008; Bell & Park 2006; Sorenson 2006). This stands in contrast to Rhodes’ (1996) “governance without government” conception, which rejects the need for overt involvement of public bureaucracies in service delivery. Metagovernance approach, takes the involvement of government not only as given (and unavoidable) but also as necessary to secure stability and strategic focus. Nevertheless, its rationale for “steering” stretches beyond a rather intuitive supposition that some degree of leadership is required to orchestrate a complex system of interaction. It accounts for the complexity of modern problems and the need for addressing their different aspects and causes (Lindsay et al, 2008). Kooiman notes that “no single actor, public or private has all knowledge and information required to solve complex, dynamic and diversified problems; no actor has sufficient overview to make the application of needed instruments effective; no single actor has sufficient action potential to dominate unilaterally in a particular governing model” (1993:4). He argues that due to this limitation there is an intrinsic need to unite administrative efforts and “normalize” cross-sector coordination. Such efforts are considered to facilitate the delivery of multipurpose and complementary services, limit inefficient overlaps and streamline multifarious bureaucratic protocols. What is central to such arguments is that effective policy outputs are conditioned upon

the ability of central authorities to set common direction and provide tools for cementing inter-sectoral/ inter-departmental synergies.

2.3.2 Constructing coordination – the search for proper tools

It is important to highlight that metagovernance scholars contend that the state is still the most central and omnipresent governance actor that steer and control public activities from local to international levels. Müller and Wright (1994:1) argue that “whilst the state may be in retreat in some respects, its activity may be increasing in others. And nowhere has its key decision-making role been seriously undermined”. Nevertheless, to maintain its influence the state must now master a host of different technologies of public intervention, each with its own decision rules, its own rhythms, its own agents, and its own challenges. Policy-makers must weight a far more elaborate set of considerations in deciding not just whether, but also how to act; and then how to achieve some accountability for the results. In fact, one of the central conclusions of the field of implementation studies was precisely that the convoluted structures of many public programs were the source of many of the problems, causing public programs to fall short of their promise. The benefit of metagovernance perspective is that it at once identifies coordination challenges and proposes how these challenges could be effectively addressed.

A comprehensive framework that delineates mechanisms and instruments for orchestration of complex system of governance was developed by Guy Peters (2010). He analysed issues related to streamlining of bureaucratic goals and procedures in an effort to enforce inter-departmental information flow. In that sense he opened-up the administrative black box to scrutiny, allowing for hypothesizing about the role of administrative mechanisms in securing effective policy outputs. Peters (2010) identified a series of key mechanisms for reinforcing coordination of public bureaucracies, including: strategic management, managerial control, soft-law, and common value system. It is useful to scrutinize each of these tools in separation with an aim to assess their strength, steering capacity and influence over implementation processes.

2.3.3 Examining a coordinative toolkit

The framework posits *strategic management* as one of the most vital instruments for strengthening the steering process. Although, governments always had difficulties in coordinating their activities, their efforts have been exacerbated by the reforms of the past several decades. Much of the traditional management within public sector has been conducted within individual program and organization, and even when successful in improving individual performance, it has rarely managed to add-value to the overall functioning of an entire governing apparatus. This arguably takes place because each individual organization and program tends to pursue its own goals, often at the expense of broader systemic objectives. In fact, Scharpf (1994) convincingly argues that the enhanced performance within a single organization actually reduces the overall performance of a system. To address this pathology he insists that strategic management should be used to coordinate institutions around principal goals, set for the political system and the society as a whole. Thus, rather than encouraging individual agencies to pursue their internal goals (which tend to be narrowly-focused and self-serving) the leading authorities should construct an overarching action plan and use it to harness organizational behaviour. However, Peters (2010) argues the stipulation of central goals for the policy process should refrain from specifying the exact means for achieving those goals. He observes that establishing goals and then permitting choices about attaining them provides substantial controls over policy directions, and the style of implementation, but also preserves some aspects of the autonomy of organizations and networks. In his argumentation, this at once strengthens compliance with central initiatives, and allows for tailoring of public intervention to the local needs.

Nevertheless, devising means to realize overarching objectives requires strong organizational capacities, expertise and discretion. Hence, allotting managerial control to individual agencies and organizations is constructed as another important variable, in particular the control and management of public budgets. The metagovernance scholars observed that public budgeting has been reformed to provide managers with greater latitude in making decisions about the use of money (Bell & Park 2006). It has been noted that bulk budgeting could provide managers with a global budget, which they could use rather freely to make their programs perform well, within the bounds of the law (Scott 1996). It could also curtail “off-loading” dynamic, whereby implementation bodies are asked (or expected) to deliver complex programs, working with

heavily constrained budgets and rigid bureaucratic protocol. In this manner managerial control could reinforce compliance with an overarching action plan and secure flexibility needed to realize it according to local needs. Managerial control could also extend to other basic inputs into the policy-making system. For example, controlling personnel allocations can be viewed as a simple source of control over individual organizations albeit perhaps not as direct as it might have been when a greater share of public-sector activity was provided directly, by career public servants (Salamon 2000).

Another presented variable pertains to informal approach or “soft law”, considered important in a system where the acceptance and legitimacy of formal rule has decreased. The idea of soft-law has been widely utilized by EU institutions (Mörth 2004) mostly as an incentive to coordinate policy-making in an environment marked by the absence of formal authority and legitimacy. Peters (2010) argues that soft law, based on negotiation and information sharing can and should be applied to the national bureaucratic setting. While the national governments continue to hold control over policy settings, their rule is effectively resisted by subordinate organization with a political base of their own and the capacity to circumvent central commands. Soft law could cope with such resistance by acting as a vehicle for knowledge dissemination across different departments and a forum for discussion aimed at formulating consensus. The main assumption is that an emergence of a shared understanding of public problems could strengthen the commitment of diverse institutional actors to work towards one general goal (Crosby & Bryson 2005).

The reliance on soft approaches extends to even less tangible tools, such as shared norms and values. Governing through these instruments has been presented as one of the cheapest and most effective approaches to governance (Peters 2010). Smismans (2008) argue that when the overseers can shape the values and the incentives to which the individuals making decisions respond, then the desired outcomes can be reached with little investment of resources, and with a continuing effect. However, public values shared within the public sector itself, are not easily extendable to other structures involved in policy-making and service delivery (i.e. supranational organizations, civil society, markets). Nevertheless, Moore (1995) argues that precisely this extension of “public” values to devolved structures may strengthen the alignment of

programmatic purposes, increase exchange of information and produce more comprehensive approaches. In many ways discussions regarding soft law and intangible tools strongly reflect ideas of constructivist scholars, who argue that shared understanding of program and its purpose among different actors can shape and secure effective and legitimate policy outputs.

2.3.4 Internationalization and coordination

The metagovernance perspective is particularly relevant for this thesis as it brings attention to the ongoing internationalization of national policy-making, whereby supranational organizations exert concrete influence on the national and subnational policy-making. Surprisingly, top-down implementation scholars has paid scarce attention to the “presence” of supranational imperatives inside the national statues or to the reality that nationally provided public goods such as human right or labour standards have essentially become globalized (Kaul et al, 2003; Kaul 2005)²⁶. An increasingly transnational character of public problems has, according to Stone (2004:38), provided the rationale for “research collaboration, information sharing, and co-operation” what accelerated diffusion of ideas and policy transfer. Interaction processes among various actors in international politics are now more frequent and intense giving rise to what Ladeur (2004:5) refers to as “flexible institutions” taking place beyond the state. In the case of the EU and the member states relations, the opportunities to lead policy process are provided for both domestic actors and international agencies. As such, the transfer does not simply occur in a unilateral hierarchical process from supranational to national to subnational but is ongoing and multidirectional, characterized by “overlapping areas of policy, norms, values, power relations, and social interaction, where actors are not confined to a single scale” (Macrae 2006: 528). Hence, orchestration of such environment is vital if coherent policies are to be implemented.

I expect, that the way such overseeing is executed in practice, will strongly influence the course of implementation and its outputs. A general assumption of my thesis is that the creation of synergy between supranational doctrines and domestic “ways of doing things” is most likely to prompt effective outputs on the ground as duplication and contestation of supranational norms by local agents might be mediated. However, to achieve such synergies, a joint-up working needs to

²⁶ Over the years issues regarding Roma minority have as well become progressively internationalized (see Marushiakova & Popov 2005).

be first consolidated, ideally through allocation of managerial tools and adherence to a shared system of values or norms.

The latter might be difficult, considering the pervasive path-dependencies characterizing modern bureaucracies and continuing predisposition of working within organizational value system²⁷. Moreover, in a multi-level setting the contestation of supranational norms continues to be quite pronounced. Nevertheless, particularly in the context of the EU financial allocations, incentives for compliance are substantial, and thus it could be argued that effective SF outputs are often more contingent on adequate coordination than on responsive political interests. Thus, it is important to scrutinize the efforts undertaken by the centre to coordinate and synergize SF programming with domestic action plans. The achievement of complementarity might have far-reaching effects, not only on the quality of delivered SF projects but also on policy convergence and cohesion.

2.3.5 Programmatic synergy as explanatory variable

What emerges from the metagovernance literature is that effective policy outputs may be secured through improved coordination and creation of common strategic directions. As such, the central authorities must strive to develop an overarching strategy for action, while making sure that the subordinate bodies have no reasons to resist it and are capable to realize its major objectives in an efficient and effective manner. In line with metagovernance scholarship, this work contends that this could be achieved with the provision of managerial control to the relevant agencies (particularly control over budgets) and the development of soft approaches aimed at consolidating consensual interaction among the departments.

However, rather than examining implementation outputs through the prism of coordinative tools, this dissertation also brings analytical attention to the way central authorities exploit the added value of supranational provisions (SF). The aim is to see whether domestic decision-makers use SF to reinforce domestic policies and approaches or whether they are more prone to exploit exogenous funding for purposes not necessarily reflective of domestic policies (i.e. fully

²⁷ Professionalization of policy areas where highly technical knowledge and expertise is necessary can effectively dwarf the potential for inter-departmental collaboration.

innovative initiatives). As such, the focus falls on programmatic synergies. My hypothesis is that allocating SF to the ongoing domestic programmes will deliver more effective policy outputs than insistence on innovation and experimentation. I expect that political consideration of the SF as a supplement to domestic policies will greatly facilitate creation of coordinative *modus operandi* what in turn will reduce duplication, overlaps and contestation of supranational expectations. At the same time, political reluctance to see the auxiliary character of EU funding and proclivity to craft novel programmes not linked to domestic initiatives, will hinder coordinative schemes, resulting in bureaucratic congestion or departmentalization. While innovative approaches in themselves could promote needed changes of the status quo, it is believed that in the context of SF programming the probability of such dynamic is relatively low. The relationship between innovation and incremental policy-making will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

I expect that the two countries under study developed different coordinative tools and exploited the added value of SF programming in a different manner. Thus the empirical investigation will scrutinize the adopted coordinative *modus-operandi*, focusing on tools used to orchestrate multi-level implementation process. Close attention will be paid to the way domestic stakeholders “interpreted” the purpose and aim of SF programming, in order to disclose their motivation (willingness or reluctance) to exploit the added-value of cohesion policy. The main aim is to identify the character of programmatic synergies and explore their potential to influence the implementation process.

The shape and impact of administrative coordination in a multilevel system of governance has not been thoroughly analyzed in the context of SF programming. While cohesion policy scholarship and Europeanization research pay extensive attention to domestic factors, they focus predominately on the transposition of directives, domestic political interests and resource dependencies (Beyers 2004; Beyers & Kerremans 2007). In general, implementation problems have been ascribed to non-compliance or non-capacity, while factors such as weak coordinative traditions or administrative imbroglis have been largely glossed over. Researchers working on Roma integration pay even less attention to administrative coordination, instead focusing on issues pertaining to local capacities and micro-level political factors (Guy 2013; EURoma 2014).

In these accounts, the ineffectiveness of SF outputs is often presented as a product of political hostility towards the Roma or inability of the localities to absorb available funding. This work, by focusing on administrative factors, can challenge the above claims, by demonstrating that diverging implementation outputs are strongly driven by administrative factors, largely disconnected from political variables such as compliance or political-will.

2.4 Three-pillar theoretical framework

The above theoretical discussion reminds us that implementation process is extremely complex and affected by an array of explicit and implicit factors. As such, it is difficult to analyze implementation outputs relying on a parsimonious model. Nevertheless the above theoretical discussion identified concrete (if not always stable) patterns that provide a starting point for untangling the multifarious processes and arriving at the most compelling model to infer and explore causal relationships.

While modern governance has undergone a fundamental transformation, which has largely dismantled a constraining chain of command (Salamon 2000:1612) the dispersion of power and influence should not be exaggerated. It appears that “top” decisions are still the most tangible blueprints for policy action, able to constrain and shape the behaviour of implementers and other policy-making stakeholders. Hence my analysis of implementation outputs pays close attention to objectives and priorities imposed from the above. While contestation may arise at different stages of the implementation process, my assumption is that sufficing and non-compliance will be curtailed by the “strength” of the statute/action plan (its clarity, incentives, and resources) and its underlying perception about what needs to be addressed and how. I argue that top-down analysis of implementation process continues to prove valid even in the context of rapidly changing power relations. Tracing the influence of statutes at different stages of implementation may unveil failure of public interventions is a product of poorly fashioned policies and/or overarching strategic plans.

Nevertheless the fast-pacing decentralization should not be ignored, given solid evidence that the sphere of influence over the way policies are formulated and realized is shifting and expanding

(Osborne 2010). Thus an analysis cannot succumb to the luxury of treating implementation as a hermetic process, sealed from the “outside” influences and diverse interests. Most commentators agree that it is no longer possible given the complexity of today’s society, for the state to govern without the co-operation of other actors (Taylor 2006:297). Moreover, the input of new partners is considered essential for creation of more informed policies and delivery of composite public programmes. Thus the way new partners exploit the newly created channels of influence constitutes an important factor which can shape policy outputs. However, it must be remembered that who participates and to what extent is likely to be dictated by the overarching action plans (or statutes). Hence my investigation treats the openness of policy-making with caution and scrutinizes the bounded relationship between structuring potential of statutes and influence of new collaborative arrangements.

Another issue that should not be undermined when examining modern policy-making is a massive proliferation in the tools of public action and an acceptance that, in order for policies to address the range of complex and multi-dimensional problems, multi-agency approaches are required. This requires a tremendous coordinative efforts and strong administrative rigour to align often conflicting departmental priorities, values and diverse methods of operation. It is not difficult to foresee that the impact of well design statutes and effective partnership on policy outputs might be offset by a lack of strict administrative direction. Thus the analysis needs to focus on the management of public interventions and lurk inside the black box of administrative protocols. While statutes might provide for coordinative tools, such provisions might prove weak when met with persistent path-dependencies and resistance of the bureaucratic cadre. As such it is important to focus the analytical lens on the administrative routines and the openness to innovative thinking and joined-up working.

In light of this understanding of implementation process I propose to examine SF programming along three main dimensions A) The design of the overarching strategy B) The way partnership with social actors is realized C) The capacity of the centre to coordinate administrative apparatus. For analytical rigour and clarity I propose a three-pillar theoretical framework that conceptualizes the three dimensions as: policy design, partnership design and programmatic synergies.

- ***Policy design*** constitutes the fundamental policy decision being implemented, in that it indicates the problem(s) being addressed and stipulates objectives and measures to be pursued. As an official “master plan” it has a potential to structure an entire implementation process thus influencing the final outputs. The design is based on two dimensions - discursive and instrumental. The first extends to the way public problems are framed (social exclusion of the Roma). The second accounts for the provision of tools for realizing objectives and priorities. SF outputs will thus depend first on the discursive articulation of a problem to be ameliorated, which will legitimize a particular set of interventions and second on the presence of adequate tools for their realization. To capture this relationship there is a need to examine and account for the debates about the concept of social exclusion and the way it has been mobilized in the area of cohesion policy and Roma integration strategies. Once that is established, the analysis needs to probe whether envisioned action plans are backed by tangible resources.
- ***Partnership design*** extends to the collaboration agreement between public and non-public actors (formalized by the authorities) that specifies how partnership will be realized or institutionalized. SF outputs will depend on the way partnership design is institutionalized: what aim it has, who is invited as partners and what types of tools are offered to them for partaking in decision-making processes. SF outputs will also be influenced by the presence of Roma representatives. However what needs to be highlighted is that notions about apposite representation of Roma minorities are politicized and often challenged by policy-makers and Roma themselves. Moreover, pervasive disenfranchisement of Roma from public sphere, not always makes them “welcomed” partners in policy-making. Thus there is a need to engage in normative debates about legitimate representation and enabling support. The assumption is that SF outputs are dependent on the way partnership-design accounts for legitimate representation and provides capacity building assistance to the most vulnerable groups and communities.
- ***Programmatic Synergy*** constitutes coordinative efforts undertaken by central authorities to orchestrate a multilevel system of policy-making, with a goal of linking SF

programming objectives with those held by domestic public departments. Programmatic synergy might influence implementation process by using coordinative tools for streamlining bureaucratic procedures, enforcing inter-departmental information exchange and providing common purpose. SF outputs are contingent on the way the programmatic synergies exploit added value of SF; secure procedural complementarities and overcome working in silos. What needs to be highlighted, is the coordinative mechanisms are highly diverse and political elites have different traditions of 'steer' complex bureaucratic environment. Thus it is important to engage in normative debates on joined-up governance and explore the trade-off between synergy and innovation. It is expected that SF outputs will be influenced by the undertaken synchronization efforts, and the degree of synergy between the SF programming and domestic policy landscape.

For conceptual clarity this framework presents each variable separately. However, it is important to keep in mind that they are highly interconnected and reinforce one another. Thus, while policy design may impose the shape of partnership, it may also be mediated (or even challenged) by various partners. Programmatic synergy may re-shape policy design (to reflect domestic norms and procedures) and at the same time influence partnership design by expanding partnering opportunities to a wider group of stakeholders. In view of this dynamic the main assertion of this dissertation is that SF outputs are contingent on the presence of all three variables and their interconnectedness²⁸.

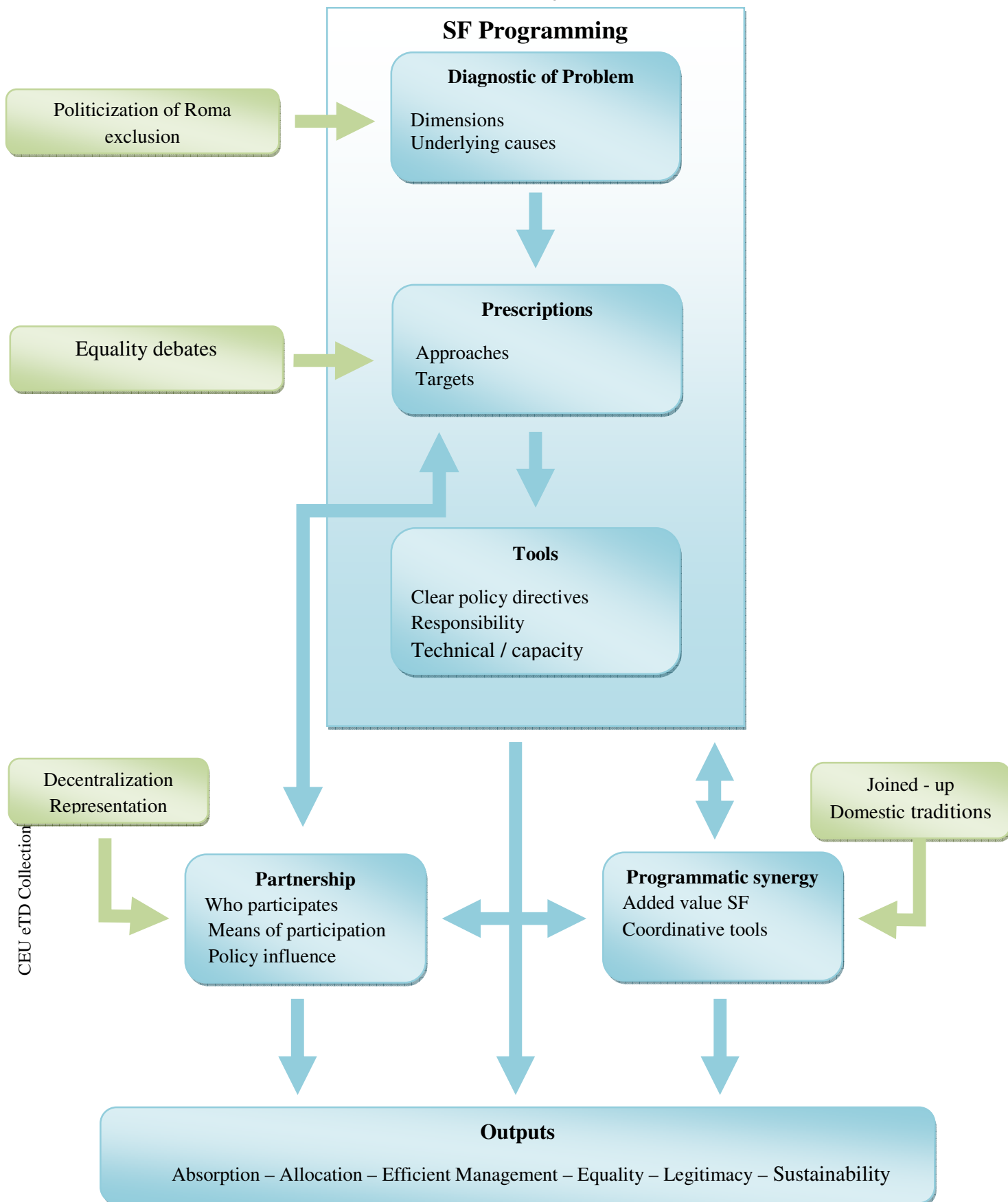
The next section of this research analyzes the collected empirical data with an aim to validate the posed hypotheses. The main aim is to demonstrate that the diverging outputs are driven by the three presented variables. While the first three chapters analyze the influence of independent variables separately, the fourth one analyzes their compounded influence on SF outputs.

²⁸ The entire framework is presented in very skeletal form in Table 2.

External factors

Statutory Variable

External factors



Chapter 3 – Policy design

As demonstrated in the theoretical section the strength of statute (or overarching action strategy) and framing of public problems may influence the delivery of successful policy outputs. The aim of this chapter is to empirically validate these theoretical arguments by examining how the policy design - the content of SF programming (a diagnostic of the public problem, prescription and mechanisms) structure the implementation process. However, before engaging with empirical data, there is a need to discuss the central concept of this research - “social exclusion” of the Roma. Hence the first part of this chapter reviews social inclusion and equality literature with an aim to extrapolate common definitions of this highly politicized and elusive concept.

While there is little theoretical agreement on what constitutes and what causes social exclusion, there is a tendency to see it either as a multidimensional phenomena caused by an array of structural factors (including institutionalized discrimination and shallow endorsement of the equality principle) (Whelan & Maître 2005) or a condition experience by some groups/individual who lack necessary skills to adapt to the changing conditions of modern life (Abrahamson 1996). What can be noticed is that the recommended solutions are highly contingent on how the theorists and/or practitioners perceive and define the problem. In general, theoretical opinions oscillate between targeted approaches and mainstreaming. This chapter will take a more intense look at these relationships, in an effort to confirm my hypothesis.

This chapter argues that “ethnically neutral” framing of Roma exclusion and recognition of its structural dimension is more likely to generate effective SF outputs. Such conceptualization is likely to legitimize mainstreaming approach more geared towards long-term impacts of policies and institutional “transformation”. This in turn can strengthen the allocation of funding to social inclusion priorities and prompt creation of legitimate and sustainable SF outputs. While this chapter does not fully refute the need for affirmative action and/or targeting it adopts a fairly critical stance. It argues that while targeting can deliver immediate assistance to Roma communities it runs the risk of missing an opportunity to generate a more equal and inclusive access to public institutions and services. Moreover, it may isolate Roma issues from mainstream

policies contributing to exaggerated ethnicization of Roma exclusion and further stigmatization of Roma communities.

The findings largely confirm my hypotheses that framing of public problem influences the choice of solutions and that mainstreaming approach is more conducive to successful policy outputs than affirmative action and targeting. However, the empirics negate the assumptions about the need to device multi-sectoral action plans. It appears that the focus on multi-dimensional aspect of exclusion and promotion of comprehensive approaches has contributed to unsuccessful outputs in Slovakia. In turn, the residual conceptualization of social exclusion (confined to one policy sector) in the Spanish SF programming, prompted the aggregation of efforts which eased the implementation process and facilitated successful SF outputs. This stands in contradiction to the generally accepted viewpoint that effective Roma integration strategies must cover all major policy fields in a comprehensive manner.

This rest of this chapter is structured as follows. The first section presents the concept of social exclusion, outlining its fundamental features and exploring how it was elaborated in the framework of EU cohesion policy. This is followed by the discussion on the benefits and shortcomings of mainstreaming and targeted approaches, particularly in the context of Roma exclusion. This section aims to infer a normative model of the diagnostic and prescriptive dimension of policy design which then will be tested against empirical data. The second section analyzes the adopted definitions and action plans in both countries, with an aim to demonstrate how the articulation of the “problem” and the construction of strategies structured the SF implementation process and affected SF outputs. The conclusion discusses the implications of the main findings.

3.1 Social exclusion - an elusive concept

The concept of social exclusion has emerged on the EU agenda as a response to the political recognition of new forms of poverty and marginalization, perceived as a by-product of the “profound economic, technological and social changes which characterise the evolution of industrial society” (EC 1992:7). Officially incorporated into the EU agenda in the early 1990s,

the concept intended to expand the traditional understanding of inequality in terms of income redistribution. As such it brought analytical focus to exclusionary processes experienced also in social and cultural spheres. Moreover it emphasized the dwindling inclusivity of the welfare state and the existence of structural barriers that can obstruct optimal socio-economic advancement of certain groups and individuals. In the context of cohesion policy, adoption of social exclusion discourse added the “human resource dimension” to the redistributive tactic traditionally contingent on administrative and political spatial units. Thus the territorial redistribution clause was expanded to allow for the thematic allocation of SF (i.e. employment, education, and housing) and the targeting of deprivation as experience by individuals and vulnerable groups (EC 2000:2). Attention was also brought to existing “pockets of deprivation” within regions (i.e. urban ghettos, isolated rural areas), patterns of discrimination and micro-regional underdevelopment.

Throughout these developments the term remained vague and has been subjected to various interpretations often mirroring contextual factors and the political interests of domestic stakeholders. Consequently as noted by Walker (1995:102) “inside political discussions social exclusion means different things to different people”, a dynamic that largely prevented the formulation of normative claims. This has not forestalled theoretical efforts to delineate fundamental features and patterns of social exclusion. As some scholars describe exclusion in terms of “not belonging” or lacking social connection (Spicker 1997) others conceive exclusion in terms of the denial – or non-realization – of citizenship rights, directing attention to institutionalized discrimination and political disenfranchisement (Robbins 1994; Berghman 1995). Still others contend that it is dependent on “distance” whereby people become removed from the benefits of participating in a modern society (Woodward & Kohli 2000).

In the EU policy literature, including discussion on Roma integration, social exclusion has been presented as a dynamic and multidimensional process, stretching across different policy fields. It came to signify the combined impact of factors such as a lack of adequate education, deteriorating health conditions, a loss of family support, non-participation in the regular life of society, a lack of job opportunities and pervasive discrimination. In this conceptualization each type of deprivation has an impact on the other, the result being a “vicious cycle of poverty” (EC

2012:8). Such dynamics are believed to pose a serious threat to social cohesion and integration initiatives, which can only be broken by the combined multi-sectorial efforts undertaken by many social and political actors (Kjaerum 2012). Empirical reports assessing the situation of Roma communities living in Europe all confirm the multi-dimensional and reinforcing character of Roma marginalization (Ringold et al, 2005; EC2012; EP 2011). Political failure to account for this reinforcing complexity during the formulation of strategic plans has been considered a main factor driving ineffective Roma inclusion policies.

Although the multi-dimensionality of Roma exclusion seems to have achieved the status of gospel in European discourse, arguments about its underlying causes are much more fractious. The crucial dichotomy concerns the question of whether social exclusion is a characteristic feature of contemporary European societies or a living condition visited on particular individuals and ethnic groups. The former notion relates the incidence of poverty and disadvantage to wider processes of restructuring of economies and welfare states. It sheds critical light on existing patterns and privileges perpetuated by institutional arrangements, persistent socio-economic inequalities and discrimination. As such, it problematizes the system as a whole and argues for the reconsideration of the hierarchy of goals and the set of instruments employed to guide socio-economic progress (Fraser 1997). The latter tends to discuss disadvantaged groups (i.e. the Roma) in relatively isolated terms. It takes the moral fabric (or cultural characteristic) of groups and not the social and economic structures of society to be the root of the problem (Wilson 2000). In effect there is a tendency to “ghettoised risk category” under a new label and publicise the more spectacular forms of cumulative disadvantage, distracting attention from the general rise in inequality, unemployment and family dissolution affecting all classes (Silver 1994). Exclusion is thus presented as a product of “adaptability” whereby people’s interests, skills, or motivations function outside the core of the society which consists of people who are integrated into the sets of relationships and groups that are considered “normal”.

The conceptual division has been particularly pronounced in the discussion concerning the Roma predicament, given the different positions stakeholders and scholars hold on the ethnic dimension of exclusion (Kovats 2002; Vermeersch 2012, 2003, O’Nions 2007) and the specificity of the Roma quandary (Goodwin 2008). In fact it has often been argued that the Roma face a set of

problems which differ considerably from those faced by the majority population (i.e. spatial segregation, discrimination, low educational attainments, and intergenerational poverty). As such, social exclusion and Roma exclusion are often considered and discussed in separation. Although this “difference” is rarely problematized, contestation arises as to the underlying causes of this difference – whether it is driven by institutional factors or cultural traits of the group under question. Despite concrete empirical evidence attesting to the structural aspect of Roma exclusion – including increasingly unequal economic distribution, restrictive access to public services of high quality and institutionalized discrimination (Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009; UNDP & FRA 2011; Trehan & Sigona 2009; UNDP, World Bank, EC 2012), there is still a predisposition, particularly in neo-liberal political circles, to blame the problem on the adaptability of Roma minority – their incapacity or unwillingness to integrate or benefit from available resources (see Drál 2008).

This work treats Roma exclusion as driven by institutional factors, arguing that the neglect of structural discrimination and inequalities is likely to produce ineffective SF outputs. However, it also stipulates that the complete disregard for the specificity of Roma exclusion (i.e. segregation, inadequate education attainments) might lead to a situation where funding in fact bypasses the most marginalized Roma communities.

3.2 Choosing solutions – mainstreaming versus targeted action

The framing of social exclusion influences decisions regarding apposite intervention models and their composition. I hypothesize that the focus on institutionalized barriers is likely to prompt solutions more cognizant of inequalities and more geared towards institutional adjustments. At the same time the conceptualization of the problem in terms of behavior of individuals or groups might induce action plans aimed predominately at altering behavioural patterns considered problematic (i.e. welfare dependency) which run the risk of undermining institutional inequalities. In practice, public interventions vary from country to country, however, amidst amalgamation of often conflicting ideas regarding the “best solution”, two models appear to dominate the SF approaches to social exclusion – a) mainstreaming and b) targeted (or affirmative) action. The normative assets of these two approaches have been widely debated by

equality scholars (Rees 1998; Squires 2005; Bacchi 2004; Stratigaki 2005) and advocates of Roma integration (see O’Nions 2007). Hence, before commencing with the analysis of approaches undertaken in Spain and Slovakia, it is important to review the main arguments concerning the benefits and shortcomings of these two models.

3.2.1 The mainstreaming of equality

The mainstreaming approach was endorsed by the EU cohesion agenda as a means to combat existing gender inequalities (see European Standard 2013). With time it was directed at other areas of inequality including race, ethnicity and disability. The furtherance of mainstreaming stemmed from the EU’s recognition that existing “tailor-made” policies for disenfranchised groups were failing to have any impact on pervasive inequalities, lacked coherence and a long-term perspective. A more critical rationale arose from equality literature, which argues that institutional norms pledging equal opportunities are plagued by biases that implicitly disenfranchised certain groups and individuals who for variety of reasons do not “fit” accepted standards and practices (Reese 1998; Verloo 2001; Woodward 2003). It is often assert that the conventional policy-making and public services are not reflective of the diverse characteristics of the society and in many ways actually undermine or even stigmatize differences. It could be argued that this “normalizes” structural discrimination and erects barriers to meaningful participation, serving only to deepen patterns of exclusion. In order to offset such dynamics, public interventions would need to bring critical focus to structural power arrangements and strive to remodel the institutional order. They would also have to consider inequalities as trans-sectorial – resulting from actions in various policy domains – and address it through transversal policy instruments (Jacquot 2010). While, there is little evidence that the EU has endorsed the far-reaching transformatory course of action, it fostered non-binding and flexible instruments with tangible effects on policy outputs.

The EC presented mainstreaming as an antidote to the traditional one-dimensional approaches arguing that as a transversal policy instrument it could effectively manage the multidimensional and complex nature of issues, such as gender equality, social inclusion, and antidiscrimination, by incorporating them horizontally and systematically at all stages of policy-making and of the governance system (see Halpern et al, 2008). The critical expectation of equality scholars is that

the incorporation of the equality dimension in all envisioned objectives and measures will alter decision-making structures and processes, tackle deeply rooted organizational cultures and retune policy priorities (Lombardo 2005). As argued by Squires (2005) the main task of mainstreaming would be to recognize the complexities of social exclusion and inequality and to build organizations, policies and projects informed by a desire to accommodate and benefit from the strengths of diversity. Rees (1998) has called this approach “transformation” as it strides away from add-on initiatives (which aim to fit excluded groups into existing structures) and tries to adapt the institutional setting so that it better reflects (or understands) the circumstances of the excluded.

In practical terms, the realization of mainstreaming was to be conducted by bureaucrats and public agencies, through regular assessments of the implications that planned policy action have on disenfranchised groups (including the legislation). As such awareness-raising activities were to take place, novel performance indicators were to be adopted, incentives were to be introduced (both positive and negative) and finally monitoring and evaluation were to adhere to data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, etc. Additionally as explained by Booth and Bennett (2002), mainstreaming was to induce “informed policy-making” where public agencies, various organizations and potential beneficiaries work in partnership and engage in information exchange and learning processes.

Despite the enthusiastic endorsement of the concept by scholars and practitioners, the “track-record” of mainstreaming has faced considerable criticisms. Stratigaki (2005) argues that it failed to affect core policy areas or radically transform policy processes within the European Community. The realization of mainstreaming goals was particularly condemned, as scholars pointed out the lack of evidence of monitoring or evaluations (Charlesworth 2005; Lombardo 2005). Looking at mainstreaming from the implementation perspective one can notice inadequate budgeting for the equality components of projects, insufficient development of analytical skills, poor supervision and a general lack of political commitment both within the organization and at the country level. In the context of the Roma there were also concerns (shared by other excluded groups) that mainstreaming can dilute the effects of existing tailored policies or undermine the

patterns of inequality experienced by different groups²⁹. Given that numerous countries made efforts to create agencies dealing specifically with Roma issues (i.e. Roma Plenipotentiaries, Roma action plans etc.) the fear arose that these can be dismantled and their achievements lost. Moreover there were concerns that long-term “transformative” goals might neglect the more immediate and practical needs of the excluded groups. Hence the promotion of mainstreaming in the area of Roma integration remained weak at the supranational level, as the EU and Roma advocacy groups tended to champion the entrenchment of “targeted actions” and the elaboration of affirmative action plans³⁰.

3.2.2 Targeted strategies as affirmative action

The targeted approach has long been a staple of cohesion policy; initially SF were administered according to territorial criteria, however, the eligibility for financial allocations was effectively expanded to cover specific policy sectors and delineated social categories (unemployed, minorities, disabled, immigrants). Proponents of targeting insist that it is more efficient to direct resources to precisely-defined target groups or areas (Ravallion 2003). Such a strategy allegedly prevents the dilution of assistance and strengthens the impact of policy. This rationale has been strongly conditioned by fiscal deficits, the rise of neo-liberal ideology and shifting priorities for social assistance. However, it also stems from the expectation that a focused action is able to induce immediate and suitable responses³¹. While thematic targeting reflects economic and organizational concerns (cost benefits and efficiency) the tailoring of policies to social categories is based on a conviction that circumstances and patterns of exclusion of some groups differ from disadvantages experienced by the mainstream society (Ringold et al, 2005). The difference is conceived either as a result of discrimination and negative stereotypes, usually related to particular characteristics of a group or an individual (i.e. gender, race, and ethnicity) (Bowring 2000; Bleich 2002) or as an unequal socio-economic position, which is often pinned on group inadaptability or pathological behaviours (Abrahamson 2006). Because of these factors, disenfranchised groups such as the Roma are seen as unable to access conventional public

²⁹ This has in fact been taking place in the area of gender equality (see Verloo 2001).

³⁰ Decade of Roma Inclusion Annual Conference, Zagreb 2013

³¹ Presently evidence-based policy-making has put extreme pressure on public bureaucracies to devise programmes which can quickly deliver visible outputs and outcomes. The channeling of funding to one-dimensional targets has been widely accepted as a strategy to secure visible impact and legitimacy.

services or benefit from mechanisms of socio-economic advancement (EU 2004; EU 2008). As such, specific support provided through different affirmative action policies is generally considered indispensable.

Affirmative action is a fairly controversial policy used to combat differences between groups in all aspects of socio-economic life (developed in the United States, it was first focused on leveling the field in the area of education and employment). It aims to bring attention to those groups and localities that have been continuously bypassed by public initiatives or fell victims to unjust treatment or persecution. The nature of affirmative action varies from region to region; while some stakeholders advocate for “hard” approaches such as quotas (and related reforms which suggest bypassing standard appointment and/or promotion procedures) others call for “soft” or targeted approaches that aim to tailor mainstream policies to the specificity of exclusion experienced by vulnerable groups (i.e. language barriers, low education attainment, stereotypes) (see Oppenheimer 1995). However, commentators tend to locate affirmative action programmes as exemptions to anti-discrimination statutes, indicating that they are considered to be exceptional, temporary and challengeable in law (Rees 1998). Critical observers also point out that affirmative action tends to represent “targeted recipients” as the ones lacking necessary skills, motivations or capabilities (Nott 2000). As a result public interventions are often directed at the “affected groups” rather than wider institutional settings. The driving idea is to enhance participation of the excluded in the system through changing their behaviour. Thus, Rees (1998) coins this approach “tailoring”, arguing that it provides add-on initiatives to the widely accepted status-quo which remains largely unchallenged.

In relation to the Roma, affirmative action has been put forward by the EU and Roma advocates as a viable approach to tackle age-old discrimination and the specificity of ethnic disenfranchisement (Lajčáková 2003). Although hard actions have been largely neglected (particularly at the national and local levels)³², the need to target public interventions at Roma communities has come to adorn all major policy documents pertaining to the “Roma question”. Considering the mounting evidence of the degree of exclusion of the Roma (in general much

³² This neglect has numerous explanations, ranging from the absence of an institutional tradition of hard affirmative action in Europe to the problems related to Roma identity and ethnic mobilization.

graver than that of the mainstream population) it was difficult to argue against the need to tailor policies to very specific circumstances and needs. In effect efforts were made at the supranational and national levels to devise strategies that focus on the Roma people as a target group. The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 and resulting national strategies promised to tackle exclusion through targeted interventions, tailored to Roma circumstances. The recognition that a targeted approach for the Roma does not undermine “the broader strategy to fight against poverty and exclusion” or “exclude other vulnerable and deprived group from support” and “is compatible with the principle of non-discrimination both at EU and national level” has allowed much of the policy development (EC 2011).

Nevertheless, it could be argued that placing exaggerated emphasis on the specificity of exclusion can essentialise group characteristics and link economic deprivation to cultural dynamics or individual failure (Levitas 1998). The risk can be particularly strong when comprehensive analysis of target groups is not supported by systematic empirical enquiry or when the targets are not involved as active agents (as in the case of the Roma population). In such a scenario the identified multifaceted exclusion of minorities such as the Roma can actually be undertaken by ethicized discourse, which tends to equate their identity and cultural values with social exclusion. Whitehead (2000) argued that by definition, targeting inscribes differences in class, gender and other characteristics in official policy. This not only makes social differences seem natural and permanent, but also divides societies into “givers” and “receivers”. These divisions can lead to stigmatization and the reluctance to use valued EU financial resources for the advancement of the “deviant” sector of the population. Moreover, focusing on target groups rather than institutional shortcomings can be superfluous as the acquisition of new skills or resources is unlikely to prompt institutional changes (see Bacchi 2004).

The above discussion showed the potential benefits and shortcoming of both mainstreaming and affirmative action approaches. This research argues that in the context of SF allocations towards Roma exclusion emphasis must be placed on the re-orientation of excising institutional practices – this means that SF projects should aim to address structural inequalities (i.e. discrimination in accessing public services, rigid bureaucratic procedures) and make public intervention more conducive to diversity (i.e. through research, awareness-raising campaigns, indicators etc.).

Thus, mainstreaming presents itself as a “better” suited approach than affirmative action, as it is more likely to allocate SF towards measures which aim to transform institutional settings, making them more inclusive and equitable. However, the effectiveness of mainstreaming is very much contingent on mechanisms which could put it in motion – specific policy tools, stipulated priorities and clearly defined objectives and outcomes. Moreover, the articulation of some targeted approaches (i.e. spatial indicators) within mainstreaming could further reinforce the allocation of funding towards the most needed groups and communities. The following section tests the above claims and suppositions empirically.

3.3 Empirical analysis

The empirical section shall first demonstrate the diagnostic of social exclusion in the SF programming of the two countries. It will focus on the adapted definitions – what drives exclusion and who is affected. It then will explore the prescriptive dimension, paying attention to the formulation of objectives, priorities and concrete measures. It will show that conceptually, the content of SF programming is very differently in the two countries. The aim is to show how this conceptual difference structures the implementation process and contributes to diverging SF outputs.

3.3.1 Dimensions of social exclusion (structures versus adaptability)

The analysis of the Spanish and Slovak SF programmings demonstrates that the diagnosis of social exclusion in the documents differs substantially, both in terms of definition and the articulation of the underlying causes. In Spain, the multi-dimensional and relative aspect of exclusion has been largely diluted in favor of a sectoral approach. A strong emphasis has been placed on “poverty reduction”, measured almost exclusively in terms of income-inequalities between households (NSRF 2007: 118) and rates of unemployment (NSRF 2007: 135). In effect the NSRF from both examined periods defined social exclusion almost exclusively in terms of “exclusion from employment” and “discrimination in the labour market” (NSRF 2007:45). In this conceptualization patterns of deprivation in other areas including housing, health and education were largely sidelined and the five outlined priority axes concerned exclusively employment themes. The prioritization of only one dimension of social exclusion was rationalized with the

need to preserve clear focus and prompt a concentration of efforts. As explained by the head of the department of the Administrative Unit of ESF (MA for ESF):

*We decided to focus on the most prominent shortcomings of our economy, and according to our research, unemployment and exclusion from employment indeed dwarf our economic and social development, moreover these are the precise issues prioritized by the EC and ESF regulation (...) it would be strategically unwise to go against these prescriptions (...) of course we do realize that some areas are neglected, but ESF is simply too small in scope to address them all.*³³

The reductionist definition was translated into regional ESF OPs, which treated the concept of *social exclusion* and *exclusion from the labour market* interchangeably. The regional ESF Unit has also rationalized this articulation with the need to comply with ESF regulations, in addition, claiming that a focus on the economic aspects of exclusion avoids the stigmatization of certain groups as it does not link “social or cultural position in the society to poverty and destitution”³⁴. It could be argued that the one-dimensional focus was also dictated by available research which throughout the 1990s pertained almost exclusively to household consumption patterns reinforced with data on patterns of unemployment and labor demands³⁵. In this way, recommendations that Roma exclusion be considered as multi-dimensional were all together neglected.

In contrast, the definition of social exclusion articulated in the Slovak SF programming was much more expansive directing attention to all major policy fields. The 2007-2013 NSRF states that exclusion is “a multidimensional phenomenon, comprising in addition to the income dimension also other important aspects, such as the level of satisfaction of fundamental needs, access to employment, access to education, housing, healthcare, law and culture” (NSRF 2007:23). The document also points to the unequal access to rights protection and insufficient political and civil participation (NSRF 2007:24). Particularly in reference to Roma minority the emphasis was

³³ Interview #1, 2011

³⁴ Interview #9, 2011

³⁵ In the mid-1980s, and on the request of Caritas, the study on ‘poverty and marginalisation’ carried out by EDIS (1988) estimated that around 8 million of the Spaniards were poor (i.e. having less than 50% of the income mean). The findings of the EDIS study allowed Caritas to initiate a campaign of demands to the public authorities. Following this debate the number of studies on poverty increased considerably (Arriba 1999; Susín 2000) becoming a leading source of knowledge for policy-makers involved in the debates about exclusion.

placed on bringing focus to spatial segregation, dismal living conditions, health problems and intergenerational poverty (NSRF 2007: 24). As stated by a manager working for the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities (hereafter referred to as the Plenipotentiary Office):

*Extreme levels of poverty among Slovak Roma are well documented and acknowledged by the Slovak government. It is well accepted in policy circles that marginalization is multi-dimensional, acutely felt in all the vital policy areas, including employment, education, housing and health. Focusing on only one aspect is simply not possible because these areas are strongly interconnected.*³⁶

Interestingly, while SF programming has presented a long list of acute problems facing the Roma, and reserved a special section in all the OPs for a diagnostic of the “Roma problem”, there were only scarce references made to any scientific data which could confirm the scale and scope of the problem. This omission as argued by some members of Monitoring Committees (MC) meant that the conceptualization of Roma exclusion often reflected purely ideological points of view and interests of governing agencies:

*The MAs continue to act as if there was no data available regarding Roma population, however in the last 8 years numerous organizations including our own have been researching the situation, the fact that existing work is not included in the design of the SF programming only shows how politicized the Roma issue has become.*³⁷

3.3.2 Underlying causes of social exclusion

Where the two SF programs differ even more substantially, is in their diagnosis of the underlying causes of social exclusion. While Spanish documents assessed the functioning of institutional settings and highlight the detrimental effects of systemic discrimination, Slovak ones asserted that exclusion is driven by lack of individual adaptability or non-compliance with existing policies. These indications have mirrored the vexing dispute between those who see the system

³⁶ Interview #53, 2011

³⁷ Interview #58, 2011

as a main engine of exclusion and those who attribute it to certain group characteristics or inadaptability.

Throughout the Spanish SF programme disparities between regions have been presented as products of macro-economic factors, ranging from low productivity and dependence on imports to inflation and unfavorable labor conditions (NSRF 2007, 28-32; OP E&A 2007, 31-35). However, the peculiarities of social exclusion were mainly attributed to persistent institutional barriers. Situational assessments in both the NSRF and relevant OPs maintained that rapid social transformation of Spanish society has left the bureaucratic apparatus unprepared and not flexible enough to address new arising challenges. A senior public servant confirmed these assertions:

*Our institutions continue to be largely underequipped to address the new public demands and the complex realities of the Spanish society, such as an increased immigration, the disentanglement of family support system, changing gender roles, and urban poverty. Our anti-discrimination schemes continue to be quite limited and potential innovations of public interventions are constrained by the procedural complexity and inertia.*³⁸

Critical attention given to the institutional setup - a lack of integrationist instruments, incentives and flexibility (NSRF 2007:36; OP Andalucía 2007:56) - also highlighted the negative effects of discrimination in the area of employment (NSRF 2007:). This recognition prompted the creation of the OP FAD, a multiregional programme created specifically to tackle “discrimination in the labour market”. In its diagnostic the OP FAD explicitly states that “discrimination in the labour market is in many cases the main and most immediate causes of poverty and exclusion” (OP FAD 2007:13). As argued by a director from Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), the IB for the OP FAD:

*Negative perceptions about groups and individuals prevent them from obtaining the same employment opportunities as the mainstream society. This is the single most important barrier to meaningful participation in the economic spheres of life. It is an institutional shortcoming that needs to be prioritized in all SF and other public interventions.*³⁹

³⁸ Interview #4, 2011

³⁹ Interview#23, 2011

The critics of Spanish SF programming argued that while attention to discrimination was in place it only pertained to the area of employment. The diagnostics did not pay attention to the “intersectionality” of discrimination, thus not recognizing the inequality axes such as ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation and religion. Bustelo’s analysis (2009) shows that Spain in general has endorsed the “Unitary Approach”, in which inequalities are tackled by separate institutions and gender has primacy⁴⁰. Others point out that there is very little evidence of attending to multiple inequalities and only little proof of the “Multiple Approach” to discrimination in policy discourses around Spanish equality policies (Platero 2008). Spanish anti-discrimination advocates maintain that such a conceptualization of discrimination fails to capture critical racism and intolerance directed specifically at the Roma community (anti-Gypsism)⁴¹. The SF stakeholders, however, maintain that discrimination affects all “different groups in similar manner” (preventing them from entering labour market), and that is why SF should focus on discriminatory patterns rather than on group identity or characteristics. The FSG contend that social exclusion framed in terms of institutional shortcomings rather than group dynamics is beneficial to the functioning of SF programming:

*Taking into account the characteristics of the problems and not the types or groups of persons affected by it, forces public authorities to consider structural revisions in service delivery. The aim is making them more accessible and inclusive to all those in need, because this effectively prevents stigmatization of certain groups or treating them in separation from mainstream strategies.*⁴²

Not surprisingly the circumstances of the Spanish Roma population were treated in the same way as other groups, while references to their cultural distinctiveness were rarely discussed. What has been mentioned, however, was the “history of discrimination” whereby the Roma were viewed as victims of the previous totalitarian regime. The iniquitous past treatment of the Roma has thus

⁴⁰ The case of gender inequality has been progressively articulated in the Spanish legislation and SF programming. The most recent socialist governments have effected important changes and developments in gender politics: a parity government was sworn in, crucial new laws on gender violence, same-sex marriage and equality between men and women were passed, and internal measures on gender promotion in public administrations were taken. These developments included the creation of the new Secretary General of Equality Policies, which was exclusively devoted to gender equality, and has not tackled any other inequalities. In April 2008 a new Ministry of Equality was created as part of the second government of Rodriguez Zapatero. Although the Ministry began to slowly address others forms of inequality the main impetus was to comply with the European legislation by enacting a new Equality Treatment Law.

⁴¹ Interview#8, 2011

⁴² Interview #23, 2011

been used as an explanation for the low levels of education among the members of the community, inadequate housing conditions and activities in the informal economy (OP FAD 2007: 60). Nevertheless, the distinctive cultural or social characteristics of the Roma population were not emphasized. According to the SF stakeholders, a neutral approach to the Roma question actually prevents the ethnicization of poverty whereby being Roma could be automatically equated with being excluded⁴³. As argued by Rodríguez (2011) some level of neutrality is instrumental in avoiding the promotion of “difference” over “equality” a process that dramatically reduces the potential for social solidarity and runs the risk of disconnecting measures targeted at the Roma from the wider political arena.

The diagnosis presented in the Slovak SF programming has directed attention away from institutional and wider macro-economic factors. Although the 2007-2013 NSRF has acknowledged the existence of labor demand asymmetries and uneven territorial development, it by and large linked social exclusion to “adaptability of groups” and their “distance from the mainstream society” (NSRF 2007: 20). The emphasis was placed on the skills and motivation that an individual or a group needs to possess, in order to better adapt to ongoing socio-economic developments. The NSRF assessment openly stated that while some people “exclude themselves voluntarily from socio-economic life” others are unable, incapable or unwilling to access available rights⁴⁴ (NSRF 2007: 24, 56, 158). Similar assertions appeared in OPs, pointing out that the unfavorable position of marginalized citizens stems from a lack of “*basic competences which often leads to helplessness and an inability to guide or control the decisions which have implications for day to day life*” (OP E&SI 2007: 47-48). Such attention has been defended by the Slovak central authorities:

When talking about marginalization we need to take in consideration issues such as inadequate skills to compete in the labour market, health problems, family situation and area of residence. If we are to use SF in an effective manner these circumstantial factors need to be properly identified and assessed so the projects can be carefully tailored. We already know that a “one size fits all” strategy does

⁴³ Interviews # 23 #4 #28 #25, 2011

⁴⁴ It is important to note that while the concept of rights appears throughout all the documents, it is not clearly defined. There is no clear distinction or explanation regarding different usage of human rights, minority rights and access rights.

*not work in practice (...) people are different, they deal with different problems are differently predisposed (...) policy action needs to take this under account*⁴⁵

While the interviewees attested that exclusion affects various groups and individuals, the diagnosis has focused predominately on the circumstances of the Roma minority. The NSRF stated that “the problem of insufficient level of social inclusion is most obvious in the case of the Roma ethnic community” (NSRF 2007:21). The Roma were categorized as a group that faces greater risk of exclusion than any other faction of Slovak society (including the homeless, disabled, and immigrants). Moreover there was an explicit contention, that their situation is *unique* in its scope and character. The specificity of their quandary has been generally attributed to spatial factors, whereby Roma exclusion “is underpinned by the fact that most of Roma communities live in disadvantaged and economically lagging regions” and in “segregated and impoverished settlements”. The assertion put forward by the OP E&SI was that “the more distant the settlements from the mother municipality/town, the worse off the quality of life inside the settlement” (OP E&SI 2007:59). What has not been included in this diagnostic was why communities were segregated in the first place. According to critics this omission gave rise to the false conviction that Roma intentionally choose to reside in isolation or are themselves responsible for inadequate living conditions:

*Public authorities continue to focus on Roma culture and behaviour, despite a lack of data on that topic, the marginalized Roma communities are often viewed as the source of all evil where pathology and self-imposed isolation are on the rise threatening the well-being of Slovak mainstream society (...) Instead of accounting for wider socio-economic problems, the authorities engage in rhetoric that present Roma communities as the main barriers to cohesive development and not the victims of unjust and ineffective policies.*⁴⁶

In fact, the role of Roma culture in perpetuating exclusion has been emphasized throughout the SF programming. While NSRF stressed that “different cultural characteristics serve as barriers to meaningful integration” (NSRF 2007:21, 23) the OP E&SI linked cultural behaviour of the Roma to circumstances of exclusion stating that “natural socio-hierarchical rules of social life in Roma communities pose a risk for building up and maintaining communication barriers” (OP E&SI

⁴⁵ Interview #43, 2011

⁴⁶ Interview#69, 2011

2007:63). The OP Education has ventured as far as to explain the inadequate education attainments of Roma children by a “low value of education among Roma communities” (OP E 2007:35, 62).

However, perhaps the most significant feature of the Slovak conceptualization of social exclusion was its negligent attention to patterns of discrimination. As argued by a public manager from a regional agency:

*We talk about multidimensionality we talk about dependencies and critical living situation, we elaborate and analyze, but if you look carefully you will not find any references to systemic discrimination, as if the escalation of anti-Gypsism, the deeply-rooted prejudice in the Slovak public sector, and well documented patterns of segregation do not in any way contribute to the marginalization of the Roma.*⁴⁷

A reference to discrimination appears for the first time in the prescriptive section of the NSRF, in a statement that all social inclusion actions will “aim to combat discrimination based on sex, race, ethnical origin, religion and beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation” (NSRF 2007:96). Prior to that, discrimination was neither defined nor properly assessed, making it impossible to infer where it was most acutely felt and who the victims and the perpetrators were. The concept was also not elaborated further down in the SF programming, as none of the relevant OPs elaborated discrimination in their assessment of social exclusion. As pointed by a member of the MC:

*It has been pointed out in numerous meetings with MA that patterns of discrimination and unequal treatment should be elaborated on, unfortunately this has never been realized and in general there is a great reluctance on part of the authorities to account for discriminatory patterns, especially within public administration, despite strong evidence of such practices.*⁴⁸

Not surprising the SF programming fell silent on the historical dimension of Roma predicament, including the well-documented fall in living standards of many Roma families and the escalation of right-wing violence following the transition from state-run to a free market economy (Barany 2002; Kovats 2002; Mirga 2009). There were also no references made to discriminatory attitudes towards Roma communities particularly entrenched at the local level. This neglect has been

⁴⁷ Interview#54, 2011

⁴⁸ Interview#59, 2011

strongly criticized by international Roma organizations⁴⁹. During the EC High Level Event in Bratislava, representatives of Roma-led organizations argued that the neglect of structural discrimination lead to the creation of ineffective SF interventions which fail to address negative attitudes of the majority⁵⁰. Despite these criticisms, the SF programming' conceptualization of social exclusion remained largely unchallenged.

The above analysis demonstrated that Spanish and Slovak SF programming have mobilized a very different definition of social exclusion. SF programming in Spain adopted a residual conceptualization, focused predominately on discrimination in the area of employment. It also recognised the institutional dimension of exclusion without overbearing focus on group adaptability or consideration of how ethnicity (or culture) can actually reinforce patterns of marginalization. Slovak SF programming on the other hand provided a wide definition of social exclusion but failed to consider the role of institutional discrimination. Instead, what was emphasized was the inability of certain groups to adapt to a quickly changing environment and/or the lack of skills or motivation among particular groups and individuals. Issues of ethnicity were also articulated, as it was stressed that minority groups like the Roma suffer from specific patterns of deprivation and marginalization. The following section aims to demonstrate how these different conceptualizations influenced the adopted solutions.

3.4 Spanish objectives and measures – consolidation of mainstreaming

What first comes to view in the case of Spanish SF programming is that the residual conceptualization of social-exclusion had been translated into outlined prescriptions. The ESF priority axes set employment conditions as a prerogative, paying negligent attention to other policy fields. Although this one-dimensional approach raised criticisms, it was not contested by the governing apparatus. As explained by a senior public servant from the Ministry of Education:

It is an interesting case of compliance where various departments try to link their own objectives to employment priorities. That is why in education there is such a striking focus on drop-out rates (...) Yes it is a major problem of our education

⁴⁹ The 18th International Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma inclusion, Bratislava 2010.

⁵⁰ High Level Event on the Structural Funds contribution to Roma integration, Bratislava 2011.

*system, but it is prioritized mainly because it can be presented as a factor in generating unemployment. The ACs have figured this out already and if you look at their SF development strategies investment in education is presented as a means to generating full employment.*⁵¹

Indeed references to education in the regional OPs prioritized actions in secondary education and long-time learning⁵² and explicitly aimed to promote entrepreneurship and the adaptability of workers, businesses and public services. Areas such as health or housing were seldom touched upon⁵³ and if so they were linked to employment, for example OP Andalusia put forward an objective for improving “health safety in the work place” (OP Andalusia 2007:31).

The prioritization of employment initiatives was underpinned with clear commitments to institutional reforms and the equality principle (NSRF 2007:135). In an interview a senior manager from the MA ESF in Madrid confirmed that SF programming leaned towards the mainstreaming approach as it aimed to support a working environment free of discriminatory practices, committed to the principles of equal opportunity, transparency and innovation:

*The aim is to really bring about changes in the way things are done, this is not an easy task and we struggle against great bureaucratic inertia, but we believe that SF can really jump-start and sustain institutional transformations. What is important is that all objectives and measures adhere to the equality principle and that the proposed projects delineate how they will address discrimination and how they will contribute to greater cohesion.*⁵⁴

On paper the equality principle was indeed incorporated into the main objectives pertaining to the development of social inclusion programmes and services. The two multiregional OPs - OP FAD and OP E&A⁵⁵ - called for the construction of a working environment “free of discriminatory practices, committed to the principles of equal opportunity, transparency and economic as well as

⁵¹ Interview #7, 2011

⁵² There is no assessment or analysis of primary education also no implications are made that unfavourable education of children can generate social exclusion. The interviewees all stated that primary education is working well.

⁵³ Although NSRF mentions health and housing as potential areas where SF programs can be dispensed, the articulated objectives fell silent on these issues, and no indicators have been put forward.

⁵⁴ Interview # 1, 2011

⁵⁵ It is important to note that the two OPs set priorities and objectives of all regions, a strategy adopted to reflect the explicit acknowledgment that even in the “better off” regions structural barriers to employment exist and need to be addressed (Ministry of Employment and Immigration 2011). As such the two OPs have earmarked ESF for anti-discrimination measures undertaken in phasing-out regions as well.

social innovations” (7.8.1). The regional ESF OP emphasised the need to adjust public services and administrative procedures in order to “strengthen attention to diversity and equal opportunities” (OP ESF Andalucía 2007: 138). These commitments were not strictly rhetorical as efforts were made to operationalize the objectives. Indicators and selection criteria were set up conditioned upon the adherence to the equality principle. As confirmed by the manager from General Directorate for European Funds and Planning the intermediate body of the OP ESF Andalusia:

We expect that all potential beneficiaries demonstrate how their initiatives will cater to diversity and equal access and how they will address discrimination, without such elaboration the proposed intervention is automatically rejected. To aid the process we set up equality indicators, time-frames and public budgets, we also designated bodies responsible for monitoring and evaluation⁵⁶ invest in equality research and information exchange.⁵⁷

Although, criticisms arose regarding the “unsystematic evaluation” of mainstreaming, one could observe an incremental move to set up common indicators, support cognitive activities, awareness-raising campaigns (especially among public workers), and the exchange of “good practices” (OP ESF Andalusia 223-230, OP FAD , OP E&A). In Andalusia, European funds have been used to create a unit where all other council areas or departments could draw expertise and methods of introducing mainstreaming into the Community Support Framework for 2000-2006⁵⁸. This unit provided training, information and tools to the entire Administration in Andalusia to ensure that mainstreaming becomes an integrated part in their every day work, in particular that which is financed by European Funds. The prioritization of anti-discrimination measures was secured through budgeting. The MAs and IBs for regional ESF OPs were required to earmark a concrete amount of SF for measures addressing discrimination in the labour market, while the central and regional authorities were to provide co-financing from a pool of the public budget reserved exclusively for promoting equality measures and non-discrimination (NSRF 2007). The OP ESF Andalusia, under priority axis 2 (promotion of employability, social inclusion and gender equality) assigned €73,130,561 for measures tackling discrimination- the

⁵⁶ Reference to MCs, Equal Opportunity Thematic Group, ESF Forum, and Social Inclusion Network, all institutionalized in the governing system of SF.

⁵⁷ Interview # 9, 2011

⁵⁸ Extended to 2007-2013

second largest amount within the axis⁵⁹ - a sum co-financed by the aggregated budget of central, regional and local authorities. In effect, over 80% of SF projects introduced in Andalusia, addressed directly or indirectly barriers to equal employment.

The endorsement of mainstreaming has largely ousted approaches targeted at specific groups or communities, an approach that was criticised by Roma activists⁶⁰. Out of 15 thematic objectives, only one aimed to “improve employability of persons at risk of exclusion” through targeted measures. However these were ethnically neutral, with no explicit mentioning of the Roma minority as a target group (OP ESF Andalusia 2007:237). No references were made to cultural distinctiveness⁶¹, particular circumstances or even area of residence. As such there were no specific plans to rely on affirmative action (directed at the Roma) and it was assumed that transformation of structures will indirectly benefit all vulnerable groups including the Roma. As expressed by FSG manager in Seville:

*The main drive here is to develop existing structures rather than introduce independent projects targeted at excluded groups. It is not unreasonable to believe that once public institutions are prepared to support equality, those who are marginalized will benefit. Programmes directed at discriminated groups cannot be successful if governance structures remain unchanged. What is the point of giving somebody new skills when nobody will employ them.*⁶²

The proposed targeted measures (63, 65) called for “customized itineraries of insertion”. Even in this case however, specification of group membership was avoided and the measure proposed it more as an additional component to be anchored within implemented projects, than a systemic approach. While some commentators saw this as a way to combine mainstreaming with the targeted approach, critics maintained that:

⁵⁹ This amount was earmarked on top of funds channelled to Andalucía through the OP FAD (Mid-term evaluation report 2011).

⁶⁰ Interview #38, 2011

⁶¹ The only place where culture is mentioned is in the context of education, where it is prescribed that all educational activities should be sensitive to diversity and cultural differences (Thematic Priority nr. 72). The OP ESF Andalusia specifically calls for the “mainstreaming of cultural diversity” inside the education system (58).

⁶² Interview #11, 2011

*Targeting which does not take under consideration group dynamics is strictly cosmetic with limited leeway to really address the specificity of discriminated groups.*⁶³

3.5 Slovak priorities, objectives and measures – targeting excluded groups

The prescription embedded in Slovak SF programming provided for very different priorities and measures. The conceptualization of social exclusion as multidimensional phenomena resulted in the creation of various thematic ESF OPs (OP E&SI, OP E, OP Health and OP RD) and four horizontal priorities, including HP Marginalized Roma Communities (HP MRC). The rationale for such design was outlined by the MA for OP E&SI:

*The SF programming needs to reflect the multidimensional aspect of exclusion so that funds can be channeled to specific fields. It is important that efforts are coordinated and reinforce one another. That is why we set up HP MRC to make sure that all aspects of Roma exclusion are effectively addressed. Coordination of efforts can hopefully stop the pervasive practice of addressing only selective aspect of Roma marginalization.*⁶⁴

The incorporation of HP MRC in the SF programming was initially hailed as a successful attempt of mainstreaming Roma issues and contributing to a more efficient absorption and utilization of SF (see Kusá 2011). Its aim was to strengthen and increase the efficiency of coordination activities and aggregate financial resources for tackling exclusion. The Plenipotentiary Office became the coordinator of the HP MRC, responsible for drafting the “complex projects” aimed at increasing the employment and education level within Marginalized Roma Communities (MRC), and improving the living conditions (including health and housing). Although there was no specific financial allocation for this priority, an estimated €200,000 was expected to be drawn from six OPs, two financed through the ESF and the rest from the ERDF. However, upon closer scrutiny the design of HP MRC appeared excessively vague, lacking precise objectives, output indicators and instructions of how cooperation among different OPs was to be realized. Moreover the Plenipotentiary Office has neither received an additional budget for its new coordinative responsibilities nor decision-making authority. While some commentators noted

⁶³ Interview# 8, 2011

⁶⁴ Interview# 46, 2011

that this “vague” design was caused by limited administrative capacity to develop complex governance programmes, it could also be attributed to the general neglect of long-term thinking about institutional reforms. As expressed by the manager from the SDF (IB for OP E&SI):

It really seemed that designing nice and comprehensive strategic documents, in line with EU regulations and recommendations was a priority; whether and how objectives embedded in these documents were to be realized was of lesser concern (...) as long as EC gave a check mark and accepted the NSRF; this what was important not what will happen in the far and unknown future.⁶⁵

Furthermore the articulation of HP MRC fell silent on the equality principle and structural discrimination (as such reflecting the initial diagnosis of the problem). The priority has not emphasized the need to reform existing institutional structures and failed to account for the need for research or communities’ input. The commentators began to stress that the HP was a blunt example of window-dressing and in fact it served to further isolate Roma issues from mainstream objectives and measures:

Maybe the intentions were good, but the priority is obviously an answer to EU pressure and not a solution to Roma exclusion (...) The authorities keep on saying that they are channelling money to the communities when in fact they are only talking about it (...) how can you channel anything if you do not know who should do it and how. Plus if you look carefully, the idea that Roma issues should be addressed by everybody, in practice meant that nobody felt responsibility.⁶⁶

It is important to note that thematic priorities articulated in various OPs also failed to stress the need to tackle discrimination and systemic inequalities. No specific objectives were set up, let alone OPs, that dealt explicitly with structural inequalities or discrimination. Overall co-financing of anti-discrimination activities from the state budget has been limited, accounting for less than 4% (CSES 2011b) and supporting exclusively awareness raising projects. In instances where attention was brought to administrative modernization, it pertained to investments in innovative technologies and infrastructure, with no mention of how equitable access to services will be provided for. In an interview, a civic association manager from Eastern Slovakia contended that

⁶⁵ Interview# 50, 2011

⁶⁶ Interview# 56, 2011

SF were used predominately to strengthen the institutional setting for business elites and not for regular citizens or the excluded groups:

*The SF are improving conditions for large businesses and entrepreneurs, which is needed of course, but no money is earmarked for programmes which could make public services more inclusive or more accessible. The current programming fails to address instances of discrimination and rights violation (...) it really does not reflect the fact that for the most vulnerable groups systemic barriers continue to be extremely high.*⁶⁷

It could be argued that a lack of structural objectives in the area of social exclusion was not an omission, but a conscious choice stemming from framing the problem in terms of individual adaptability. Numerous interviewees asserted that SF were seen as tools for developing projects targeted at specific groups to make sure that people are assimilated into the system⁶⁸. The social inclusion objectives within OP E&SI called for preparing and training excluded groups, so that they could participate in all aspects of socio-economic life. The document relied on slogans such as “catch up”, “activate” or “motivate”, all of which accentuated the need for behavioural change of the target group. As commented by a public manager working for the MA:

*SF can be a great tool for helping vulnerable groups develop their potential, so that they can partake in socio-economic activities on an equal footing with other citizens, SF projects can equip them with necessary skills, for example help them to complete secondary education.*⁶⁹

The OP E&SI also emphasized the need to invest in human resources in order to break patterns of dependency and assist excluded groups in accessing public services and benefit from advancement mechanisms (OP E&SI 2007: 45). The objectives called for the “integration of excluded groups and individuals” into the institutional landscape, with references made to adaptability, adaptation, and activation. The focus fell on the provision of special care services and curatorship to excluded groups with an aim to prevent pathologies, improve personal competences and living conditions (OP E&SI 2007:142). OP E also emphasized the need to

⁶⁷ Interview # 68, 2011

⁶⁸ Interviews #69 #71 #70, 2011

⁶⁹ Interview # 47, 2011

improve skills and attendance of vulnerable pupils while OP Health called for the creation of special health awareness initiatives' among excluded groups.

The attainment of these goals was to be achieved through national and demand-driven projects, targeted at specific thematic areas and groups. In the specific case of MRC the endorsement of soft affirmative action aimed at delivering additional financial assistance. The NSRF stated that "the circumstances of MRC are addressed separately...as projects need to be tailored to specific community needs" (NSRF 2007:95). The OP E&SI set up national programmes targeted specifically at Roma communities (i.e. field social work, community centers) while OP E channelled funds to programmes supporting Roma teaching assistants. The selection criteria asked potential beneficiaries to demonstrate how their projects will assist or include persons of Romani origin and applications would receive higher score for accounting for Roma beneficiaries. As expressed by MA of OP E&SI "*we need to motivate project managers to tailor their initiatives towards the Roma that is why we provide financial incentives*"⁷⁰. The critics, however, pointed out that the selection procedures were strictly symbolic limited to "checking the MRC box on the application". There were neither clearly outlined evaluations indicators nor monitoring. As expressed by a member of the MC:

*Targeting of Roma in projects was done in a superficial manner, which in fact led to situations where projects that had one Roma participant were considered examples of good practices (...) Moreover selection processes favoured projects like training or consultation, which could be easily evaluated, hence localities, instead of devising long-term complex projects aimed at institutional changes, submitted something 'quick and dirty' with the word Roma slapped on to it.*⁷¹

Thus while governing authorities and many Roma advocates tended to support the targeted approach, the manner in which this strategy was executed only further distanced Roma inclusion initiatives from general regional development strategies (this had severely negative consequences which will be discussed further down). Commentators attributed this to weak administrative capacities but also to a sheer neglect of the structural dimension of Roma exclusion that "rendered the targeted approach of little value"⁷².

⁷⁰ Interview #46, 2011

⁷¹ Interview#59, 2011

⁷² Interview #62, 2011

The above analysis highlighted the main differences in the way Spanish and Slovak SF programming treated and addressed social exclusion. It was demonstrated that the recognition of the structural dimension of social exclusion has led Spain to endorse mainstreaming strategies aimed at institutional transformation. The narrow focus on employment sector facilitated the creation of concrete tools and methods to operationalize the mainstreaming approach. Endorsing the ethnically-neutral approach to exclusion the objectives and measures by and large refrained from direct targeting of Roma communities. As such, it could be argued that the Spanish SF programming has promoted a narrow but in-depth approach to social exclusion. In turn, the Slovak multi-dimensional conceptualization of social exclusion enforced the creation of several objectives for various policy fields. However, the consideration of discrimination was limited, reflecting the reluctance to recognize it as a public problem. The attention to behavioural patterns has prompted the adoption of soft affirmative action plans aimed at tailoring interventions to specific circumstances of excluded groups – the MRC. However, the prescriptions remained vague and inconsistent. Thus, it appeared that the comprehensive framing of social exclusion was only superficially addressed. What follows is an attempt to demonstrate how these differences contributed to the diverging SF outputs.

3.6 Structuring effect of policy design on SF outputs in Spain

The Spanish utilization of SF has been largely praised for the efficient allocation and absorption of funding. Quantitative assessments demonstrated that Spain has committed a significant proportion of estimated spending on ESF measures towards social exclusion and equality (55.4%)⁷³. At the same time its ESF absorption capacity has balanced above the EU average (Spain 46.3%, EU average 41.1%)⁷⁴. Country reports largely confirmed the efficient implementation performance, in generally assessed as free of excessive delays, mismanagement and cancelations. The ESF MA in Madrid ascribed these achievements to the narrow focus and coherent objectives:

⁷³ Surpassed only by Germany and Poland (see Inside Europe 2014 available at: <http://insideeurope.eu/taxonomy/term/204>)

⁷⁴ Data up to the end of year 2012 at: http://www.qren.pt/np4/np4/?newsId=3198&fileName=novos_Gr_Site_012013.pdf

*Focusing on one theme allowed us to streamline administrative resources (...) we were able to work more efficiently because we didn't have to design multiple project-calls directed at different sectors and different organizations. If that was the case we would need to come up with different evaluation methodologies, different time frames and eligibility criteria, and this would substantially strain our administrative capacities.*⁷⁵

The IB for Andalusian ESF OP echoed this sentiment stressing that the clear unilateral focus led to the increased efficiency and streamlining of selection procedures:

*We were able to intensify our efforts to deal with the identified condition (...) instead of introducing numerous project-calls we have opted for two major calls, one directed at public organizations and the other at private and social ones (...) Given that the calls were thematically focused we avoided the inflow of miscellaneous applications, this speeded up the selection process.*⁷⁶

Although the final beneficiaries, particularly the civil society organizations, remained rather skeptical of these postulations, and complaints about excessive bureaucracy came up in numerous interviews, the general view was that the application procedures were consistent and the state's administrative support was stable if not openly accessible⁷⁷.

According to SF stakeholders the delineation of concrete (if frugal) objectives further contributed to the effective allocation of SF by allowing for aggregation of funding. Well articulated priorities and comprehensive equality indicators were seen as a means to consolidate the mainstreaming of the equality principles and prevent the fragmentation (or redirection) of SF interventions. The very creation of the multiregional OP FAD was considered an important step in anchoring mainstreaming methodologies. With the total budget of € 208.068.774 it fortified the regional ESF OPs' strategic focus on discrimination and delivered essential cognitive support to civil societies and public institutions. Moreover, close to 89% of all OP FAD initiatives were aligned (in terms of objectives, priorities and targets) with initiatives introduced by regional ESF OPs (Evaluation of OP FAD 2013). This allowed for the introduction of projects larger in size and with extended time-frames (allowing projects to continue into the next funding period).

⁷⁵ Interview #2, 2011

⁷⁶ Interview #9, 2011

⁷⁷ Interviews # 30 #36 #39, 2011

What needs to be pointed out is that the MAs tended to circumvent complex initiatives in favour of simple and focused projects. As explained by the FSG:

We generally feel that it is better to implement a smaller number of projects but of greater size and capacity. The small, localized projects are useful in providing immediate practical aid, but to facilitate real transformations and policy impacts we need ambitious, large-scale, and result oriented initiatives (...) We also strongly believed that such projects should be relatively “easy” to manage. From our experience as IB complexity of the management and control system discourages the usage of SF altogether.⁷⁸

Looking at fiches of Spain ESF projects it appears that they were predominately large-scale, multi-million dollar initiatives, implemented by public authorities with substantial co-financing from the public budget. For example, a total budget of €41,700,000 was allocated to the labour insertion program *Acceder* in 2008-2013 period, in total €72,222,833 has been invested since 2000 (EURoma 2010). In Andalusia, the majority of labour inclusion projects ran by regional OP ESF, possessed budgets reaching €5 million or more (Evaluation OP ESF Andalusia 2010). The majority of winning initiatives outlined strategies for tackling discrimination and developing methodologies for the “inclusion of vulnerable groups”.

The effective outputs were further reinforced by the strategic focus on inducing institutional changes and contributing to the general reforms of the Spanish reforms. The 2013 evaluation of the OP FAD demonstrated that SF contributed to enhancing institutional “quality” by anchoring anti-discrimination methodologies and equality principles among public and civil society organizations⁷⁹. As such it created social, economic and institutional conditions to prevent exclusion, making it an emblem of the principle of equal opportunity. The evaluation also emphasized that the focus on institutional improvements has advanced quality management, control and monitoring inside the MAs. For example in the period 2006-2011 the amount of resources that were returned to the ESF by ineffective management was only 0.07% of the expenditure incurred, while managed funds that did not exceed the control of different audits was less than 2% (Evaluation OP FAD 2013:60). Finally it was attested that institutions have

⁷⁸ Interview #22, 2012

⁷⁹ While there is no expansive data to confirm this, it does appear the working of OP FAD served to reinforce the efforts of the Spanish state to “expand” its anti-discrimination legislation.

increased the amount and quality of professional resources which allowed them to develop more effective projects in line with the equality principle. The Foundation Once expressed that:

*Institutional quality should not be viewed as an end in itself, but a means to create accessible and cohesive public services and inclusion projects, using SF as an instrument for improving the way institutions deal with exclusion is imperative and such style of work should be prioritized in the future programming periods.*⁸⁰

Nevertheless, the adoption of the mainstreaming approach with negligent focus on the ethnic dimension of poverty (or intersectionality) was criticised by Roma inclusion advocates. The criticisms stressed that neutral treatment of vulnerable groups runs the risk of by-passing the most marginalized communities⁸¹. Bereményi and Mirga (2012) argue that the use of ESF for the Roma in Spain has been rather limited to the nationwide programme Acceder and that its existence served as a disincentive for regional authorities to programme meaningful Roma-related activities in their ESF OPs. These criticisms were rebuked by the interviewed SF stakeholders who stressed that real changes take time and lack of ethnic indicators in the SF has not meant that Roma benefited less than other groups. The ESF MA attested that mainstreaming was instrumental in raising the number of social exclusion initiatives and providing greater assistance to all vulnerable groups including the Roma⁸².

The 2011 CSES studies demonstrate that the number of Roma beneficiaries has in fact been on the rise. A director of the Secretariat for Roma Community within the Andalusian Ministry of Equality and Social Welfare, argued that:

The international reports often put a lot of emphasis on the number of beneficiaries while neglecting to account for institutional changes that take place. Exclusive targeting of Roma is simply not feasible, not only because of the fluidity of the Roma identity but also due to legislative restrictions regarding the collection of ethnic data. That is partly why we focus on creating services and procedures that cater to all excluded and discriminated groups. Although the impacts of our initiatives are not immediately evident this does not mean that Roma do not benefit. We've seen a flourishing of Roma activism, a growing number of high school graduates, and falling number of ethnically driven hate crimes. These

⁸⁰ Interview# 30, 2011

⁸¹ Interview #8 #41, 2011

⁸² Interview #1, 2011

improvements are directly related to changes in procedures and regulations and numerous SF projects such as social enterprises.⁸³

Managers of SF projects introduced in Andalusia confirmed that SF had “jump-started” changes in the mentality on the part of the public administrations, business sector and society at large. They also asserted that modernization of employment offices led to the flexibilization of procedures and hence greater initiatives for working with vulnerable groups. In particular, Andalusian support for social enterprises⁸⁴ was viewed as a positive development, extremely effective in providing employment opportunities for the most excluded persons.

3.7 Structuring effect of policy design on SF outputs in Slovakia

Slovak sub-optimal outputs have been well documented in studies and evaluation reports (UNDP 2012; The Decade Watch 2009; EP 2011; CSES 2011b). The SF programming was criticised for excessive bureaucratisation, acute inefficiencies, low absorption and a re-direction of SF from envisioned goals. In particular the HP MRC and the Local Strategies of Comprehensive Approach were assessed as failures given that only some €16 million out of the allocated €200 million had been contracted. This state of affair could be directly linked to the design of the SF programming, particularly to its wide conceptualization of social exclusion that lacked strategic focus and clearly stipulated objectives. The MC members commented that the intent to address all dimensions of social exclusion has reinforced the fragmentation and diffusion of funds:

The money was allocated to various OPs, each with their own objectives, priorities and interests. In effect we had numerous integration strategies not linked to one another in any way. HP was supposed to serve as a coordination tool, but without any political clout, budget or actual management plan it was really unable to do anything (...) we ended up with miscellaneous project-calls, prone to cancellations and overlaps, some even contradicted one another(...) managerial efficiency was simply lost.⁸⁵

⁸³ Interview#11, 2011

⁸⁴ In 2007-2011 SF allocation prompted the creation of over 300 social enterprises in Andalusia, benefiting over 30,000 persons, an unofficial estimate points out that more than 12% of the beneficiaries were of the Roma background.

⁸⁵ Interview# 60, 2011

In addition, the diffusion of funds among mixed and disparate objectives and measures reinforced the creation of small initiatives of dubious effectiveness (over 85% of competitive allocations did not exceed a budget of €500,000) (Grambličková 2010). The reliance on small initiatives was also tied to a lack of secured co-financing from the public budgets (only the minimum 15% was provided) and meager administrative support provided for project managers. In practice entities competing in project-calls needed to amass their own funds and operational capital (even the NGOs had to contribute expected 15%). This impeded the participation in project-calls of small impoverished localities and privileged “small and simple” interventions. As explained by a project manager from Banská Bystrica:

All projects directed at Roma communities were to be implemented by local authorities or local NGOs (...) neither the central nor regional authorities contributed their expertise or co-financing. Not surprisingly the poorest of the poor failed to compete on equal footing with the well-off localities (...) those who did manage to get funds were only able to manage simple highly localized initiatives, nobody aspired to contribute to larger changes.⁸⁶

The ambiguous focus has also prompted inefficiency during the selection processes. According to the MC the eligibility criteria within project-calls were excessively vague and open to wide interpretations. This generated a great interest and overflow of miscellaneous project proposals⁸⁷. The MAs were not technically prepared to meet such a demand, which as a result, generated further delays and legitimized the superficial selection process, whereby applications were scored strictly on meeting the technical standards and not on the feasibility or policy contribution. In an interview a senior employee of Regional Development Office, openly stated that due to the inflow of an “*excessive number of applications*” there was no time “*to evaluate each and every project in greater detail*”⁸⁸. SDF pointed out that selection committees were often confused as to which policy area or theme should be prioritized when dealing with Roma exclusion, in general the consensus was that “*any intervention is better than none*” as long as Roma communities are presented as a target group⁸⁹. However, rather than promoting complex approaches the tendency

⁸⁶ Interview #72, 2011

⁸⁷ In an interview the Regional Development Office confirmed that for one-project call, the demand exceeded expected prognosis by 200%. Interview# 51 Bratislava 2011

⁸⁸ Interview# 51, 2011

⁸⁹ Interview #50,2011

was to introduce one-dimensional, ‘minor’ assistance services (i.e. training, social curatorship, setting up of community centers, or infrastructural repairs). As stated by the Roma Institute:

*This is what happens when you are under pressure to spend the money on time but you are not really required to contribute to social integration in a wider sense. People go for projects that are easy to realize, whether such initiatives are actually helpful in generating integration is of little regard. As long as you can show that the money was spent as promised you are safe, everything else is just an unimportant detail.*⁹⁰

The critics have also pointed out that the targeted approach so strongly supported by the SF stakeholders has neither curtailed the pervasive redirection of SF away from the MRC nor contributed to a larger number of social exclusion projects or higher number of Roma beneficiaries (UNDP 2012). By and large this could be attributed to a purely rhetorical articulation of the HP MRC and lack of clear indicators or conditionalities. The Regional Development Agency in Prešov argued that the targeted approach was designed without a clear understanding of the on the ground conditions:

*Public servants simply lack extensive knowledge about the MRC, thus the indicators are designed according to technocratic rationales rather than assessments of the situation. There is this push to change or improve the circumstances of Roma but it cannot work if the people responsible for designing and managing initiatives do not know what exactly needs to change. It is like working in the dark (...) this also kills the morals of the bureaucrats who become convinced that the situation is hopeless and nothing can be done to improve it.*⁹¹

However, the failure has also stemmed from the excessive “problematization” of Roma behaviour – the ethnicization of social exclusion – and the neglect of wider structural inequalities and discrimination. Overall the objectives stressing the need for institutional modernization fell silent on the issues of discrimination while the Roma inclusion initiatives were confined to measures lacking any structural component (i.e. training, consulting). Numerous stakeholders argued that the adherence to the targeted approach in fact only reinforced the exclusion and stigmatization of the Roma population. A member of the MC stressed that the pervasive focus on strengthening

⁹⁰ Interview #61, 2011

⁹¹ Interview#55, 2011

the adaptability of minorities, legitimized the separate approach, disconnected from wider socio-economic developments⁹².

Finally, the analysis of project fitches shows that the majority of implemented initiatives did not internalize anti-discrimination or equal treatment goals; according to the 2011 Country Report, less than 2% of implemented projects addressed (directly and indirectly) structural discrimination. According to Roma activists, this further dwarfed the effectiveness and impact of SF projects:

*For a long time we've been saying that what needs to be targeted are the structures of exclusion and not only the excluded people, this might sound insensitive but offering training to people who live in segregated communities and face daily discrimination in employment and pretty much all other areas of life, well that is just throwing money out the window. SF should be used to change policies, tackle discrimination, promote equality ...we don't have projects like that.*⁹³

3.8 Concluding remarks

This chapter demonstrated empirically the influence of policy design on SF outputs. In respect to presented theoretical arguments regarding the framing of social exclusion and approaches to address it, the findings appear rather counterintuitive. The analysis of Spanish SF programming showed that the residual conceptualization of social exclusion (understood mainly as discrimination in the labour market) allowed for the creation of clear and concrete objectives and measures that have enhanced the efficiency of SF allocations. The one-dimensional focus on employment by and large facilitated the aggregation of funding and secured the sustainability of the implemented project. As anticipated, the recognition of structural factors driving exclusion prompted the channeling of SF towards interventions aimed at institutional change and the adoption of mainstreaming approaches. At the same time, however, the reluctance to endorse affirmative action strategies or target funds at “ethnic communities” has not resulted in the expected redirection of SF away from the Roma. Meanwhile, the Slovak framing of social exclusion as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, encompassing a wide range of policy areas has

⁹² The 2012 UNDP Report has demonstrated this empirically.

⁹³ Interview #73, 2011

led to the fragmentation of objectives and priorities. In effect funding was dispersed among miscellaneous, small-scale projects, which lacked clear focus and long time-frames. The general avoidance to emphasize the role of structures in perpetuating exclusion legitimized interventions directed at “changing the behaviour of excluded groups”. Although Slovakia’s targeted approach appeared sensitive to the specificity of the Roma quandary, the failure to recognize systemic discrimination, contributed to the ethnicization of the problem and creation of interventions generally isolated from the regional development strategies. This negatively affected both sustainability and the legitimacy of SF projects.

Overall, these findings challenge the conventional arguments about the way Roma exclusion should be diagnosed and addressed. While the multi-dimensional aspect of Roma deprivation is irrefutable, it appears that the sectorial approach to exclusion can in fact nurture more concrete assistance. As such there is a need to critically consider whether the EC’s promotion of multifaceted approaches to Roma exclusion is in fact feasible or even necessary in the framework of SF programming. Perhaps tackling Roma unemployment, which in some localities reaches up to 100% (UNDP & FRA 2011) could be more effective than diffusing funds to an array of interventions spread across all policy fields.

The findings of this chapter also challenge the perceived positive influence of the targeting approach, championed by the EU and numerous international Roma advocacy organizations. It appears that targeting SF at minority groups without resources provided for institutional “transformations” - in particular the enhancement of anti-discrimination principles - is rather counterproductive as it offers individual or group assistance (i.e. training, consultancy) without any possibility for beneficiaries to use newly gained skills. This often leads to disenchantment and the de-legitimization of the entire SF programming. In fact if one looks more closely, an increase in SF allocations to Roma integration in Slovakia has actually generated greater contestation of their usefulness in facilitating inclusion⁹⁴.

⁹⁴ A similar trend could be noticed in other Eastern European countries, generally endorsing targeted approaches (EURoma 2010).

Thus far this work has demonstrated the influence of framing and the structuring effect of policy design, offering new ways of thinking about social inclusion interventions. However, it must be remembered that the implementation of SF strategies rests in the hands of numerous stakeholders, who often hold considerable discretion over the actual form that the diagnostics and prognostic part of strategic documents takes. Given that the modern system of governance is realized through complex networks and third-party arrangements, it is necessary to scrutinize who the main participants are and how they influence or interact with strategic action plans. The analysis needs to pay special attention to the participation of Roma minorities in shaping and realizing public interventions. It has been well documented that the Roma continue to face extensive barriers in accessing policy-making and influencing decision-making processes (Guy 2013; McGarry & Agarín 2014; Trehan & Sigona 2009). Consistent disenfranchisement considerably weakens the impact of social inclusion policies, as the voice of those most affected rarely informs public interventions. I expect that the establishment of mechanisms that bring these voices into all phases of SF programming could substantially improve the shape and effectiveness of SF outputs and add legitimate quality.

The next chapter considers the role of participation and inter-agency collaboration in the complex system of SF programming. The analysis focuses on the way SF governing bodies interact with local and third-party actors (i.e. civil society) and the way they utilize resources brought-in by local partners to shape and realize SF strategies.

Chapter 4 - Partnership design

As demonstrated in the theoretical chapter, greater interagency cooperation has become “paradigmatic of modern policy-making” (Bache 2010: 58). Inside the EU cohesion policy, participatory dynamics have been institutionalized through the partnership principle, the requirement that decisions over the spending of SF are made collaboratively by a mix of state actors from different territorial levels – supranational, national and subnational – alongside non-state actors (Article 9, Council Regulation 183/2006). In the difficult context of social exclusion, the partnership principle was to offer the potential to draw on the knowledge and expertise of an array of actors and contribute to the development of local capacities. In view of these developments, I expect that SF outputs are contingent on the performance of the partnership principle, especially the influence it grants to the new actors. This chapter empirically investigates how the domestic realization of the partnership principle (the partnership design) influences the diverging SF outputs.

The concept of partnership design builds on a framework designed by Archon Fung (2006). Fung’s analytical framework presents three important dimensions in which mechanisms of participation vary. The first concerns who participate: some partnership arrangements are open to all who wish to engage, others invite only elite stakeholders, while still others place emphasis on direct participation. The second dimension examines the manner in which partnership is institutionalized, paying attention to communication and capacity-building mechanisms. As some partnership arrangements rely on deliberation and provide for organizational resources, others have a purely consultative character, and do not offer opportunities for capacity-building. A third dimension describes the link between discussions on one hand and policy or public action on the other. The chapter locates the Spanish and Slovak partnership within this tri-dimensional space with the aim of distinguishing which partnership design actually contributes to more effective, legitimate and just policy outcomes.

To capture this causal relationship, it is necessary to explore normative aspects of partnership and collaboration. The exploration undertaken in this chapter builds on arguments presented by the new governance literature and representation scholarship. In general, partnership is either

considered as a technical device aimed at improving decisional efficiency and effectiveness of public interventions (Conway 1999; Rhodes et al, 2003; Osborne & Gaebler 1992) or as a highly political instrument with the faculty to empower disenfranchised groups and localities (Geddes 2006; Taylor 2007, Finn 2000, Fung 2004). Each consideration brings to light important question regarding the impact that partnership may have on effective, legitimate, and equitable governance. What is particularly problematized in these debates is the idea of representation, whether the interests of the localities or excluded groups should be championed by their very members (i.e. local leaders, associations) or by professionals and experts trained in specific themes and managerial procedures.

While discussion between the so-called descriptive and substantive representation is vexing and controversial, in the context of the Roma minority there is the strong proclivity to champion the involvement of community members, with a strong emphasis on the descriptive representation of the Roma. Advocates of Roma integration argue that only when Roma themselves partake in all aspects of policy-making and have the authority to make vital policy decisions, can public intervention bring about favourable results (Nicolae 2013; Jovanović 2013). They further stress the need to provide less recourse to actors with the necessary capacity-building support and empowerment possibilities (Rostas & Ryder 2012). The last argument stands in stark contrast to neoliberal contentions, that partnership should be open only to those with strong lobbying propensity or those who are already capable of contributing necessary resources (Rhodes 1997). Nevertheless, governance scholars convincingly assert that without enabling governance weaker interests will be effectively sidelined and hierarchies will be reinforced (Goetz 2009).

In light of these debates, this chapter asserts that the partnership design most likely to promote effective SF outputs needs to provide participatory opportunities to local and minority interests, while making sure that less resourced organizations or communities receive the necessary capacity-building support. At the same time, the presence of experts in partnership is not fully neglected. I expect that if both Roma representatives and technocrats do not work together, there is a risk that the provided SF initiatives would be disconnected from the local contexts, or SF allocations would fully bypass the most needed communities (as it is likely that the leaders of the most impoverished localities/groups will have little capacity to access SF). This chapter also

asserts that ceding decision-making authority over the SF programming design to the newcomers is crucial. Without such provisions there is a strong possibility that partnership will take the form of strict tokenism thus at once hindering the effectiveness and legitimacy of SF outputs. Finally while partnership should strive to facilitate more informed and efficient public interventions it should also foster community empowerment, not only considered indispensable to the effective development but also necessary for overcoming exclusion and disenfranchisement of the Roma minorities in SF programming. While the main findings confirm the main hypotheses, they are also rather counterintuitive as they negate the conviction that the recruitment of Roma representatives or community leaders is indispensable for successful SF interventions.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section reviews existing scholarly accounts of partnership practices focusing on debates concerning its envisioned purposes. It also examines the main arguments concerning the normative aspects of representation and ‘activation’ of vulnerable groups. It then looks at ideas concerning the realization of partnership or the manners in which inter-actor collaboration has been systematized. The empirical section assesses partnership practices in the two countries in terms of the scope of participation, mode of institutionalization and extent of authorization. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and the implications.

4.1 Dual nature of partnership principle

The partnership principle has been set as a core feature of the EU cohesion policy that informed successive waves of reforms aimed at involving an increasingly wide range of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of cohesion policy. The overall prerogative of the regulations was one of “increased partnership working, with greater involvement of subnational bodies, economic and social partners and other organisations among the member states” (EC No 229/2008). However, beyond the preamble to the regulation no precise and formally binding instructions or guidance have been provided on how the principle should be applied in practice. Not surprisingly the pattern of partnership representation has been uneven across the EU often reflecting established domestic norms, preferences and concerns about the purpose (or utility) of this new participatory tool (Bauer 2002).

The cohesion policy regulations appeared to promote the partnership principle as both a technical tool and political instrument (EC No 1828/2006). The former treats partnership as a potent means to improve the management and implementation of SF in terms of efficiency and the distribution of gains (i.e. absorption and allocations). EC has extolled its potential to tap into local knowledge and foster better informed SF interventions. The latter considers its potential to replace hierarchically binding rule-making with decentralized and participatory decision-making. In this vein the EC's partnership objective was premised on the ideal of legitimate grassroots empowerment, crucial for bringing EU policy-making closer to the realities of the member states. Of course the accommodation of such a dual purpose proved extremely difficult, often resulting in deep-cutting tensions and ideological disagreements (Bache 2010). Both cohesion and public policy scholars began to investigate the benefits and limitations associated with this dual nature of the partnership principle in hopes of arriving at a most effective model. It is to these issues that this chapter now turns.

4.1.1 Partnership design – expertise versus political voice

In general, governance scholars argue that the complexity of modern public problems necessitate a range of inputs from experts involved in delivering social, economic and infrastructural programmes (Conway 1999; Rhodes et al, 2003; Osborne & Gaebler 1992; Osborne 2010; McQuaid 2010; Nelson & Zadek 2000). The partnership principle is seen as a tool, able to secure such collaborative work which in turn can facilitate the creation of comprehensive policies that tackle various causes as well as symptoms of public dilemmas. This assertion is underpinned with an assumption that policy-making is a rational process focused on finding optimal solutions to pending issues and problems. As such it is expected that policy-makers and ruling elites will voluntarily seek to recruit organizations with specific merit, thematic interests, and scope of activities in order to enhance the effectiveness of public interventions (Osborne 2010). The presented benefits stemming from such collaborative action include: pooling of resources (i.e. increasing the number of budget-holding organizations involved in delivering solutions), improving efficiency (i.e. avoiding duplication in service delivery) and sharing knowledge and expertise (i.e. to maximize the appropriateness, quality and efficiency of provisions). McQuaid (1999) argues that the flexible nature of partnerships can also facilitate a process of comparison

and appraisal, so that best practices can be identified and alternative options and design features can be evaluated. Inherent of these debates is an explicit understanding that partnership should *enhance* policy-making rather than bring about political or systemic change. Hence proponents of the instrumental purpose of partnership fall silent on issues of empowerment or grassroots mobilization (as these are considered a challenge to status quo).

It is rather difficult to refute the positive value expertise brings into policy-making, however, this stance neglects the highly politicized nature of policy-making and the systemic power asymmetries. Critics contend that the prioritization of technocratic efficiency (that is, added value for policy-making through drawing on the knowledge and skills of various partners) actually destabilizes transparency and democratic accountability (Bauer 2002, Bache & Olsson 2001, Derkzen & Bock 2009; Newman 2001; Gittell 2001). Peters and Pierre (2004) describe the trade off between efficiency and democracy as a “Faustian bargain” whereby the reliance on expert organizations marginalizes the role of elected politicians, local community leaders and dwarfs accountability to voters and local jurisdictions. Additionally, it could be argued that partnership as a mean of achieving greater efficiency in delivering “public value” actually impinges on the possibility of excluded groups to contribute their voice and experiences. This is because it neither takes under consideration issues concerning the organizational capacities of vulnerable communities nor does it address the pervasive political disenfranchisement of some groups (i.e. the Roma). Voiceless and impoverished communities are often sidelined, given their weak ability to exert pressure on the ruling elites or bring to the table the needed (or expected) resources. As such for marginalized groups, partnership is believed to be little more than a façade, allowing governments to continue controlling policies while giving an impression that excluded groups are not interested or willing to contribute their expertise (Dobbs & Moore 2002; McGarry & Agarín 2014).

Dissatisfaction with such an approach (particularly pronounced among Roma advocates) has led to increasing demands for shifting the site of decision-making from a close group of experts to community organizations and citizens directly affected by problems at stake (Kocze & Trehan 2009; Jovanović 2013). The empowering dimension of partnership has been put forward as an adequate means to challenge systemic inequalities – by developing the political capacity of

marginalized minorities a to contest the legitimacy of existing rules. Roma advocates maintained that only such empowerment could curtail paternalistic attitudes towards the communities and oust tokenistic interventions (Jovanović 2013). More importantly empowerment could curb disenchantment and lack of trust in public institutions, thus making public interventions more legitimate and compliance more pronounced. It could also prompt needed institutional reforms more attentive to social cohesion, equality and justice. In this sense partnership can be viewed not as an end in itself but as a means for expanding the democratic quality of public governance.

Considering the ongoing need for more informed policy-making and the continuous disenfranchisement of the Roma from crucial decision-making processes, I argue that partnership should account for both expert-driven knowledge and community empowerment. The question that arises is how such a merger could be achieved and whether it is at all feasible. I contend that the success of such fusion is strongly contingent on the way partnership is institutionalized in practice; who is given the “green card” to participate, on what grounds and through which means. An attentive look at the theoretical discussion regarding these institutional aspects of partnership can unveil the role of partnership in generating diverging outputs.

4.1.2 Who should participate?

Although partnership principle regulations set requirements for engaging a long list of partners in SF programming, the central government maintains the authority to select the most “competent” bodies (Article 9, Council Regulation 183/2006). As such, the inclusion of new partners is more likely to take a form of “recruitment” than popular mobilization. The new governance spaces, as Cornwall reminds us (2004), are spaces to which partners are invited by the state and which are created and defined by the state (*invited spaces*) as opposed to spaces created and defined by citizens (*popular spaces*). It has been widely documented that central governments often exploit resources provided by the new partners to consolidate their own political goals as opposed to re-shaping existing approaches or policies (Scott 1998; Kröger 2008). In effect partners that do not adhere to a dominant policy discourse or do not offer the expected input are often excluded from established partnerships. Jones (2003) argues that there is a predisposition to open partnership to well-organized and resourceful agents who could relieve governments of some duties (i.e. service delivery) rather than engage with actors who are considered problematic or who challenge the

governing status quo. Although, if well exploited, such a dynamic can in fact enhance the efficiency of delivered services, they are less likely to facilitate recruitment of groups excluded from policy-making or add to the pluralist qualities of democracy. As such, the possibility of bringing to the table diverse bargaining positions is severely curtailed.

Nevertheless, in the last decade opening partnership to local community representatives has become a staple of good governance seldom challenged by top political elites (at least not explicitly). However, questions regarding who should represent excluded communities began to be fiercely debated, often leaving little room for reaching consensus. Particularly in the context of Roma integration, a growing frustration with existing institutional participation of Roma, where the so-called “Roma-in-charge” not only lack decision-making authority but are considered far removed from realities of the local communities, has reinforced the calls for ethnic mobilization, and contestation of bureaucratic approaches (Jovanović 2013, Rostas & Ryder. 2012; Nicolae 2012). However the ethnographical diversity of the Roma population combined with a lack of resources within communities and a high level of structural discrimination has curtailed the potential for grassroots mobilization (Vermeersch 2003), which could compel authorities to take greater interest in Roma issues. These dynamics were often used as a rationale for greater involvement of thematic experts and bureaucrats in managing social inclusion programmes.

In conceptual terms the debate regarding Roma involvement oscillates between descriptive and substantive representation. While descriptive representation is based on the participation of agents who in some sense are typical of the larger class of persons to which they belong (i.e. gender, ethnicity or race). Substantive representation focuses on the ability of a participant to advocate for the interests of a certain group without regard to shared characteristics (see Pitkin 1967).

Descriptive representation has been strongly advocated by the Roma representatives, who argue that communication between “non-mirror” representatives and marginalized constitutes is impaired by distrust, which in turn undermines the legitimacy and sustainability of public policies. They maintain that pervasive discrimination of the Roma minority results in the lack of

political will to provide assistance and inclusion strategies, thus descriptive representation is imperative as only the Roma themselves can aggressively pursue group-related interests (Kawczynski 1997). The slogan “nothing about us without us” adopted by the Decade of Roma Inclusion, communicates that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of Roma citizens affected by that policy. As such effective and legitimate policy outputs are considered contingent on the wide recruitment of Roma community leaders, Roma organizations or members of Roma communities who can bring their experiences and bargaining chips into policy-making. However, this understanding of partnership can be criticized for undermining the ability and predisposition of people to “act for others or on behalf of others” thus weakening solidarity and neglecting the positive value of merit inside policy-making. Moreover Dovi points out that descriptive representation “essentializes group characteristics thus running a risk of perpetuating or even aggravating the marginalization of historically disadvantaged groups” (2002:742). Substantive representation has been presented as an antidote for such “artificial” separation and categorization of the society. In her ground breaking work on representation Pitkin (1967) convincingly argues that it is more important to focus on what representatives do than on who they are.

Nevertheless, descriptive and substantive representations are not necessarily contradictory, and arguably participatory opportunities can accommodate them both. When properly tackled descriptive representation, may in fact result in substantive representation. For example legitimate Roma leaders and community representatives may use their personal experience as Roma to bring unique insight and innovative solutions to the policy-making process. At the same time non-Roma organizations or local stakeholders might bring in their expertise to the communities. However, mutual learning can only be secured if both parties are provided with an opportunity to engage in a dialogue, and the authorities are actually accommodating of diverse inputs. Thus partnership design needs to account for enabling mechanisms, such as capacity-building support and influence over decision-making.

4.1.3 Institutionalization of partnership

Fung’s (2006) analytical framework pays extensive attention to the way participation is institutionalized - whether expanded participation actually translates into policy change or

influence over governing procedures. He argues against the idea that policy-making is an equally level playing field where all stakeholders engage with one another directly as equals and reason together about public problems (2006:8). Instead, modern institutional frameworks tend to engage new participants as observers of policy-making with no substantive influence over an undertaken course of action, while making sure that decision-making authority remains in the hands of elected representatives and/or elite experts. In the context of the partnership principle neither of these options appears capable of realizing its dual objectives. For marginalized groups such treatment of partnership is rather futile, as it simply reinforces the status quo and delegitimizes minority claims. Cornwall (2004) maintains that the activation of disenfranchised communities requires special support from the state (i.e. technical, administrative or cognitive). However, institutionalization of such support is not without its problems, as it is not always clear who deserves a “helping hand”. Scholars researching enabling government argue that rather than channelling funds to miscellaneous organizations, assistance should be provided to entities which can prove their legitimate involvement in a particular community (Zadek & Radovich 2006). Given, the problematic of Roma mobilization and the so-called “ethno-business” dynamic public support attentive to proven record of action and local accountability appears sensible. However, one should not forget that public budgets should also be invested in capacity-building of public institutions which often lack expertise and experience working through networks or engaging in multi-actor collaboration.

While investing public resources in participatory governance might endow public and social agents with the needed capacity to navigate and orchestrate a complex bureaucratic system of policy-making, another issue that needs to be addressed is the distribution of responsibilities over policy design and its implementation. Fung (2006:70) asserts that by definition, partnership legitimises the designation of decision-making authority to all those involved. His framework shows that sole expression of participants’ interests or endorsement of consultations will not guarantee that different interests and requests will translate into actual policies. Kröger’s (2008) examination of the participation of civil society in EU policy-making confirms these claims by showing that consultations held with NGOs have not informed final EU decisions, as those who were asked to provide input were not granted any power to see it through.

Roma activists and stakeholders have been appealing for a greater role in policy formulation and planning, at the same time firmly insisting that the SF authorities (MAs) should play a greater role in policy implementation. Yet it appears that these roles are often reversed, as local stakeholders often deliver interventions designed in offices far removed from the local contexts. Such dynamics not only defy the notion of subsidiarity but also run risk of earmarking money for inadequate interventions, not considered useful or legitimate by the policy targets. Thus I stipulate that a coherent designation of decision-making authority over different stages of SF programming can effectively reverse such dynamics.

In sum it appears that partnership most likely to deliver successful SF outputs, will strive to engage community interests and technocratic expertise in meaningful collaboration, by earmarking public expenditures for capacity-building (both for public agencies and local representatives or civil society organizations) and institutionalizing deliberation processes. At the same time it will need to assign decision-making authority in a way that those who participate can influence the design of SF interventions while maintaining oversight of their implementation. The next section examines partnership design adopted in Spain and Slovakia with an aim to empirically demonstrate whether the above conditions have been realized, and how they influenced the SF outputs.

4.2 Partnership design in Spain and Slovakia

The first substantial difference in the two policy designs appears in the recruitment phase. Although both countries have transposed cohesion regulation pertaining to the partnership principle, and both vouched to include local and social actors in designing and implementing funding opportunities, the realization of these commitments took very different shape. The difference can be ascribed to diverging domestic patterns of decentralization and norms regarding the purpose of partnership and community participation. However, it can also be linked to the models of interventions, mainstream and targeting (discussed in a previous chapter) adopted by the two countries. An examination of the recruitment patterns is a first step in unveiling the complexity of the partnership dynamic and its influence on SF outputs.

4.2.1 Spain – selective recruitment

The approach to partnership undertaken by the Spanish authorities was strongly shaped by a progressive regionalization process which commenced after the transition to democracy. The establishment of the 17 ACs and the adoption of the principles of the autonomous process by Constitutional Court (1983) prompted an incremental devolution of expenditure powers and transfers (including health care, education and social services). Decentralization progressed through bilateral commissions in which political negotiations determined the competencies and costs of sustaining services for each individual ACs (see Sanz 2010). The establishment of Spanish federalism influenced the working of SF programming, confining the partnership principle to strictly vertical inter-governmental interactions. In the 1990s decision-making power over SF programming was captured by the centre and ACs, leaving local authorities and social entities largely outside the sphere of influence. Although, this fairly exclusive partnership began to open up at the end of the 1993-1999 programming period (in response to new cohesion policy regulations) opportunities for participation continued to be rather limited. As explained by a senior public servant from Andalusian Ministry of Local Administration and Institutional Relations:

AC found it difficult to accept that their newly gained powers should be shared with an array of new actors. They were lobbying for a greater say in the use of SF and considered local involvement a threat to their bargaining power. Cooperation with social partners was viewed in a more relax manner, mostly because it did not challenge the primacy of ruling elites. In fact it was thought that third sector could in fact bring in expertise and resources, desperately needed for development of regional services.⁹⁵

Indeed as struggle for control over SF continued (see Morata & Popartan 2008), the central and regional authorities were determined to avoid political controversy. Hence they emphasized the technocratic rationale for partnership rather than its political dimension. The interviewed ESF MA and the IBs confirmed that partnership was predominately seen as a technocratic tool for the improvement of SF allocations. The manager of ESF Administration Unit maintained that the involvement of localities and NGOs was necessary to generate knowledge transfer from the

⁹⁵ Interview # 14, 2011

deprived areas and enhance effectiveness of SF in addressing inequalities and discrimination⁹⁶. However the interviewed grassroots organizations argued that such an approach severely undermined the empowering potential of partnership, thus missing an opportunity to engage vulnerable groups and small local communities:

*Clearly, SF authorities see partnership as a mean to gain access to local resources, not as a tool for promoting greater and equal participation (...) in fact authorities seem determined to avoid engaging organizations that represent minority issues or champion a political vision that stands in contrast to the status quo (...) Nobody wants to lose control over a great pool of money, so partnership is very restrictive.*⁹⁷

Although throughout the 2000s partnership gained greater legitimacy and began to be accepted as a requirement of modern governance, it was not easily accessible to all interested agencies. The adopted recruitment method was very selective, aimed at locating the most “knowledgeable” organizations, with a long standing record of working in thematic policy areas. Potential partners (including the intermediate bodies, supervisory bodies, consultants and project managers) were expected to have well-developed networks of influence (in the local communities or professional sectors), a “good record” of performance (demonstrable outputs, outcomes) and capacity to propose innovative strategies derived from successful pilot projects⁹⁸. Even the composition of MC, which by definition was to reflect a wide variety of interests (NSRF 2007:218) appeared restricted to services providing organizations and agents that were already strongly connected to public institutions (i.e. members of Sectoral Networks or Social Pacts⁹⁹). As stated by the department head of the ESF Administrative Unit, “it is important to work with partners whom we can trust, who can engage in constructive dialogue and who are open to compromise”¹⁰⁰. Although, the approach based on “trust” was criticized for reinforcing political patronage, the

⁹⁶ Interview# 2, 2011

⁹⁷ Interview#40, 2011

⁹⁸ Interview #19, 2011

⁹⁹ In 2003 Andalusia has reached an agreement with social partners and representatives of local municipalities called *The Social Pact Agreement of Andalusia*. The agreement resulted in the creation of 114 new offices spread all around the rural territory in the region. These offices, called *Territorial Units for Employment and Technological and Local Development*, were financed by the regional government and managed by means of an agreement with local authorities (mainly municipalities) and social partners. With time more than 85% of involved organizations became members of the MC and were asked to contribute to the design of SF programming (Evaluation Andalusia OP ESF 2010).

¹⁰⁰ Interview# 1, 2011

Unit insisted that partnership was formed based on performance indicators (including demonstrated outputs) as well as professional clout in a given policy sector. An evaluation of organizations serving in MC largely confirmed that the majority of members had substantial experience in service delivery and project management (including SF initiatives), and were often leaders of professional networks¹⁰¹. The interviewed MC members attested that discussions were constructive allowing for the formation of consensus¹⁰².

However, while the authorities were looking for innovative ways to address social exclusion and appeared quite open to learn from social and private entities, they preferred to work with organizations that adhered to established norms and championed moderate ideologies:

*It should be remembered that we need partners who can help us penetrate areas traditionally bypassed by our welfare provisions, hence we look for organizations that have documented experience delivering assistance (...) At the same time we need to work together and not challenge one another, this requires some common grounds, or what we call organizational fit (...) SF are to be used by the state to improve its workings, not to cater to political interests (...) If people are not satisfied we have numerous political channels where such dissatisfaction can be addressed.*¹⁰³

This sentiment was shared by the interviewed regional authorities, confirming that the depoliticization of partnership with social actors has become a “norm” in the SF programming¹⁰⁴. In the context of Roma integration, this norm was reflected in the recruitment of organizations that provide socio-economic services to the Roma communities, an approach that has pushed-out human rights organizations advocating for the politicization of Roma issues and community mobilization. As noted by a Roma activist:

*Employment services are needed but what is even more needed is building social capital inside the communities, promoting active citizenship and political activism (...) we don't feel that the government is interested in that ...they think once you are fed you will be content.*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ The ESF Administrative Unit has allowed the researcher to examine membership reviews conducted by the Chair of MC for ESF, given that this information will stay anonymous.

¹⁰² Interview #20 #21, 2011

¹⁰³ Interview# 4, 2011

¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that the EU has not challenged this stance.

¹⁰⁵ Interview #36, 2011

It could be argued that the Spanish selective recruitment was based on substantive representation with limited mechanisms provided for community empowerment. Numerous critics attest that the focus on professionalism has stemmed from a deeply embedded fear that the presence of actors from minority groups at the strategic level of SF programming will set off ethnic sentiments which in turn could undermine the legitimacy of public integration initiatives (which were often described as top-down and highly bureaucratic)¹⁰⁶. Nevertheless, striving away from identity politics can also be linked to the adopted mainstreaming approach that prioritized the improvement of institutional framework (making it more accessible and responsive) over the provision of “special treatment” for particular groups. Thus the belonging to particularly marginalized group was not considered essential in the delivery of effective services. In fact, the promotion of identity over professionalism was considered harmful to social solidarity and the general workings of SF (and other public services). As stated by public servant from Seville Provincial Office:

This idea that services for the Roma should be provided by Roma organizations might sound good in theory but in practice it simply reinforces societal division (...) organizations with membership linked exclusively to ethnicity are often unable or even unwilling to provide services for other groups (...) we receive only a small share of SF, and we think it is best to use it for projects that aim to improve situation of all vulnerable groups (...) of course community input is important but from our experience public funding is best utilized by organizations that account for wider socio-economic issues affecting all impoverished citizens.¹⁰⁷

This sentiment echoed in interviews with central and regional authorities. Nevertheless this stance has not resulted in a total ousting of organizations working predominately with Roma communities. In fact FSG was established as an IB for OP FAD and OP TA and is a member of the MC, thus undertaking an important role at the strategic stage of SF programming. This well established foundation has been delivering services to the Roma community since 1960s. However, its current role and position can be first and foremost attributed to a strong alignment of foundation’s organizational goal with the priorities and objectives of the authorities. In 1997 FSG ran a pilot project *INTEGRA* that was presented to the central authorities as a template for mainstream activities in the area of employment inclusion. The multicultural approach and the

¹⁰⁶ Interviews# 39, 2011

¹⁰⁷ Interview #15, 2011

structural aims of the project (i.e. working closely with public employment offices to enhance insertion programmes) were well received especially since the authorities thought them easily expandable to other vulnerable groups:

*The FSG proposed a feasible and innovative project which greatly aligned with our goals and priorities (...) given that the pilot resulted in favourable outcomes, the ministry was inclined to put its resources behind the initiative (...) FSG commitment to serving all needy citizens together with its extensive networks with other NGOs and local groups made them an ideal partner for developing labour inclusion projects, the fact that they provided services to Roma communities was an additional asset.*¹⁰⁸

This alignment of interests was strongly criticized by local Roma advocates, who argued that large national NGOs such as FSG are not truly representative of the diverse local interests and the most excluded groups, as they first and foremost represent the interests of the state¹⁰⁹. However, the FSG role in channelling SF to Roma communities should not be belittled. For the last two funding periods, FSG has been cooperating and co-producing projects with over 40 city halls, over 50 NGOs (60% of which directly represent Roma communities) in 6 different regions, and over 40 private companies. All the implemented projects directly and indirectly target Roma communities and individuals, while the number of beneficiaries of Roma origin continues to grow¹¹⁰.

Despite the criticisms the work of FSG demonstrates that “professionalized” NGOs working closely with public authorities were willing to serve the most marginalized groups. In fact solidarity of professional NGOs with Roma people has been a prominent feature of Spanish civil society and was often presented as a promising aspect of “the Spanish model” for Roma inclusion (Rodriguez Cabrero 2011). The State Council of Social Action NGOs, the EAPN-Spain, the Volunteer’s Platform, SOS Racism, have undertaken the majority of campaigning for the Roma community and, jointly, incorporated Roma issues into civic dialogue that aimed to inform major

¹⁰⁸ Interview #9, 2011

¹⁰⁹ Interview #38, 2011

¹¹⁰ The FSG annual evaluation reports point out that the number of direct Roma beneficiaries in the 2000-2006 funding period reached close to 27,000. In the second period it almost doubled. Data also shows that the number of projects that target social-inclusion increased by 60 % between the two funding periods. In the 2000-2006 period FSG as an IB absorbed all the SF allocated to them what resulted in an interesting scenario as MA decided to allocate more funds to social-inclusion initiatives (from central budget and “left over” SF).

decisions over social policies. At the same time Roma-led organizations and associations (i.e. Fakali, La Chanca, ROMI) tended to expand the area of their operations, providing services for other vulnerable groups. In this manner the isolationist treatment of Roma issues was curtailed, as partnership was largely based on inter-cultural cooperation. It could be said that while political empowerment has not been prioritized, substantive representation was able to keep Roma issues on the political agenda with that somewhat indirectly contributing to the empowerment of Romani voice.

4.2.2 Slovakia - open recruitment

In Slovakia the approach to partnership in SF programming has taken a different course. The centralized governance of the Slovak state meant that central authorities had a fairly weak tradition of engaging in close cooperation with lower tiers of government and with non-governmental actors. The decentralization attempts already undertaken in the 1990s were severely perturbed by administrative obstructions and the inability to forge political compromise (see Davey & Gábor 2008). Although transfers took place and local self-governments were granted some level of governing flexibility, fiscal autonomy continued to be limited. The unsystematic decentralization and weak institutionalization of multi-party governance was in turn reflected in the SF programming. First attempts to consolidate the partnership principle were quite shallow, as the central government maintained full control at the strategic level. Created meso-level tiers of government were not equipped with needed decision-making authority, and even the OP RD was managed at the centre (Bassa 2007). The influence of civil society was even weaker, characterized by ad-hoc interactions that took place mostly outside the institutional framework. As late as 2006 there was no concrete strategy for civil society involvement in SF programming.

Faced with strong EU conditionality and the lobbying efforts of Slovak civil society (and to a lesser degree, local authorities) to consolidate participatory channels, the situation began to improve. The institutionalization of MC in all the OPs has secured the involvement of actors representing pertinent themes and interests. While in the first funding period the selection of MC members was conducted in an ad-hoc manner, as the MA handpicked MC members without providing a concrete rationale for particular choices (see Batory & Cartwright 2010), in the

subsequent period a coalition of CSOs (civil society organizations) at the Governmental Council for NGOs (an advisory body of the government) proposed a uniform system for delegating MC members and for increasing the number of participants. Despite numerous problems and setbacks, the selection process became more transparent and standardized. As an answer to EC conditionality¹¹¹ SF authorities have introduced various working groups and consultation sessions, to foster more constructive discussions. A member of MC noted that:

MC are far from ideal, however considering the previous funding period we [social actors] made substantial progress. The selection process if anything is more transparent and representative of the diverse societal needs. It is also open to all of those actors who take interest and are eager to contribute their voice¹¹².

It is important to highlight that the notion of “voice” has greatly surpassed the notion of “expertise” in the general discourse on SF partnership. During interviews social and local actors confirmed that partnership is viewed as entitlement and as a tool to advance pluralist democracy. Whether the new participants were actually able to contribute specific know-how or resources to policy-making processes was not fully considered and in some circles it was even contested:

The voice of citizens needs to be incorporated into policy-making process, one should not be excluded simply because he or she lacks professional skills or political connections, policy-making needs to reflect diverse societal interests, not only those that represent power and influence (...) SF have failed to benefit the Roma community mostly because their voice is sidelined from strategic discussions, the partnership principle can and should be used to empower this voice.¹¹³

While central authorities appeared more careful not to exaggerate the political dimension of partnership¹¹⁴, they also placed rather modest weight on the need to engage expert partners or professional organized interests¹¹⁵. In fact SF programming documents made no reference to experience or expertise needed to strengthen the design or delivery of SF interventions in the area

¹¹¹ In the interviews all senior public managers stressed that compliance with EU conditionality was a driving factor in expanding MC membership and strengthening the MC strategic role in monitoring SF programming.

¹¹² Interview# 20, 2011

¹¹³ Interview #72, 2011

¹¹⁴ In all interviews, public authorities presented rather vague and contradictory definitions of partnership.

¹¹⁵ This tendency is characteristic of ESF programming. ERDF programming has placed much more emphasis on engaging experts, particularly from the private sector.

of social exclusion, they did however emphasized the need to engage a wide variety of voices (NSRF 2007:9). The main eligibility criteria for participation in SF programming (membership in the MC) reflected this articulation, accounting mainly for legal registrations of organizations, thematic interests and ethnic status (i.e. Hungarian, Romani).

Not surprisingly, MC meetings attracted a wide assortment of stakeholders operating in different policy fields (i.e. employment, human rights, health etc.). Among the participants a growing number of Roma-led organizations began to take interest, a development greatly praised by international organizations¹¹⁶. Working groups included Roma organizations that managed community centres, promoted civic rights activism and/or organized cultural events. They also included providers of education services, housing developers, legal issues specialists and volunteers active in charity work (MC Evaluation Report 2011). This organizational congestion was justified on the grounds that the Roma is a diverse ethnic minority in need of diverse representation coming from different communities and working with different policy areas. Some activists even claimed that given the size of the Roma population and the scope of problems they face, the representational sample was still too small¹¹⁷. What came through from the interviews, however, was that numerous participants did not have a clear agenda or demonstrable results of practical experience working in the communities or specific policy areas. It also appeared that SF authorities provided little constructive information about issues to be discussed and were often not prepared to mediate heated debates¹¹⁸.

An important aspect of Roma participation was a strong emphasis placed on ethnic identity and community mobilization. According to commentators this approach was supported by the authorities because of international pressure (i.e. from the EU and international advocacy groups) demanding stronger Roma representation in all aspects of SF programming¹¹⁹. However, it could also be argued that the insistence on recruiting partners with Romani background stemmed from the endorsement of the targeted approach to social exclusion. As SF programming aimed to provide tailored interventions to the Roma communities, it was often stressed that these projects

¹¹⁶ Interview# 62, 2011

¹¹⁷ Interview #61, 2011

¹¹⁸ Interview #58 #59 #60, 2011

¹¹⁹ Interview #62 #63, 2011

should be managed by the Roma themselves. The Plenipotentiary Office was given a leading role in securing the presence of Roma in SF programming, while MC provided “extra spaces” for Roma-led organizations. The endorsement of descriptive representation aimed to curtail “ethno-business” dynamics whereby experts (mostly non-Roma) pushed out Roma-run initiatives and dwarfed the formation of grassroots social capital. The bureaucratic or expert-driven approach was considered by many advocates to be diminishing the policy input of genuine local expertise, resulting in an array of projects which were neither effective nor legitimate. As attested by a Roma-led NGO:

*The Roma are treated as a target group, but nobody asks us about what it is that we need or that we want. We are bombarded with initiatives which at times appear simply absurd: computer classes for illiterate people or refurbishing segregated classrooms. This form of help is simply not effective, promoting passive attitudes. If the Roma are given a chance to organize and build necessary organizational capacities, we can then contribute as managers and consultants, not solely recipients.*¹²⁰

However, in practice, the envisioned benefits of descriptive representation have failed to strengthen the “true” voice of excluded citizens in SF programming. One encountered problem was related to the questionable legitimacy of Roma participants who claimed to represent local communities without a proof of their support. As one community leader explained:

*For the authorities anybody who claims to be a Roma is automatically considered a legitimate leader, nobody bothers to check who they represent and what they do in real life (...) those with money can travel to Bratislava and make claims for people they don't even know, and they get money because the government can then say that Roma are being helped.*¹²¹

Many commentators argued that Slovak recruitment of the Roma was strictly superficial, undertaken to appease international stakeholders¹²². At the same time SF authorities maintained that it was not their responsibility to ensure or verify legitimacy of Roma leaders. As expressed by a senior public servant:

¹²⁰ Interview #72, 2011

¹²¹ Interview #73, 2011

¹²² Interview #71, 2011

*We open the door for all those who want to participate, this is what democracy is, if the Roma leaders are considered to be illegitimate, it is up to the communities to delegate somebody else. People who want to get heard need to get organized and set their priorities first, we are not able to interact with groups who simply expect to have a voice in public matters without contributing their own resources.*¹²³

This statement, shared by many interviewed MA, showed that participation was being seen as the responsibility of the interested group or locality, legitimizing the contention that the Roma need to take care of their own matters. It could be argued that such an expression of partnership actually diminished the motivation to form coalitions between Roma and non-Roma stakeholders. Interviews with various MC members confirmed that in fact the majority of participating organizations representing Roma issues were not part of any larger networks or policy coalitions, and often did not hold a common stance on policy action or strategy¹²⁴. It appeared that mainstream NGOs were not prepared (or willing) to incorporate Roma issues inside their agendas. A frequent reason provided by the NGOs was that Roma-led organizations were keen to address particular issues affecting their communities and were not interested in working on wider strategic objectives¹²⁵. At the same time Roma participants claimed that their issues were not undertaken by mainstream organizations, or local authorities who generally avoided addressing issues affecting the Roma in their jurisdictions¹²⁶. Such dynamics were often a result of the widely accepted notion (by both Roma and non-Roma stakeholders) that patterns of Roma social exclusion differ substantially from the general population and thus should be addressed by Roma themselves. Nevertheless, precisely such considerations legitimized the off-loading of governance responsibilities onto the communities and their representatives. It could also be argued that such strategies were adopted to justify the state's inaction and reluctance to recognize socio-economic inclusion as a right.

¹²³ Interview #51, 2011

¹²⁴ According to the OSF Bratislava in 2009 there were more than 260 registered NGO identified as Roma-led. Only few of them provided sustainable services in the communities (housing, employment schemes, health centers etc.) The intercultural approach continues to be absent in many areas and there are very few "mixed" local NGOs that worked with the Roma. Although the situation has been slowly changing in the first funding period there was almost no collaboration between Roma and non-Roma NGOs. In fact there was very little networking among NGOs dealing with Roma issues in general. Interview #69, 2011

¹²⁵ 2nd Annual Round Table Debate EU Politics Budapest 2012

¹²⁶ Interview #70, 2011

4.2.3 Contrasting considerations

In sum, while the Spanish authorities considered partnership as a technical tool, in Slovakia more emphasis was placed on its potential to develop participatory system of governance. These different considerations have reinforced idiosyncratic recruitment processes. Hence, partnership in the Spanish context was limited to a relatively small number of organizations, prepared and willing to champion the state's objectives. The reluctance to endorse descriptive representation in fact allowed for greater inter-cultural cooperation, yet without any emphasis placed on the empowerment of disenfranchised interests. In Slovakia participation opportunities were wide open to all interested partners, with strong weight placed on the recruitment of minority representatives. While this focus prompted the surge of activism it also contributed to the fragmentation of interests and delegation of Roma issues to ethnically based organizations.

The next section analyzes whether these recruitment models have translated into influence over SF programming or effectively informed implementation processes. It examines the way partnership was institutionalized, focusing on the kind of support and decision-making discretion that was allocated to the new actors.

4.3 Institutionalization of partnership

It was already pointed out that an opening of partnership opportunities to new actors does not necessarily lead to more informed policies or influence over their implementation. Governance theorists assert that for partnership to truly influence (or re-shape) public interventions, the authorities need to take-up an enabling role, providing capacity-building assistance and granting power-authority over decision-making (Fung 2004). This section investigates whether such dynamics were indeed realized in the Spanish and Slovak SF programming, and if so how they contributed to the SF outputs.

4.3.1 Spain – support and formation of co-productive arrangements

An important aspect of Spanish partnership design was that substantial technical support was provided for the enhancement of inter-agency collaboration. The OP TA already in the 2000-

2006 funding period made “support for strengthening administrative and cognitive capacities of SF partners” its main objective. In addition it earmarked funds for research activities (i.e. situational studies, household surveys and impact evaluations) as well as communication and information exchange channels (i.e. the creation of networks, thematic groups, forums and seminars). Such assistance was to improve the quality and effectiveness of the SF operational system (coordination, allocation, evaluation, management and monitoring) and promote lesson-learning and best-practice exchange. Technical assistance was provided for the MA, the paying authorities, and supervisory bodies. Although local authorities and civil society organizations were not envisioned as direct beneficiaries, they were eligible for research grants and subsidies for training and communication (i.e. networks, forums, awareness rising, etc.). Between 2007 and 2011 OP TA spent close to € 64 million (in Convergence regions) on such capacity-building interventions. Additionally, technical assistance constituted an objective in all the OPs, earmarking funds for planning, implementation, evaluation and internal audits.

An important source of public support directed at third-sector organizations came in the shape of programs financed by general taxation (0.5% of income tax payments explicitly targeted by taxpayers in their annual income tax statements) global grants, and public subsidies. In the last decade the central and regional authorities earmarked 5% of public budgets for providing material infrastructure and human resources assistance to selected NGOs (mainly through training initiatives, information exchange and consultancy services). Reports on the functioning of the NGOs, demonstrated that state support was their main source of funding¹²⁷, a dynamic often criticised for explicit cooption and infiltration of civil society by political interests. Verge (2012) argues that state assistance succeeded in “shaping” the civil society organizations’ goals and objectives, creating a formalized professional non-profit sector for delivery of service provision. The ESF MA confirmed this observation stating that technical assistance was predominately granted to service-delivery organizations, “*to enhance their presence in the sector of social policies, which laid in the jurisdiction of the AC*”¹²⁸. Although these organizations maintained some critical voice, their capacity to act as vital watchdogs was relatively weak. While it is difficult to reject the ongoing cooptation, it should be noted that collaboration between

¹²⁷ While in recent years the majority of benefiting NGOs managed to diversify their funding it is still explicit that the central government is the main supporter (see FSG 2012 Annual Report).

¹²⁸ Interview #2, 2011

public authorities and NGOs has been increasing, and the influence of the third-sector over SF was incrementally becoming more pronounced (Leonardi & Nanetti 2011).

The presence of NGOs in SF programming was consolidated in the 2000-2006 funding period, following an intense negotiation process, after which NGOs were designated as IB for two multi-regional OPs, FAD and OP TA. While commentators maintained that this decision was made to pacify ACs' fears that multi-regional OPs will re-centralize social policy and stall or even reverse decentralization processes (Arriba & Moreno 2005) the unprecedented allocation of control was also a result of unified efforts undertaken by five large NGOs, which negotiated the terms of involvement using "one voice". The placement of a large share of control over the OPs into the hands of NGO strengthened the influence of civil society over SF programming.

The NGOs acting as IBs for OP FAD included Foundation ONCE, Luis Vives, Caritas, Red Cross and FSG. For OP TA 2007-2013 this position was granted to FSG. The IBs became responsible for overseeing the design of the OP priorities, formulating selection criteria, implementing and evaluating individual projects. Their participation in project implementation was secured by granting a portion of the ESF budget, which they could allocate (in line with OP objectives) for in-house run projects, or projects co-financed by the AC, municipalities and other civil society organizations. Although the NGOs did not receive a veto power over final decisions about the design of OPs, the whole process relied on deliberation and consensual decision-making. Interviewees commonly agreed that the MA managers were quite receptive to proposed ideas¹²⁹. They also confirmed that the NGOs had the capacity to participate in these deliberations on equal footing with public authorities, largely as a result of state subsidies. As expressed by a member of FSG:

*Of course it was difficult to convince public authorities and push our agenda, but we were all well prepared. We had procedural knowledge and access to information and we invested a lot in preparation and consultations with professionals. But overall the authorities were not explicitly trying to stall our efforts, and they were actually quite willing to hear us out.*¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Interview #22, 2012 #28 #29, 2011

¹³⁰ Interview #23, 2011

The substantial decision-making authority over the strategic phase of SF programming was also granted to the MC. The selective MC membership was compensated with the establishment of a forum where interested organizations and citizens could express their concerns and gain access to strategic documents, minutes from the meetings and assessment of the debates. The meetings of the MC were organized around specific agendas with a clearly delineated thematic focus, and points needed for discussion. Information packages were provided to all participants who could then prepare their stances in advance. While such “guided” itinerary allowed for constructive debates and facilitated consensus it was also criticized for hindering discussions about intrinsic local matters and forcing participants to discuss themes carefully preselected by the authorities. As one of the participants stated:

We were expected to comment and deliberate on issues which predominately mattered to the authorities, it was incredibly difficult to discuss local matters, especially those that did not reflect the main objectives (...) maybe such narrow focus helped us to engage in fruitful discussions and allowed for the formulation of compromise, but it prevented us from talking about new ideas (...) it appeared that the only problem we really talked about was unemployment, other issues were simply bypassed.¹³¹

Despite these criticisms, the interviewed MC members assessed the operation of MCs in the period 2007-2013, as generally positive, pointing out only minor procedural quandaries.

The Spanish SF partnership mode, as a whole appeared more inclusive in the strategic stage of partnership – providing invited members with input opportunities. The implementation stage was largely controlled by public administration from the regional tiers that acted as strategic leaders and the main coordinators and evaluators of SF projects. Moreover, the MA and IBs of OPs ran in-house projects with direct management control over their design and implementation outputs. This meant that bureaucratic bodies had a direct interest in the way projects were implemented on the ground, which arguably made them more accountable to the SF beneficiaries.

It could be said that Spanish partnership design resembled a co-productive model based on strong links between public and third-sector organizations. The co-productive arrangements operated

¹³¹ Interview #20, 2011

through stable networks of communication and joint working, secured by legal provisions. They were characterized by a limited number of participants who were selected based on expertise, professional affiliation and experience in service delivery. Their input was secured by the capacity-building assistance and influence over decision-making processes. By getting involved in the early stages of project selection (i.e. advising MA on eligibility and selection criteria), active partners were able to assess the take-up capacity and needs of the target recipients, thus contributing to more accurate and legitimate allocation of SF. Finally, acting in co-productive arrangements has allowed NGOs to act as “linchpins” between the state and wider organizational networks and communities.

Nevertheless, these co-productive arrangements strongly resembled corporatist forms of governance, privileging some interests over others. As such, the partnership logic of the Spanish state did not generate political activism and stopped short of accelerating community empowerment. It could be said that the Spanish approach has traded the political empowerment of local actors for the efficient delivery of services, as such muzzling the critical voice of Spanish civil society. Interviewed Roma activists warned that such an approach can in fact reinforce power asymmetries and diminish mobilization efforts among the communities:

*Sure SF are delivered faster if only a few actors decide their fate, but a system that treats citizens as passive beneficiaries of bureaucratic endeavours, even if these appeared quite effective, does not contribute to building local capacities, does not really make people feel like full owners of these provisions, it does not even allow one to criticize public actions (...) this in a longer run dramatically reduces political awareness and activism.*¹³²

Despite these criticisms, Spanish partnership design has not only been given credit for strengthening the allocation of SF to social exclusion goals but also for creating adequate and largely legitimate interventions. Even the critics, tended to agree that while SF do not contribute to empowerment “they do in fact provide some vital assistance to impoverished groups” which in a longer term might strengthen capacity to organize locally¹³³.

¹³² Interview #41, 2011

¹³³ Interview #38, 2011

4.3.2 Slovakia – offloading and reliance on consultations

Unlike in Spain, partnership design adopted by Slovak SF authorities was characterized by the residual and unsystematic provision of capacity-building assistance. While the central authorities complied with cohesion regulations and transposed partnership into national legislation, there was an intrinsic understanding that legislative provisions alone made participatory opportunities accessible to all interested organizations¹³⁴. Additional efforts to promote equal access were not considered a main priority. Nevertheless, the weak administrative capacity of public administration was indeed recognized, and for the 2004-2006 funding period the technical assistance objective was established in all OPs to strengthen the coordination and management of SF. However, the management of technical assistance was significantly complicated by the fact that financing was secured via several highly disconnected documents. Thus the envisioned assistance lacked a well-articulated strategic plan, concrete provisions and coordinative mechanisms. While the establishment of OP TA (2007-2013) aimed to elevate these shortcomings by streamlining procedures, strategic coordination remained weak. As explained by a public manager working for the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development (MA for OP TA):

*The USI principle (unify, simplify, increasing effectiveness) was not comprehensively implemented, we continued to struggle with a high rotation of staff and insufficient experience in spreading the information about the SF to the implementing bodies and the public. This caused serious delays and slowed down the absorption of available funding. The money was available but not well managed.*¹³⁵

The inefficient management of the OP TA strongly affected the managing capacities of the MAs. In the interviews, issues of under-staffing, procedural congestion and lack of communication channels were raised by all interviewed public managers. This in turn severely weakened the

¹³⁴ High Level Event on the Structural Funds contribution to Roma integration in Slovakia , Bratislava 2011

¹³⁵ Interview# 48, 2011

maintenance of communication between the MA and potential beneficiaries, and often undermined the legitimacy of the entire SF programming managements system¹³⁶.

Technical support for localities and civil society organizations appeared even more scattered and unsystematic. While administrative assistance was delivered to some local authorities (usually taking the shape of training and basic IT infrastructure), it was not orchestrated in a strategic manner, thus largely failing to promote informed approaches to SF. Civil society organizations were often totally bypassed by public support initiatives, prompting them to seek funds from international donors. According to commentators the support offered to civil society was inconsistent and not transparent, with little attention to fostering managerial capacities:

*It is hard to say what the government has been trying to do in the last decade. While funding was in fact provided to the mushrooming Roma civil society organizations, the criteria for this allocation remained vague. Every ministry, every agency held some different idea of the role of the civil sector, and unfortunately clientelism and tokenism prevailed.*¹³⁷

This ad-hoc support failed to strengthen the partnership capacities of both public and third-sector stakeholders, however, even more detrimental was the consistent reluctance of central authorities to provide new partners with influence over the strategic stage of SF programming. For example, while the Plenipotentiary Office served as a link between public authorities and local communities, it lacked the resources, expertise and actual influence to fulfil its obligations. As noted by the Plenipotentiary himself:

*At best we could oversee what was being done, give some ideas hoping that somebody would listen, but most of the time final decisions were taken without our presence - sometimes we were actually the last to know. Our budget could only support small-scale activities, offer some small scholarships or consultancy services, but this was not enough to mobilize the fragmented and impoverished Roma community.*¹³⁸

¹³⁶ During the High Level Event in Bratislava (2011), the MA faced severe criticisms from local and civil society representatives for failing to provide sufficient information regarding administrative procedures, and delaying project calls, selection processes and the transfer of funds.

¹³⁷ Interview #69, 2011

¹³⁸ Interview#52, 2011

It could be argued that this dynamic was reflective of the general politicization of the Slovak bureaucracy and inefficient budgetary management (see Meyer-Sahling & Veen 2012). However, what also contributed to the weak authority of the Plenipotentiary Office was the widely shared notion (among the SF bureaucrats) that as a Roma agency, working exclusively for the benefits of Roma communities, it did not need extensive power over the general workings of the SF¹³⁹. In the interviews the SF managers maintained that what was offered to the Office was “enough” to fulfil its coordinative obligations.

The Office’s alleged failure to play a more substantive role was often attributed to an array of professional shortcomings and bureaucratic imbroglios inside the Office. This led many commentators (including the international advocacy groups) to contend that the Plenipotentiary Office had become a strictly symbolic agency. The operation of the Office was also criticized by the local Roma representatives for its alleged political opportunism and weak presence in the marginalized communities¹⁴⁰. While some of these criticisms might have been too strong, it cannot be ignored that Roma communities remained largely disconnected from the SF bureaucracy, with no strong mediating organizations working for their interests. This disconnection was further reinforced by the limited advocacy for Roma issues undertaken by mainstream NGOs and local authorities¹⁴¹. While the SDF as IB for OP E&SI provided some opportunities to create partnership with localities, these were constrained by excessive bureaucratization and limited managerial flexibility granted to this agency¹⁴².

In turn the involvement of the MC was characterized by a weak discretion over the strategic stage of SF programming. Although they enjoyed some leverage over the design of SF programming, members claimed that major decisions were taken outside of the meetings. Moreover numerous small NGOs pointed out how difficult, if not impossible, it was to partake in the discussions and navigate the complex technical documentation and requirements¹⁴³. The situation was aggravated by excessive delays in the provision of documents needed to prepare for meetings and lack of contact points where NGOs could gain information and assistance.

¹³⁹ This conviction was expressed by all interviewed MA managers

¹⁴⁰ Interview #70 #72 #73, 2011

¹⁴¹ Interview #45, 2011

¹⁴² Interview #50, 2011

¹⁴³ High Level Event on the Structural Funds contribution to Roma integration in Slovakia, Bratislava 2011

While the attitudes among the MA managers towards working with MC and NGOs improved in the second programming period, the partnership interactions continued to be weak, allowing only for information exchanges among the participants and with no opportunities granted for deliberation. Reliance on strict consultations became a main *modus operandi*, as explained by NGO manager:

*The MAs would invite opinions from the third sector however it was strictly a one way process. We delivered our insights usually in a written format and the authorities either used it or discarded it, of course we were never informed about these decisions. For example during the formulation of the OP E&SI we meet on numerous occasions, providing a list of recommendations. The MA seemed very accepting, yet in the final version the OP did not reflect any of our recommendations.*¹⁴⁴

While the partnership design has not provided participants with substantial influence during the strategic phase of SF programming, more discretion was granted to them during implementation. The institutionalization of demand driven project-calls shifted the sphere of influence from MA onto the winning contenders. The role of MA in the delivery stage was limited to procedural activities (selection, dispersion of money, signing contracts) with no designated role during the actual implementation. This meant that MA were often more concerned with a quick allocation of funding, than with the actual workings of individual programmes. Whether selected projects actually contributed to the general goals of inclusion was often sidelined as it was assumed that the “general selection process on its own was effective in picking up the right candidates”¹⁴⁵. However given that the selection criteria were often not informed by local knowledge and the less resourced agents were unable to compete on equal footing with well-organized interests, the delivered initiatives were prone to bypass the most needed communities. The study conducted by the UNDP (2012) confirms that this trend was indeed characteristic of Slovak SF allocations.

Overall it appears that the Slovak pluralist approach to partnership has relied on strict consultations with miscellaneous actors, with no established links between public and third-sector organizations (or with local authorities). While commitments to the wider involvement of partners in the SF programming were expressed by the SF bureaucracy, no mechanisms were

¹⁴⁴ Interview #69, 2011

¹⁴⁵ Interview #51, 2011

provided to realize them. A lack of resources provided to external stakeholders prevented the most marginalized ones from accessing SF procedures and influencing the design of SF objectives. The participation of Roma communities was further weakened by accountability problems stemming largely from the failure to strengthen Roma representatives with needed professional assistance. The reliance on consultations severely diluted community input, leaving decision-making over SF programming in the hands of central authorities.

At the same time, a practice of transferring responsibilities over SF delivery to local actors, who were often not prepared to do so only, disenfranchised the most marginalized communities, unable to implement comprehensive inclusion projects. Thus, while the partnership design may have given local and third sector actors an entitlement to participate, it has not provided concrete instruments which would allow them to access and use their “rights” effectively. Numerous Roma activists commented that while the priorities and political commitments to include Roma voices looked nice on paper, they were rarely implemented, while participation channels catered to the selected few¹⁴⁶.

4.3.3 Contrasting institutionalization

The above analysis showed that the execution of Spanish SF programming relied on exclusive partnership arrangements institutionalized into co-productive models. Although, such an approach allowed for more efficient coordination and decision-making, it by and large undermined the political empowerment of minority groups such as the Roma. In turn Slovak SF programming appeared to endorse pluralist partnership, which was not effectively institutionalized. As such it not only reinforced power asymmetries but upset the potential to improve the management of SF.

The section below demonstrates in detail how each of these approaches consolidated diverging SF outputs in the area of social exclusion.

¹⁴⁶ High Level Event on the Structural Funds contribution to Roma integration in Slovakia, Košice 2011

4.4 Partnership and SF outputs in Spain

Overall the Spain partnership design has strengthened the overall management of SF – both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. The recruitment of a limited number of actors who often shared organizational cultures and objectives allowed for constructive dialogue not perturbed by problems related to the mediation of acutely conflicting interests. This by and large sped up the deliberation processes, avoiding unnecessary delays or decisional impasse. Moreover, these approaches prevented the fragmentation and duplication of the SF interventions albeit often at the expense of more experimental methodologies and empowerment of grassroots actors. Rather surprisingly, exclusive partnership has not diverted SF from vulnerable groups and communities. Existing data demonstrates that SF assistance for marginalized groups has been growing, a pattern which could be attributed to the systematic investment in the capacity-building of organizations with an extensive record of working in the localities. As explained by MA manager:

*Marginalized groups often lack a strong voice and representatives championing their interests and the sad truth is that the state is not always willing to cater to their weak demands, thus a ‘buffer’ organization can at once inform policy-makers about the actual needs of these groups and put greater pressure on the authorities to address them (...) while community activism should be the ultimate goal of any underrepresented group, in the bureaucratic system such as the SF it is more pragmatic to rely on support of well resourced and well connected organizations.*¹⁴⁷

The role of FSG in the SF programming appears to confirm this view. The foundation managed to develop and implement successful SF social inclusion projects for the most marginalized groups, in close collaboration with the authorities. While not free of criticisms, the evaluations assessed these interventions as effective and legitimate (Villarreal 2013). However, an even greater achievement of the FSG (working in collaboration with mainstream NGOs) was its ability to anchor Roma issues to the SF agenda, which strengthened the sustainability of undertaken efforts:

¹⁴⁷ Interview #1, 2011

Perhaps Roma issues are not the main priority of the state, but the fact that civil society stands behind the Roma population means that the issues stay on the political agenda and do not disappear under the weight of other interests. Only through solidarity and collaboration can we make sure that the authorities pay attention. Working in isolation is simply not effective or even counterproductive.¹⁴⁸

Indeed even with the progressing economic crisis and introduction of austerity measures, Roma issues have not been fully abandoned, and the FSG continued to receive government subsidies for its ongoing operations (FSG Annual Report 2012). The comprehensive allocations of decision-making authority to members of partnership has in turn allowed for converting ideas and recommendations into SF objectives and measures. This greatly enhanced legitimacy and effectiveness of SF outputs.

What has also secured successful SF outputs was the involvement of MA and IB in the actual implementation of SF projects. The IB were endowed with discretion and managerial flexibility which allowed them to establish communication with local communities and facilitate deliberation processes. The fact that IB were part of wide organizational and community networks, proved them accountable to the local interests. At the same time they possessed needed managerial capacities and co-financing ability to reinforce local efforts. As explained by a project manager from the Foundation Once:

When SF are allocated via competition schemes, the MA are only responsible for the allocation of funding and are not involved in the implementation of winning projects. In the case of the OP FAD, all parties [MA, IB, tenders] were involved in designing, planning, implementing and evaluating undertaken initiatives. This meant that all parties held similar priorities and worked for a common goal, and they could not easily pawn off responsibility onto somebody else. This is really how partnership should work.¹⁴⁹

Finally, while SF were not channelled directly to community activism, it could be argued that sustainable SF efforts (including research and awareness-raising projects) indirectly strengthen the capacity of the Roma to articulate their interests. While concrete data is not available, interviews with Roma associations from Andalusia confirmed that assistance in the form of SF

¹⁴⁸ Interview #22, 2012

¹⁴⁹ Interview #30, 2011

contributed to a greater awareness about different opportunities for organizing. Perhaps more importantly it reinforced greater attention to Roma issues at the strategic level, thus providing an opportunity for greater SF allocations.

4.5 Partnership design and SF outputs in Slovakia

In the context of Slovak SF programming, the overall functioning of partnership has been marked by severe strategic and managerial limitations. The well intended opening-up of participatory channels to a wide range of stakeholders paid little attention to the actual merit of the incoming interests. This in the longer run has substantially dwarfed constructive debates and the formation of compromise among often conflicting interests. Some MC members stated that “the discussions were fragmented, not free of personal insults and unjustifiable grievances”¹⁵⁰. The MA’s lack of mediating capacity only reinforced this fragmentation, hindering effective planning and decision-making at the strategic level. In fact most of the assessments of SF programming point to managerial inefficiencies - excessive delays in the planning stage, cancellation of meetings and inadequate facilitation of workshops, which in the end had not produced any meaningful plan of action. As pointed by a MC member:

*While we fought to have more meetings and working sessions, the way these were conducted was, I am sorry to say, a simple waste of time. There was no clear agenda, people come unprepared, and most of the time we did not really agree on anything. Moreover, discussions were often hijacked by one or two speakers, while everybody else did not contribute at all.*¹⁵¹

Although it could be expected that greater participation will complicate deliberations, the fact that extended partnership has neither secured greater input from marginalized communities nor more substantive allocations of SF to MRC objectives is more surprising. The findings show that this failure is connected to the residual and unsystematic capacity-building assistance which left less resourceful actors fully outside the area of influence. Those who were “included”, such as the Plenipotentiary Office, lack the necessary decision-making authority to influence the design of SF and in fact were rarely considered “legitimate” representatives by the very people they

¹⁵⁰ Interview #58, 2011

¹⁵¹ Interview #60, 2011

claimed to represent. In effect the shaping of SF was left in the hands of bureaucrats who often had little knowledge of the on-the-ground situation and who also struggled with inadequate managerial and administrative capacities. As admitted by a senior public manager:

*We lack input from the communities. The truth is that besides the mapping of Roma communities we have very little information about the actual needs and dynamics inside these communities. At the same time we are really not able to engage in planning and assessment considering the overload of work and high rotation of our staff.*¹⁵²

Not surprisingly the proposed objectives and measures as well as the issued project-calls were often not aligned with the needs of the communities (UNDP 2012). Somewhat ironically the execution of these objectives was placed in the hands of local authorities and NGOs. This, rather than reinforcing legitimate outputs, led to opportunism and inadequate allocations¹⁵³. Moreover, given that the implementors had to come up with considerable co-financing¹⁵⁴ and operational capital, many opted out from participating, what in turn reduced SF absorption. As explained by NGO worker in Banská Bystrica:

*The burden of implementation rests on our shoulders. We are expected to navigate the excessive bureaucratic process of application, aggregate funding, do impact assessment and more. While the central authorities do little to help us out (...) for us it simply doesn't make sense to invest so much in the application process when we know we can't sustain the implemented initiatives.*¹⁵⁵

The negative influence of Slovak partnership design was most acutely visible during the planned implementation of Local Strategies. In 2008 the authorities issued a call to all localities with MRC inviting them to prepare Local Strategies. The initiative was championed by the Office of Plenipotentiary, Roma Institute, and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (in particular the SDF). The idea was to foster the development of local strategic action plans which could benefit from funding opportunities, earmarked for that specific purpose. The initiative was

¹⁵² Interview # 51, 2011

¹⁵³ It was a common practice to write project application to meet selection criteria, without accounting for its operational costs or long-term impacts. Interview #62, 2011

¹⁵⁴ Even the NGOs were by law expected to provide 15% of the co-financing, an amount that often exceeded the resource capacity of smaller grassroots organizations.

¹⁵⁵ Interview #68, 2011

envisioned as an “affirmative action” reflecting the Slovak assertion that Roma issues should be addressed through specific programmes and targeted projects. The call generated great interest especially given the fairly low criteria for acceptance and promised technical support¹⁵⁶. However, it quickly became evident that the Office had no capacity to coordinate the selection process and review a growing pile of local strategies (the Office at that time had only 10 full-time and 2 part-time employees). A lot of inquiries were thus left unanswered, communication channels were blocked and deadlines not respected¹⁵⁷. This situation not only generated frustration among the localities but also jeopardized the transfer of funds earmarked by the MA for the HP. The Plenipotentiary Office without any decision-making capacity or strong political allies was unable to compel the government to provide critically needed assistance or even to delay deadlines for the open-call. The bureaucratic overload was aggravated by little cooperation among the localities and weak collaboration between Roma-run NGOs and mainstream organizations. In the end most of the earmarked funds were redirected to other calls generating further frustration and resulting in mutual accusations and finger pointing.

4.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter has empirically demonstrated the influence of partnership design on SF outputs in the area of Roma exclusion. However, the Spanish partnership design which delivered more effective outputs substantially contradicts the main assumption held by Roma advocates and governance literature.

The success of SF programming appears to be driven by the consolidation of co-productive partnership arrangements, whereby central and regional authorities recruit few experienced service delivery organizations, rather than community representatives. The provision of capacity-building assistance, while rather generous, was again confined to a small number of beneficiaries with proven records of serving the communities. Yet precisely this attention to organizations’ expertise and experience working in the area of social exclusion (rather than the ethnic background of their members) fostered an inflow of vital knowledge and consolidated a feeling

¹⁵⁶ Interview #50, 2011

¹⁵⁷ Interview #53, 2011

of solidarity among the Roma and non-Roma stakeholders. This resulted in better informed interventions and perseverance of Roma issues on political agenda. However, the success of Spanish co-productivity has been first and for most a result of ceding of authority to new participants and consolidating clear modes of interaction based on deliberation, trust and shared responsibility. It must be noted that Spanish partnership-design has not provided extensive opportunities for the political empowerment of the marginalized Roma community. In fact the political dimension of participation was fairly neglected and often purposely avoided. This shortcoming, did not appear to affect the legitimacy or effectiveness of SF, it also did not result in a re-direction of SF to other priorities. Moreover the reliance on substantive representation has strengthened Roma and non-Roma solidarity ties and allowed for meaningful exchange of expertise. In line with theoretical expectations, such dynamic can in long run induce community empowerment by providing it with necessary skills and resources. Overall the Spanish experience clearly negates the widely maintained view that lack of descriptive representation will result with re-direction of SF provisions from the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and communities.

In contrast the Slovak partnership design appears to confirm that the lack of substantive representation (reinforced by descriptive presence of representatives SF outputs are likely to be unsuccessful. The Slovak all-inclusive approach to partnership has not generated expected results and in fact led to inefficiencies, as there were no built-in mechanisms to mediate or organize the miscellaneous voices. However it was the systematic neglect to engage expert organizations with strong ties to the communities and experience in delivering social inclusion services that prevented tapping into the local knowledge. This in turn negatively affected the allocation and legitimacy of SF outputs.

The commitment to harbour descriptive representation was done superficially, with neither resources nor decision-making capacities delivered to the Roma community representatives. It appears that working with ethnic-based organizations was promoted to avoid international criticisms, rather than to reinforce meaningful collaboration or empowerment of the Roma voice. Moreover SF authorities adopted a strategy of off-loading the responsibility over SF delivery onto organizations and leaders with limited managerial capacity. The consequence of such

practice was not only limited absorption but an actual re-direction of funding to other priorities (or applicants with more resources). The case of Slovak partnership design clearly demonstrates that the promotion of wide partnership, if not well institutionalized, largely retards the functioning of SF. More importantly it gives an impression that participatory opportunities are open to all who wish to contribute, when in fact the power asymmetry remains unchanged.

One important aspect that comes out from this analysis is that the empowerment of Roma communities was undertaken neither in Spain nor in Slovakia. This raises serious doubts about the EU's aptitude to pressure member states to promote the empowerment of communities and excluded groups. While it is unlikely that without empowerment Roma communities will be able to participate on equal footing with other stakeholders, the establishment of "buffer" organizations liaising between the state bureaucracy and the people appears to be a feasible strategy given the overtly bureaucratized system of SF allocations. It could be said that the partnership principle on its own (even with substantial capacity-building assistance from the authorities) is not design to fostering the empowerment of minorities and other vulnerable groups. Perhaps rather than relying on SF, both the domestic governing bodies and minority rights activists should aim to first exploit the available legal instruments for empowerment or existing domestic channels, treating SF as a potential additional succour and not as an auxiliary empowering tool.

In fact, the additionality principle of cohesion policy regulations, explicitly prescribes that SF should be used as a complementary tool and not a replacement of public spending or domestic initiatives. Accordingly, it is expected by the EC that member states will use SF to support or adjust ongoing reforms with the aim of spawning policy convergence. Whether and how member states comply with this regulation may have a considerable effect on SF outputs.

The next chapter scrutinizes the way Spain and Slovakia enforce the added-value of SF in the field of social exclusion. It is expected that the creation of synergies between domestic policies and SF strategies, could at once strengthen (sustain) efforts undertaken by domestic agents (through the channelling of extra funds) and induce innovative thinking about exclusion. In cases where social inclusion policies are weak, SF may additionally serve as a start-up engine,

supporting domestic institutions in remodelling and modernizing their approaches. The analysis will focus on administrative tools used by governing elites to coordinate SF programming with domestic reforms and action plans that fully exploit its added value.

Chapter 5 – Programmatic synergies

The last two chapters have demonstrated that diverging SF outputs in Spain and Slovakia were largely driven by the content of strategic SF documents and consolidated partnership designs. This chapter explores another variable identified in the theoretical section – the programmatic synergy. Examining the potential influence of synergies (coordination of SF programming with domestic policies) on SF outputs is important given ongoing public sector reforms, which have moved governing away from the centre of the conventional politically driven public sector. In this process, the rhetoric and reality of governing were transformed and many conventional (hierarchical) styles of governing were abandoned in favour of complex systems of networks and horizontal interdependent interactions. EU cohesion policy constitutes a good example of this trend, as decision-making and the delivery of programmes transcend organizational boundaries. Hence I assume that SF outputs are contingent on the ability of the “centre” to orchestrate (or guide) this highly dispersed system of policy-making and secure joined-up workings of the robust administrative apparatus. This chapter empirically examines the effect of coordination and programmatic synergies on SF outputs.

The analysis builds on metagovernance scholarship, which assesses the functional value of working across organizational boundaries over the customary working in silos (Clarke & Stewart 1997; Peters 2010). The concept that needs particular scrutiny is “joining-up government”, understood as connections and interchange between programmes or services delivered by different public agencies. In the context of cohesion policy, joining-up efforts are reinforced by the additionality principle, which stipulates that European funding is to supplement or add to domestic development reforms. Given that the institutional framework created for managing SF operates according to its own organizational culture that tends to follow procedures and objectives not necessarily espoused by public departments responsible for domestic services, coordination is essential to ensure that linkages and commonalities can be achieved.

This chapter analyses the way domestic elites understand and coordinate the added value of SF programming with domestic initiatives. I argue that without joining-up and striving for synergies (connecting SF to domestic programmes) there is a possibility that the implementation of SF will

take place in isolation, without any linkages to domestic services or programmes. This may lead to duplication, fragmentation and/or incongruity of delivered SF interventions (thus dwarfing efficiency). It may also muddle accountability for allocated funds and their contribution to domestic inclusion strategies. Finally it may hinder the flow of knowledge and expertise across organizational boundaries and protocols, dwarfing creation of comprehensive and legitimate programmes.

The consolidation of such a “double tier” system may be especially detrimental for Roma inclusion initiatives, as governing elites may be inclined to reduce public budget allocations for integration initiatives, arguing that they are already supported by SF initiatives. Perhaps more importantly such segmentation may weaken the knowledge about SF integration procedures and initiatives among the administrative cadre. Working in isolation may thus negatively affect absorption and allocation of funds as well as sustainability of implemented SF projects.

The analysis of programmatic synergies also pays attention to the potential risks complementarity may generate. While joining-up government is extolled for its ability to deliver comprehensive services and reinforce mutual accountability for provided public services, it also can dwarf potential for policy innovation. The assumption that inter-departmental working and facilitates mutual learning (Kemp & Weehuizen 2005) glosses over bureaucratic path-dependencies and administration’s reluctance to endorse “new ways of doing thing” (Pierson 2004). Thus this chapter also brings attention to bureaucratic routines, a propensity to favour incremental development over systemic reforms, and problematic related to administrative modernization.

The findings largely confirm that synergizing SF programming with domestic development reforms drives effective SF outputs. However, they also bring about rather pessimistic conclusions regarding the potency of SF to foster innovative approaches to social inclusion. What emerges from the empirical analysis is that programmatic synergies were more prone to reinforce existing practices than to promote innovative solutions and endorse policy experimentation. This tended to buttress “traditional” approaches not always able to keep-up with changing socio-economic landscape. Moreover, findings show that SF outputs were more

likely to be effective in places where domestic social exclusion strategies and policies were already in place. When such domestic strategies were missing or were relatively unfledged the potency of SF to foster institutional development and modernization appeared surprisingly weak. This raises important questions about the ability of cohesion policy to induce modernization and progressive thinking about social policies.

The chapter is structured as followed. The first section presents the way cohesion policy has been constructed to safeguard the use of SF in a complementary manner. This is followed by a short theoretical exploration of the normative underpinning of joined-up government. The empirical section investigates Spanish and Slovak administrative coordination efforts. It first analyzes political commitments to additionality and then scrutinizes the manner in which coordination and joining-up were realized and how they influenced SF outputs. The conclusions summarize the main findings and implications.

5.1 Cohesion policy – complimentary and added value

The analytical importance given to the creation of synergies stems from European cohesion policy regulations and prescriptions calling for the complementary usage of SF. The grand vision of cohesion policy – to even out disparities in regional development across Europe – has been rooted in a conviction that SF should add value to domestic practices, by channelling resources to improve administrative capacities and trigger modernization processes within the territorial administration of all member states. Quintessentially, this meant that member states were expected to synchronize cohesion objectives with national action plans, in an effort to deepen and widen policy convergence. The added value of SF has been safeguarded by additionality regulation which explicitly states that “EU Structural Funds may not replace the national or equivalent expenditure by a member state” (Art.15, No. 1083/2006). The objective of additionality regulation is the creation of a co-financing system whereby SF are channelled to initiatives partially funded by national, regional, or local authorities (within the convergence objective that co-financing ceilings for public expenditure amount to 75% for the ERDF and the ESF). Although the member states were encouraged to channel acquired funds towards innovative or novel approaches, there has been an overt expectation that the introduced SF

initiatives will be connected to ongoing public schemes, and SF will have a leverage effect on public and private sources of funding as well as domestic development strategies (Bachtler & Mendez 2007). In the case of Roma integration plans, the EC explicitly stated that SF should be used to strengthen and advance domestic integration plans (EC 2008, 2011).

The quest for complementarity however, was not limited to the amalgamation of financial resources. The EU has also expected that national interests, values and procedures would subscribe to the overarching cohesion objectives and its *modus operandi*. How such complementarity should be best achieved was not clearly specified, allegedly to give member states considerable leeway in designing appropriate coordination measures. It could be argued that the EU assumed that “adjustments” of domestic governance will happen automatically as member states will restrain their domestic interests in order to benefit from generous EU financial transfers.

This assumption however, was enfeebled by Europeanization and cohesion policy scholars who demonstrated that the level of compliance with EU regulations tends to be fairly inconsistent (Falkner et al, 2008; Börzel et al, 2007). It became clear that some member states were not in fact using SF in a prescribed additional manner. Scholars tended to ascribe this inconsistency to the strength of domestic interests and accepted norms (Sedelmeier 2008). However, it could also be argued that it stems from a rather incongruous expectation of the EC that the SF should on the one hand support existing approaches and on the other re-shape them to fit and succour supranational goals. Such duality is rather difficult to reconcile, especially when the use of SF might challenge the status quo or when SF objectives do not have a counterpart inside the national strategies (thus new approaches and administrations need to be created) (Méndez et al, 2007) The lack of clear guidelines from the EC only strengthens this contradictory pull. Not surprisingly research shows that member states tended to adopt a hybrid strategy – in some policy areas SF constitute an added value to existing approaches while in others SF are channelled towards new-fangled programmes (Toshkov 2012). The question that arises is what approach is actually more conducive to successful SF outputs. Theoretical debates concerning the perceived benefits and shortcomings of synergies can help to generate some normative assumptions.

5.2 Synergies as joined-up government

Metagovernance scholars have argued that joined-up government first and foremost aims to offset working in silos (where public departments work towards achieving their own specific objectives which they directly control), considered detrimental to the realization of common policy goals (see Clarke & Stewart 1997). The assumption held by metagovernance literature is that comprehensive public programmes cannot be delivered through the separate activities of existing organizations but neither can they be delivered through the creation of a new “super agency” (Ling 2002:620). As such there is a need to align incentives, structures and cultures of various bureaucratic units in order to comprehensively address critical tasks that cross organizational boundaries. The boundaries could be either inter-departmental, inter-tier or sectorial (corporate, public, community), but what is essential is that they are erected because of distinctive procedures, aims, controls and values held by each organization or cooperative arrangements. For example, in the case of cohesion policy, SF programming is managed by fairly autonomous agencies (the MA and IB) which often espouse idiosyncratic controls, procedures, and aims that tend to differ from those held by departments dealing exclusively with domestic policies. Such complex bureaucratic amalgamation requires some joined-up action to diminish the protective and exclusive tenacity of organizational boundaries without actually removing the boundaries themselves¹⁵⁸.

Scholars generally agree that the consolidation of joined-up government necessitates new structures and processes to oversee and account for the delivery of outputs (Sorenson 2006). There is also a need to change the culture and mindsets of participants to engage in collaborative working and put common goals first rather than working through their own organisational perspective. Such deep-cutting changes might require substantial resources and time which might discourage coordinative undertakings. However, the benefits of joining-up appear to outstrip the potential disadvantages. Below theoretical assumptions about the benefits and shortcomings associated with joining-up are discussed.

¹⁵⁸ It is important to highlight the difference between partnership and the alignment of goals through coordinating mechanisms. As partnership seeks to bring different actors together to deliver a particular service or strategy, the alignment of goals seeks to direct diverse action and services (run and delivered through different configurations) in such a way as to avoid overlaps and promote multifaceted services.

5.2.1 Simplifying service delivery

Perhaps the most regularly developed argument in favour of joined-up efforts is that it can make access to services seamless – rather than fragmented – for the individual and society, which in turn reduces the need for citizens to understand the way in which government is structured in order to gain access to the services they need (Peters 2010). This is critical since citizens (especially those affected by exclusion) have difficulties dealing with a range of government agencies, often located at different tiers of government, to make progress on a particular course of action. It has been demonstrated that navigating a bureaucratic “labyrinth” can discourage those seeking public assistance thus breeding apathy, inaction or blunt non-compliance with official rules and regulations (Weaver 2009). Joined-up government is seen as a provider of “common responses” that facilitate better access to public services and interventions. In the context of SF programming and social exclusion, such common responses based on established links between SF inclusion objectives and public inclusion services (i.e. SF training initiatives designed to fit the requirements of public employment offices) can facilitate delivery of comprehensive assistance rather than unilateral and short-lived projects. This strategy is crucial given the multi-dimensional aspect of social exclusion in essence requires multifaceted approaches provided by different agencies working together (Ringold et al, 2005).

Joining-up can also facilitate simplification of procedures, an important aspect to consider in the excessively bureaucratized SF allocation and absorption procedures. Administrative streamlining can strengthen the absorption capacities of organizations contending for SF (in particular local authorities or NGOs) by aligning existing procedures (i.e. federal transfers, public grants) with those guiding SF programming¹⁵⁹. It may ease the difficulties in navigating the SF procedures and requirement. Moreover, it may allow the organizations contending for SF to exploit their knowledge and experience accumulated through applying for public grants and subsidies. While, this might not be of much help to organizations or communities which historically have not been interacting with public authorities (as in the case of the Roma), the potential for simplifying the

¹⁵⁹ It has been stated in numerous evaluation reports that the greatest hindrance in accessing funding is overly complex procedures which follow their own logic without taking under consideration the domestic institutional setting (see EURoma 2014).

bureaucratization of funding application could at least in theory provide a more “user-friendly” environment, accessible to less organized interests.

5.2.2 Managerial efficiency

Another related argument, explores the positive influence that joined-up government has on safeguarding efficiency. It has been pointed out that when policies aimed at exclusion remain sectoral, their reciprocal influence and possible contradictions are often poorly evaluated (Mulgan 2005). Thus when tensions between different approaches arise, they often remain unresolved (or simply ignored). Joined-up government may in fact decrease the risk of such contradictions. It has been demonstrated that the coordination of organizational objectives, values and procedures spreads the knowledge about existing approaches to public problems (i.e. social exclusion) and their inherent interdependencies among all policy stakeholders and delivery agencies (Pollitt & Talbot 2004). As such the lead organizations and key participants are able to gain an end-to-end view of the program and its performance against expectations, and can respond more appropriately to performance issues.

Joined-up government can also strengthen incentives for the creation of joint funding applications and pooled budgets, and can link remuneration to joined-up targets. Such practices at once streamline budgetary procedures, cutting costs tied to management and allocations, and facilitate the amalgamation of funds. Of course the consolidation of such practice depends on the capacity and willingness of top authorities to mediate various interests and to dispense the necessary incentives (both negative and positive, i.e. conditionality, administrative resources) (Pollitt & Talbot 2004). In the case of cohesion policy, it can be expected that linking SF programming goals and interests with those of domestic departments will enhance the capacity to secure substantial co-financing by bringing in funds from various sources (allowing for aggregating funding that goes beyond the mandatory 15%). The amalgamation of funds in return can facilitate the creation of larger projects without running the risk of duplication or implementation of unsustainable projects. Finally it can facilitate the comprehensive evaluation and endorsement

of necessary adjustments, since all actors involve subscribe to common input and output indicators¹⁶⁰.

While joined-up government can promote a more efficient management of SF programming, it is not self-evident that sole efficiency gains will translate into greater allocation of SF towards Roma inclusion or more legitimate projects. Nevertheless, metagovernance theories point out that joining-up can in fact strengthen the accountability of all active agents, in particular when partnership and networking arrangements are already in place (Klijn 2010). This in turn could safeguard prioritization of Roma inclusion in SF programming.

5.2.3 Accountability

A key question put forward by the metagovernance literature is how one can have joint action, common standards and shared systems, on the one hand, and vertical accountability for individual agency performance on the other (Lægreid 2014). The challenge is to achieve a better balance between vertical accountability to central government, horizontal accountability to local government and to agencies in other related policy areas like cohesion policy (i.e. MA), and responsiveness downwards to users and clients. Peters (2010), as well as major top-down implementation scholars (Mazmanian & Sabatier 1989), contended that the clearly designated responsibility can strengthen accountability and reinforce the achievement of organisational objectives. Certainty about one's competencies and mutual responsibility can eliminate confusion about who is accountable for what.

Accountability problems may also be resolved through the introduction of common frameworks and appropriate reporting mechanisms for shared programs (Mulgan 2000). Well executed joined-up government, which aligns organizational goals as well as procedures, can thus improve accountability by ensuring that there is a clear understanding and appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of the relevant participants in the governance framework. In the context of cohesion policy, clearing up expectations and reinforcing credible reporting can promote the sharing of reliable information and data, but perhaps more importantly bring SF and domestic

¹⁶⁰ It has been argued that SF projects targeting the Roma tend to be evaluated in isolation, hindering the possibility of seeing their actual impact on domestic policies (UNDP 2012).

agencies' accountability into alignment. Such linkages can reinforce collective responsibility for the performance and outputs of individual SF projects.

5.2.4 Innovation

Finally, it is argued that joined-up government facilitates testing of new and innovative approaches to policy problems (Mulgan 2005, 2007; Lekhi 2007). A quest for policy or systemic innovation has been widely endorsed by various states and public agencies trying to keep up with the demands of a rapidly changing society. Innovation has been placed at the heart of the European 2020 strategy for tackling major societal challenges, including social exclusion, growing unemployment and resource scarcity. It is thus not a coincidence or isolated impulse that within the cohesion policy framework, innovation of public administrations has been strongly prioritized. It has been argued that joined-up government with its strategic leadership, rather than micro management is needed if government is to effectively improve public services (Lekhi 2007). The coordination of a range of different policy perspectives can, in itself, produce greater dynamism through the sharing of ideas, expertise and practices. When actors at all levels and sectors coordinate their planning and objectives to live up to their common responsibilities, they are more likely to gain fresh inputs and ideas, and create new policy instruments and methods (Pollitt & Talbot 2004). This reduces the risk of encapsulating innovative ideas in isolated spaces thus dwarfing their potential to infiltrate policy-making routines. In terms of SF programming, which in many ways aims to induce policy innovation, strong coordinative measures may ensure that these aims are effectively harboured inside the domestic institutional setting. This is particularly important in the area of Roma exclusion where there is a persistent demand for innovative strategies and approaches delivered by relevant stakeholders and agencies.

5.2.5 Inevitable challenges

Although, it is difficult to refute the positive impact that joined-up government may have on the design and delivery of public services, it must be recognised that its institutionalization requires extensive efforts that can put a great strain on central authorities (in terms of time and resources). The existence of many bodies with overlapping functions, and the tendency of group-think, can severely limit the envisioned benefits of joining-up. Perhaps that is why Pollitt (2003) has argued

that well-defined vertical and horizontal organizational boundaries should not be seen as a symptom of obsolescent thinking, but as mechanisms ensuring stability and professional specialization. The division of labour and specialization are inevitable features of modern organizations and can provide the needed constancy and clear-cut direction. Working horizontally is a very time- and resource- consuming activity that is not always able to satisfy diverse demands and needs, or deliver timely responses to critical situations. Moreover, there must be a genuine willingness on the part of bureaucratic elites to counteract the common tendency to retreat into policy silos and nurture path-dependencies. Such willingness is hard to come by, considering that certain laws, rules, and institutions create heavy disincentives for change because so much has been already invested in the existing ways of doing things (Pierson 2004). Thus costs of joining-up and path-dependencies should be kept in mind during the investigation of synergising efforts and their influence on implementation outputs.

What comes out of this discussion is that while joining-up has a strong potential to improve the overall operation of public bureaucracy, it is a costly venture that needs time and long-term commitment. Nevertheless, in the context of cohesion policy creation of synergies appears almost axiomatic, given that cohesion policy regulations urge member states to exploit the added-value of European funding. The next section analyzes the empirical data in an effort to expose joining-up practices undertaken in Spain and Slovakia and the effects of synergies on implementation outputs.

5.3 Supporting domestic programmes or challenging the status quo

Before exploring synergizing efforts undertaken in Spain and Slovakia it is important to first outline the political preferences regarding the manner in which the exploitation of SF should be approached. As already pointed out the EC's recommendation to take advantage of the added value of SF leave considerable room to manoeuvre, predisposing national actors to interpret it according to their own needs, interests and institutional setting. Hence the very conceptualization of the SF purpose may differ from country to country. In fact, it appears that the Spanish understanding of the SF purpose differs substantially from the Slovak one. This understanding

can play an important role when coordinative mechanisms and synergizing efforts are undertaken. Below these differences are examined and discussed.

5.3.1 Spain political consensus on complementarities

The Spanish case has been characterized by a strong political proclivity to align SF programming with existing national and regional social inclusion policies and programmes. Following the accession to the EU (1986) Spanish authorities have made a uniformed political decision to use the SF (particularly the ESF) as tool for the consolidation and modernization of existing welfare programmes and inclusion initiatives. All the major ministries, including the Ministry of Labour (1988), Ministry of Social Affairs (1988) and Ministry of Health (1989) have endorsed SF as an instrument for triggering initiatives that “*reduce gaps in access to social protection and employment and enhance visibility to the problems of certain social groups*”. Although emphasis was placed on modernization and the development of innovative interventions (especially at regional levels) the ministries have consistently stated that all proposed measures must “add to rather than replace” existing practices (Leonardi & Nanetti 2011). The Ministry of Education in particular has vouched for using SF in a complimentary manner, by dispensing funds to support the implementation of the Organic Law for the General Ordering of the Education System (1990) especially Article 63 which is aimed at ‘promoting equal opportunity in the education of students from unfavourable contexts’¹⁶¹. The alignment was enhanced through the full synchronization of the NSRF objectives with Spain’s National Reform Program (NRP)¹⁶².

The supportive function of SF was clearly outlined in the first paragraph of the NSRF, stating that SF were considered “indirect tools of influence that are not necessarily meant to produce a direct impact on social policies but rather aim at easing reforms and improving existing public interventions” (NSRF 2007-2013: 4). According to the Ministry of Employment and Social

¹⁶¹ The authority over education issues was progressively transferred to the individual AC, which now regulate and organize the educational system within the framework of state law. However the commitment to use SF in the “supplementary” manner has remained unchanged. Regional authorities of Andalusia asserted that SF will be channelled to initiatives developed under the Solidarity in Education Act (Law9/1999) including the activities of the Departments of Education and Vocational Guidance which promote ‘intercultural education and aid to children faced with vulnerable circumstances’ (Government of Andalusia 2000).

¹⁶² With the exception of the Axis 1 of the NRP (Strengthening macroeconomic and budget stability) which due to its very nature does not relate directly to ERDF and ESF programming, all other NRP axes show a specific association with the actions foreseen in the NSRF.

Security, SF were to be used to continue ongoing reforms, ensuring their effectiveness and sustainability. As explained by a public servant:

*European funding is used first and foremost as financial reinforcement for our welfare reforms and unemployment initiatives. Our aim is to safeguard their sustainability without giving up on needed improvements. At the same time there is reluctant to use SF to create purely new approaches, because of fears that it could generate opposition from the bureaucratic cadre and increase the costs of implementation (...) We try to achieve a delicate balance between support and innovation.*¹⁶³

In effect the added value priority has been harboured in all of the ESF OPs. The OP FAD stressed the need to “support *mainstream* employment and welfare policies with *interventions sensitive to different situations of discrimination and inequality*” (FAD 2007-2013:45) while the OP E&A contained a clause regarding the “*need for innovative approaches which could ease the labour market reforms and enrich existing approaches*” (OP E&A 2007:20).

Similar dynamics took place at the regional tier. Here too the political commitment to exploit the potential of SF for strengthening existing approaches surpassed calls for experimentation or “deep-cutting” reforms. A spill-over effect characterizing the decentralization of social policies in Spain has only further strengthened the propensity for aligning the SF program with regional reforms. As explained by a senior public manager:

*The modernization of the social protection system was the main priority of all the AC endowed with the new responsibility. It almost became a competition of who can modernize faster and better. SF programming was molded in such a way so it could help increase regional budgets benchmarked for initiatives already in operation; nobody thought it would be wise to channel funds towards projects that do not directly contribute to regional reforms or go against the party agenda.*¹⁶⁴

As a result all regional ESF OPs incorporate an explicit clause calling for SF initiatives to “complement and reinforce” existing regional development plans and contribute to the consolidation of cohesive welfare policies (i.e. ESF Andalusia: 2). Perhaps even more importantly, the same commitment has been incorporated into national and regional reform

¹⁶³ Interview #3, 2011

¹⁶⁴ Interview #12, 2011

programmes, as well as in the manifestos of all relevant ministries and public agencies. All interviewed public managers, not directly involved with the management of SF confirmed that the ESF funding was first and foremost seen as a reinforcement of operating social inclusion programmes and services.

5.3.2 Slovakia – an ambiguous commitment

In Slovakia, the political commitment to use SF in a complimentary manner has been at best, ambiguous. NSRF has been presented as central integrating strategic documents, aimed at “*defining and linking together the relevant components of individual autonomous, yet coherent strategies of the EU, Slovakia and the individual sectors and regions, with a view to achieving greater synergies and the highest efficiency*” (NSRF 2007:137). However, within the general state administration, the articulation of this commitment has been weak. In fact it appears that different ministries and agencies had very different ideas regarding the “ideal” contribution of SF to domestic initiatives. As the Ministry of Interior expressed a preference for using SF as a buttress for the needed modernization of public administration, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family was more vocal about the need for innovation, experimentation and the introduction of pilot projects (especially in the area of social inclusion)¹⁶⁵. However, the overall political discourse on cohesion policy fell rather quiet on the potential of SF to reinforce existing public interventions in the area of social inclusion. Much more attention was given to innovation and experimentation perhaps as a response to the intense European pressure calling for wide-scale reforms in the new member states. It could be argued that political affinity for novelty and vicissitude stemmed from the realization that existing approaches to social inclusion are weak and have not delivered expected results. As explained by SDF:

*It is difficult to think of SF as a tool for the reinforcement of existing practices, in an institutional landscape that generally lacks evidence-based social inclusion policies, and really cannot account for achieved progress or even small improvements (...) it should not be surprising that there is a strong anticipation that SF will help to jump-start new ways of thinking about social problems.*¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Interviews #45 #46, 2011

¹⁶⁶ Interview #50, 2011

The unclear consensus over how to exploit SF potential was reflected in all relevant OPs. Although “additionality” and “complementarity” appeared in the preambles of all the OPs, it was neither elaborated on nor developed further down in the documents. Instead different axes emphasized the need for “setting up novel approaches” (OP E&SI 142). This was particularly visible in sections delineating social inclusion measures. Thus the OP E&SI under the framework activity *Promoting increased access to, quality and effectiveness of care services (social services and measures of social and legal protection and social curator ship) that improve the access of the at-risk and marginalized groups of the population to the labour market and society* explicitly supported innovative programmes directed towards preventing social exclusion (OP E&SI: 145). The OP E followed suit stating that EU funds will be channelled towards initiatives that “support the development of innovation in all aspect of education” (OP E 24, 69, 84). The SDF office confirmed that:

*The utilization of SF is perhaps the only incentive available, which could prompt authorities to engage in the creation and implementation of novel Roma integration initiatives.*¹⁶⁷

Among the domestic political actors not directly involved in SF management (especially the local authorities) perceptions regarding the best possible way to use SF for regional development were also leaning towards purposeful innovation. Local stakeholders appeared enthusiastic about the usage of extra funding for new developments. As expressed by a local mayor:

*We are excited about the inflow of extra funds, our locality for years has been in deep need of new infrastructure and modern services – the money from the national budget was not enough to realize our ambitions – we hope that European money will allow us to test new grounds and design novel ways of addressing dilemmas of our jurisdiction.*¹⁶⁸

At the same time when asked about plans to use SF the interviewees (local authorities and NGOs managers) fell silent on the way their projects could reinforce ongoing reforms or help to fulfil legislative obligations. Upon examination of National Regional Development Strategy of Slovak

¹⁶⁷ Interview #50, 2011

¹⁶⁸ Mayors for Roma Inclusion Forum Meeting, Skalica, Slovakia 2011

Republic 2008-2012, the articulation of complementariness or overlaps with SF programming was only faintly visible - reduced to the issues of mandatory co-financing.

5.4 Institutionalizing Coordination

Overall it appears that while Spanish authorities viewed SF as a supplementary instrument, Slovakia aimed to use SF for the creation of new programmes and services. It should not be assumed however, that one choice (or motivation) is necessarily more superior to the other or more adequate for delivery of successful SF outputs. I expect that potential positive impact on policy outputs depends more on the way these choices were realized and managed by the administrative apparatus. Hence the analysis below focuses on the consolidation of joined-up efforts and coordinative tools for synergizing SF with domestic policies.

5.4.1 Spain - decentralization, consensus and soft approaches

In Spain the institutionalization of coordination became the core of SF administration in the area of social inclusion, as central authorities aimed to line-up all relevant stakeholders behind the main political goal – reducing unemployment. Political motivations to use SF as a buttress for existing approaches only strengthened the stimulus for the promotion of joined-up government. This process was by no means free of conflict, and multiple challenges arose. These, however, were to a large degree mediated (if not fully resolved) by ongoing negotiations between the central and regional authorities (see Arriba & Moreno 2005). Nevertheless, it was the ceding of power to SF stakeholders located at the subnational tiers as well as the creation of active cooperation channels between the SF institutional landscape and domestic bureaucrats that reinforced the acquiescence to the overarching goals and allowed for nurturing joined-up measures.

The consolidation of greater autonomy among the ACs prompted the central government to strengthen vertical coordination in order to maintain some form of command over social policy and modernization processes. The reliance on deliberation and negotiation between centre and regions in many ways eased coordinative challenges, although in the beginning interaction was

executed bilaterally in a vertical fashion¹⁶⁹. The establishment of Sectorial Conferences (1982) was aimed at breaking this bilateral trend, and maximizing inter-departmental cooperation. By 1999, 24 sectorial conferences had been set up, including one for *European Affairs*, which brought together high ranking officials and political representatives of both the central and regional governments. At first, the regional authorities were concerned that the Sectorial Conferences could be transformed into an institutional mechanism controlled by the central administration in order to intervene in areas of regional competences. Gradually such uneasiness subsided, paving the way to more “trusting” interactions (Arriba & Moreno 2005). However, it needs to be highlighted that these conferences were envisioned as communication platforms and not institutions for joint-decisions making. Thus policy analysts viewed them as a mechanism of “institutional courtesy” (Grau & Creus 2000) that paved the way to co-operative regionalization and the reduction of inter-tier cleavages. In the context of ESF, the European Affairs Conference was pivotal in strengthening the motivation of regional authorities to align their reforms with SF programming¹⁷⁰.

Since the accession to the EU, the central authorities saw cohesion policy as a potent instrument for maintaining some level of supervision over a quickly decentralizing system. During the first programming periods (1989-93) the process of programming the SF was considered to be rather technocratic and centralizing. The protagonist was the central administration, which controlled the preparation of the regional programmes through its Public Investment Committee, an informal committee dependent on the State Secretary of Economic Planning. The regional authorities were invited to participate in the formulation of regional programs but not in the final decisions. This in many ways allowed the central government to anchor the complimentary approach which called for channelling funds towards the modernization of existing services. With time complementarity became the leading norm guiding all subsequent funding periods and has not met with considerable resistance, perhaps because the EU did not pressure Spanish authorities

¹⁶⁹ Often due to an uneven decentralization process, whereby some ACs decentralized faster than others. For a comprehensive account of Spanish decentralization see Keating & Wilson 2009.

¹⁷⁰ The case appeared quite different in the area of infrastructure and the ERDF. Madrid’s plans for large-scale infrastructure developments were highly contested by the AC who claimed that money was being diverted from the real needs of their populations. Bargaining and pork-barrel politics have prevented the alignment of regional reforms with SF programming. SF strategies were largely imposed on the AC and in many ways changed the way infrastructure reforms were conducted by the Ministry of Transport.

to modernize existing approaches¹⁷¹. In a longer run this has substantially reduced European influence over Spanish social inclusion strategies, and dwarfed efforts to introduce policy innovations.

From 1993 onward, the input of regions became more pronounced as vertical interactions were institutionalized. At the same time, inter-departmental contacts multiplied, culminating in a regular exchange of information. From 2000, the role of localities and social actors also crystallized, as they were incrementally given a stronger voice over decisions regarding the shape of SF programming (Arriba & Moreno 2005). Once again that late-coming of the sub-national stakeholders, indirectly facilitated the alignment of organizational goals to those put forward by the central government and ACs. It appeared that by acquiring greater decision-making power over SF management, stakeholders were actually more inclined to join-up at least at the planning stage. Although the goals were streamlined according to the central blueprint, the decision over the design of specific measures was nestled inside the IB of regional OPs. The Spanish Ministry of Economy and Finance became responsible for the coordination of the application and management of the SF via the General Directorate of Community Funds of the General Secretariat of Finance and Budgets. However, once the money was parcelled out (according to convergence and axes criteria), the administrators of regional OPs were responsible for designing project calls, and selecting winning proposals. Despite these developments 60% of ESF funds remained under central control while 40% were passed to the ACs (NSRF 2007). The central administration has thus retained a broad margin to manoeuvre in distributing and managing the funds. It could be argued that positing of central goals for the public departments while granting decision-making over their execution strengthened compliance and collaborative propensities.

However, what truly strengthened the coordinative process was the introduction of tangible mechanisms which fused the work of domestic agencies with those managing the SF. These had a character of “soft instruments” and were meant to serve as a forum for exchange of knowledge and expertise, in order to ensure transparency and consolidate a common direction. One of such mechanisms was the cohesion policy forum which facilitated interaction among all the

¹⁷¹ The pressure from the EU intensified only in the mid-2000 as an answer to the Spanish “incomplete” transposition of equality directives (see Bustelo 2009).

stakeholders, including the MA, the IB, and ministries dealing with social policy, education and health. Under this forum specific task groups were organized to assure that all actions planned for each axis in the OPs by different beneficiaries will complement the remaining actions (including those not benefiting from SF). Although the fact that the forum met only once or twice a year was highly criticized, the interviewed stakeholders claimed that it improved their understanding and knowledge of the work conducted by different ministries and agencies¹⁷². The forum was also instrumental in building consensus regarding the need to use ESF for the continuous modernization of social services according to the principle of equal opportunity and non-discrimination (Law 43/2006 of 29 December; Royal Decree 395/2007).

The central government in agreement with the ACs also introduced coordination committees with the sole purpose of analyzing the complementarity of SF with national, regional, and local measures. The committees brought together MA, relevant bodies of General State Administration, line ministries and regional agencies. They were responsible for analyzing the contribution of SF to regional development and issues concerning actions that could benefit from two or more funds. Their work was in turn supplemented by sectorial networks, i.e. Network of Urban Initiatives, Network of Equality Policy and Network for Social Inclusion, which maintain a permanent secretariat in charge of disseminating information to its members and organizing thematic meetings. Despite, ongoing resistance to joined-up initiatives (i.e. resistance of the bureaucratic cadre and constraining legal procedures) the committees were able to develop a culture of reporting, which in many ways strengthened transparency and accountability. As noted by a senior manager from the Ministry of Education:

*It brought together parties which would otherwise not feel obliged to communicate, it is too early to talk about joined-up government, but the ground has been laid out, most importantly transparency and some degree of reciprocity has seeped into highly compartmentalized bureaucratic apparatus.*¹⁷³

Overall it could be argued that Spanish coordinative efforts managed to create links between SF authorities and general administrative apparatus. While not free of challenges and bureaucratic resistance synergies were being formed.

¹⁷² Interview #5 #20, 2011

¹⁷³ Interview #7, 2011

5.4.2 Slovakia – centralization, top-down command and fragmentation

In Slovakia, alignment of SF with national and regional social inclusion strategies failed to be fully realized. Although at the beginning of the first funding period political discourse called for the orchestration and utilization of EU funds to reinforce a nation-wide modernization of services, in two years' time such rhetoric subsided considerably. Faced with EU conditionality Slovakia concentrated on building and consolidating the SF management infrastructure, in the process neglecting to emphasize the need to create synergies. According to the interviewees, political aspirations to develop new structures and measures diluted concerns regarding the potential for synergy or re-evaluation of existing approaches¹⁷⁴. In effect the newly established public agencies for SF management (i.e. MA, Plenipotentiary for the Reform of Public Administration, MC) operated according to internal organizational objectives (in general dictated by the EU conditionality) which lacked linkage to objectives held by line ministries and managers of social programmes and services (particularly at the local implementation level). It could be argued that more attention was given to meeting EU conditionality, than to considering how SF could be fused with domestic norms. This process has often been explained in terms of pressure from the EU (Kusá & Gerbery 2007) however, to a larger extent it has also been reinforced by top-down policy-making tendencies which curtailed horizontal coordination, and consolidated a two-tier system, separating ESF objectives from the aims of domestic reforms.

As already demonstrated in the chapter on partnership, the Slovak centralized tradition meant that policy-making was realized by the state without extensive involvement of subnational and civil society actors. In this setting the political motivation for horizontal coordination was rather weak, as the leaning towards a vertical chain of command remained strongly embedded in the national policy-making style. Nevertheless, upon the accession to the EU (2004) the Slovak central government was no longer able to exert full control over the ongoing fragmentation and bureaucratic congestion. Accelerated accession requiring intense restructuring, necessitated administrative capacities as well as knowledge that in general was not in possession of Slovak bureaucrats (Kusá & Gerbery 2007). However, rather than aiming for a pooling of resources new agencies were being established under central control. Their mandate was restricted to the

¹⁷⁴ Interview #43, 2011

management of SF programming, effectively cutting them off from procedures and priorities guiding domestic line ministries and agencies. Hence, from the very beginning the alignment of objectives was jeopardized as SF programming in the area of social exclusion was fairly disconnected from existing social policy legislation (i.e. Act on Social Assistance Act No.45/2004). This led to serious programmatic contradictions. For example, while SF programming called for a greater allocation of funds to tackle the multidimensional aspect of exclusion, domestic reforms were delivering welfare cuts (Drál 2008). This incongruity meant that innovative measures contained in SF programming could not be properly implemented as needed legislative provisions were lacking¹⁷⁵.

Coordination within the institutional setting responsible for cohesion policy was more substantial. Shifting the responsibility for regional development from the Ministry of Interior to the Plenipotentiary for the Reform of Public Administration strengthened to some degree cross-sectorial cooperation in regional policy¹⁷⁶. However, there was considerable reluctance on the part of national ministries to delegate control over EU funds to lower governance levels, let alone to public agencies that operated outside of their institutional structures. Paradoxically, the central ministries lacked the capacity to execute a strong level of control, which would discipline the crowded bureaucratic apparatus. The central gatekeeping has created an environment of mistrust, confusion and bureaucratic pedantry, stifling learning processes and flexibility needed for designing appropriate local measures. A lost opportunity for goal alignment only further consolidated these confusing dynamics, reinforcing the reluctance of front-line staff to take on responsibility. As noted by a senior public manager working in regional administration:

*Everything was dictated from the top but with little concern for existing procedures used by us and other specialized agencies (...) we were supposed to adjust but no guidelines were provided as to how (...) we entered a period of double checking and triple checking, and at one point it was evident that nobody was exactly sure what rules applied to what (...) it slowed down everything and on some issues we entered a total stalemate.*¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ For example, social housing initiatives in OP RD were not designed in line with existing regulations concerning housing and social assistance.

¹⁷⁶ Such cooperation was however more pronounced within ERDF programming.

¹⁷⁷ Interview #54, 2011

This is not to say that the involvement of subnational actors in SF programming has not taken place. However, Slovak central government did not develop concrete tools or mechanisms for cross-sector planning, decision-making and managing of public funds. Rigid departmentalism in fact obstructed the creation of a coherent social inclusion strategy at the centre which could serve as a lynchpin or a guideline. Furthermore, Slovak government did not offer concrete mechanisms which would enable the ministries to interconnect parts of the OPs they managed and enforce the integrated approach. This problem was significant as social exclusion priorities, in particular concerning the MRC were presented as cross-sectorial in nature in need of multifaceted approaches. The prevailing working in silos was unable to design let alone deliver such comprehensive programmes. As explained by a public servant from the Ministry of Interior:

The SF programming was pushing for the multidimensional approach in an institutional setting that was not prepared to accommodate it; it was simply assumed that different public agencies will work together so no oversight or guidance was provided (...) everybody continued to pursue departmental objectives, that more often than not contradicted each other, a culture of blaming was rampant as well as avoidance of responsibility.¹⁷⁸

The problems related to the lack of coordination were in fact well acknowledged. The NSRF for the period of 2007-2013 explicitly stated that “*based on the experience from the previous programming period it is necessary to concentrate on better coordination of relevant policies and higher concentration of public funds to priorities than in the period 2004 - 2006. Better coordination and concentration of resources should lead to higher efficiency and effectiveness of SF contributions and help the country to progress*”. However, the coordinative efforts were undertaken predominately within the SF programming framework often in an ad-hoc and highly politicized manner¹⁷⁹. In fact Slovakia has created numerous coordination agencies and units (not linked to one another) each responsible for specific priority axis. Thus while MRC HP was to be coordinated by the deputy prime minister for European affairs and the Plenipotentiary Office, the Equal Opportunities HP was to be coordinated by the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. This bureaucratic congestion in fact only further contributed to fragmentation, especially since the coordinative bodies were often under direct political influence

¹⁷⁸ Interview #44, 2013

¹⁷⁹ The majority of interviewees working in the public sector stated that these were executed on paper only.

and held limited decision-making power over their own operations. As noted by the Plenipotentiary:

*The Office was not granted any decision-making authority, its influence depended fully on personal relations with individual ministries, yet the ministries themselves held very different ideas about needed action. Moreover inter-departmental cooperation was virtually absent thus actions taken by the Office were often simply ignored; we could not count on any rules or mechanisms to fall back on.*¹⁸⁰

In sum, it is rather clear that programmatic synergies were not consolidated and the Slovak administrative apparatus remained excessively departmentalized without tools to reinforce in inter-departmental collaboration or even simple information exchange.

5.4.3 Contrasting alignment

What comes out of this analysis is that Spain has managed to institutionalize coordinative mechanisms which in turn facilitated a closer alignment of SF programming objectives with domestic approaches. Although Spain should not be treated as an example of well-developed joined-up government, it was nevertheless fairly successful in reinforcing synergies and tackling the compartmentalization of the public bureaucracy. In contrast Slovakia's coordination efforts were weak, which has prompted fragmentation and the emergence of a double-tier system. As such SF programming in the area of social exclusion was isolated from general social-inclusion legislation and efforts undertaken by domestic actors. These developments had a strong effect on SF outputs, and explain the divergent performance of SF in the two countries. Below I examine the causal relationship between synergy and SF outputs.

5.5 Spanish programmatic synergy and SF outputs

The Spanish commitment to complementarity, realized largely through the introduction of 'soft' coordinative mechanisms had a positive effect on SF outputs. First and foremost it facilitated the alignment of diverse organizational objectives and information sharing which in turn translated into procedures guiding the management of SF. The MA were thus required to incorporate the

¹⁸⁰ Interview #53, 2011

“added value” section in the selection criteria which by and large determined the scoring strategy. The governmental bodies competing for SF were expected to clearly outline how the money would be used to support existing programmes and action plans (this included the presentation of budgetary and human resource contributions and evidence-based evaluations of existing schemes). Additionally they needed to specify whether the program or project fitted with the legislative regulations. The interviews with public applicants for funding confirmed that this strategy was taken seriously and despite cases of political favouritism, the added value of SF maintained the status of the main criterion for allocation:

*Of course the ability of an agency to lobby for funds was an important factor, as was its wealth and political affiliation, however, even these preferential candidates needed to demonstrate the added value of their proposals. They were required to show how their programs contributed to regional reforms or wider national legislation -without that there was a serious risk of losing some of the funding. This has been the case of our Advice Body, which was unable to make appropriate references and interlinks. We proposed a strictly innovative approach not fully in line with existing legislation, and that was a mistake.*¹⁸¹

The same regulation was adopted during the calls for individual projects issued to NGOs and private organizations. It stipulated the role of the project in supporting mainstream policies and programmes. The clear specification of such support again guaranteed a higher score during the selection process:

*Sometimes this actually thwarted the competitiveness of innovative proposals and experimentation. It also, from the start, put the new or independent actors at a serious disadvantage. Nevertheless the contenders had to convince the authorities that they could benefit from the proposed schemes, that they could compound them with their own interventions. We were able to clearly demonstrate the added value of our project and secure support from relevant public agencies. Hopefully we will be able to push for a change in the approach to the social enterprises in our region.*¹⁸²

The data on implemented projects between 2004 and 2011 (CSES 2011a) shows that more than 75% of the ESF social-inclusion and employment initiatives were extensions of the national/regional programmes completed under three main axes: *increase and improvement of*

¹⁸¹ Interview #8, 2011

¹⁸² Interview #33, 2011

human capital (NSRF Axis 3, 2008), *improvement in the efficiency of public administration and competitiveness* (NSRF Axis 5, 2008) and *enhancement of the job market and social dialogue* (NSRF Axis 6, 2008). The extension allowed for the amalgamation of funding and creation of comprehensive projects, whereby measures introduced in SF programming were interconnected with general welfare and unemployment services. For example, projects aimed at tackling discrimination in the labor market, introduced through OP FAD, faced little problems in securing co-financing and administrative resources from regional and local authorities. The SF initiatives were also connected to social services (i.e. beneficiaries needed to be registered with an unemployment office, or SF training projects had the labor placement component managed together with public servants) (FAD Evaluation 2013). Various projects targeting the Roma population (i.e. Acceder, Seville street vendors' initiative, Roma integration projects run by the Roma Women's Association ROMI) at their basis were directly connected to the regional and local provisions. In effect, the sustainability of these projects was secured, in certain cases even leading to policy change (i.e. the introduction of legal permits for flower vendors in Seville) (EURoma 2010).

Just as important was the fact that such a dynamic prevented the duplication of efforts and deep-cutting contradictions (i.e. SF projects were by and large compatible with legal statutes). As expressed by a senior public servant working in Seville:

*Efforts are made to reduce duplication and increase efficiency. Although more work needs to be conducted to strengthen the alignment of our work with SF programming, we have made considerable progress on eliminating the greatest overlaps, in particular between measures provided by OP FAD and the Andalusia Plan for the Roma Community.*¹⁸³

This achievement was acknowledged by an otherwise highly critical evaluation report on Roma inclusion practices in Spain (see Bereményi & Mirga 2012:44).

Linking SF with domestic services and programs also contributed to an enhanced accountability over the results and effectiveness of SF projects. Firstly all the engaged stakeholders had a clear understanding of overarching goals for social inclusion. FSG regional manager noted that:

¹⁸³ Interview #11, 2011

*Our knowledge about the ongoing public programmes allowed us to structure our own measures accordingly. It also gave us leverage when negotiation co-financing proposals with local stakeholders.*¹⁸⁴

Similar opinions were expressed by agencies within Andalusian Government as well as local authorities. As noted by a public servant working in the social services department in Granada City Hall:

*Although we are mostly responsible for localized social assistance services, we also have access to information regarding SF projects, which makes decisions over co-financing and potential contributions easier and more transparent.*¹⁸⁵

Moreover, the strategic management provided by the central government – in the form of inter-departmental conferences and workshops (which always included actors responsible for domestic and European programmes) allowed for the clarification of evaluation criteria and sharing of best practices. This in turn fostered “check and compare” approaches, where leading stakeholders were motivated to continuously re-assess their achievements against the laid-out framework:

*Constant re-assessment was indeed strongly endorsed by the bureaucrats. Of course reluctance was rampant as departments were not eager to admit failure and we struggled with setting up coherent indicators. Nevertheless this not only helped us see acute inefficiencies, but in a way made everybody more accountable and more willing to improve their outputs.*¹⁸⁶

Finally the institutionalization of synergies has greatly lengthened the life span of individual projects, increasing the potential for policy impact. The data shows that close to 80% of the social inclusion projects targeted at the Roma (directly or indirectly) introduced in the 2000-2006 funding period, continued in 2007-2013 (CSES 2011b). Moreover, some of the projects (i.e. ACCEDER, Granada Empleo) actually grew in scope and scale, increasing the number of beneficiaries (EURoma 2010). Nevertheless the stability and longevity has also dwarfed the opportunity for innovation. Although theoretical assumptions maintain that joined-up actions can

¹⁸⁴ Interview #25, 2011

¹⁸⁵ Interview #18, 2011

¹⁸⁶ Interview #4, 2011

reinforce dissemination of innovative ideas, the case of Spain appears to contradict these assertions. Even though the information flow was fairly open and accessible to social inclusion stakeholders¹⁸⁷, the strong proclivity to use SF as reinforcement for existing approaches impinged on the creative processes and experimentation. As commented by an NGO worker:

*The procedures successfully barricaded initiatives which were not reflective of national goals and interests. The imperative to channel SF for interventions that were already linked to public services severely disadvantaged truly innovative, grassroots projects such as participatory research (...) if you wanted to introduce projects with no counterparts run by public administration you could not count on European provisions.*¹⁸⁸

Another NGO worker noted:

*We work on small-scale individual-based projects in the area of multicultural education, however, our methodology is not in line with approaches undertaken by mainstream education. We quickly found out that we are not eligible for available financial assistance unless we compromise on our objectives and working methods.*¹⁸⁹

Nevertheless numerous public managers as well as the leading NGOs, maintained that synergy has effectively prevented the dispersion of funds to miscellaneous projects, which were believed to provide immediate charity-like assistance without contributing to longer-term integration aims. While the opinions about effectiveness of existing approach were fractious, all sides were in agreement that experimentation and innovation have not been strongly promoted by the Spanish SF programming.

The analysis shows that coordinative efforts undertaken in Spain allowed for the streamlining of SF procedures and the aggregation of efforts. This had increased the effectiveness of the

¹⁸⁷ In the context of Roma inclusion, it was strengthened by the establishment of the State Council for the Roma People (Royal Decree 891/2005, 22 July) a collegiate inter-ministerial organ with consultative and advisory powers, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Policy. It formalised the collaboration and cooperation of the Roma associative movement with the General State Administration. The work of Council was evaluated as a good practice as it was noted that “the joint work of all relevant stakeholders in the Development Action Plan for the Roma people has greatly improved the quality of the preparation of social policies and specific measures directly affecting the Roma, as Roma NGOs have actively contributed in their preparation” (Villagómez et al, 2009).

¹⁸⁸ Interview #36, 2011

¹⁸⁹ Interview #37, 2011

implementation process, avoiding fragmentation and duplication, and secured longevity of the introduced initiatives. However, while SF outputs were judged as effective and legitimate, the Spanish strategy has dwarfed innovation, relying instead on incremental adjustments of existing approaches. Thus it could be said that SF reinforced already well-developed domestic strategies without considerable efforts made to promote innovative pathways or initiatives.

5.6 Synergies in Slovakia and SF outputs

The emergence of a double-tier system dichotomising the public bureaucracy into domestic and European-focused agencies contributed to largely ineffective SF outputs. The lack of coordinative mechanisms and strategic oversight meant that public agencies adhered to internal objectives and interests with no incentive for horizontal alignments or reciprocity. Thus SF programming was design without consistent input from departments responsible for domestic programmes. Interaction between MA and domestic agencies or local authorities was often considered insubstantial and strictly formalistic¹⁹⁰. This departmentalization and disconnection was strongly reflected in the introduced project-calls and selection criteria. An analysis of project calls from the two funding periods showed an evident lack of added-value criteria, or conditionality calling for reinforcement of domestic practices¹⁹¹. The demand-base allocation procedures were neither linked to national or regional overarching development objectives nor introduced concrete selection criteria¹⁹². Thus applicants often proposed interventions which subscribed solely to internal organizational objectives and methodologies, with no coherent articulation of how the projects would contribute to general social inclusion goals. The absence of mechanisms which would promote the alignment of organizational goals and interests reinforced the ‘silos’ logic and contributed to ‘blame placement’ tactics¹⁹³. As explained by a senior public servant working for the MA OP E:

During the selection process we really lacked clear guidelines as to who would be the best recipient, different MAs had their own objectives and were focused on meeting their own goals and requirements so we could not really learn from them

¹⁹⁰ High Level Event on the Structural Funds contribution to Roma integration in Slovakia, Košice 2011.

¹⁹¹ The added value was granted low punctuation, thus proposed initiatives with no articulation on the contribution to domestic plans or services were not penalized.

¹⁹² For a database of project-calls, see <http://www.iazasi.gov.sk/en/calls-for-proposal>.

¹⁹³ Weakly institutionalized partnership was at the core of these isolationist inter-agency relations.

(...) No efforts were made to foster resource reciprocity, when faced with criticism agencies simply pointed fingers at other stakeholders or pone off responsibility onto somebody else (...) we all worked in isolation, hiding behind our own protocols.¹⁹⁴

The lack of steering mechanisms resulted in the introduction of SF projects that often contradicted domestic political agendas and approaches. As mentioned before while the central authorities pushed for welfare cuts and active employment policies (Drál 2008), the SF programming proposed objectives dependent on generous social provisions (i.e. construction of social-housing, social assistance programmes). This in many ways confined the duration of the implemented projects to a 5-year funding period (often only 1 or 2 year initiatives were introduced) and hindered the scaling-up of successful local initiatives. As commented by a leader of a grassroots NGO:

Even if the SF project is successful there is no interest to make it part of the political agenda. There is no interest to promote Roma issues because the authorities have very different plans and priorities. They often say that since we got the money we should not expect anything else. Or claim that the legislation does not allow for the project to be scaled up¹⁹⁵

Moreover, the lack of coordination meant that co-financing practices did not exceed the 15% stipulated by cohesion regulations as there were no incentives to earmark additional public budget. In fact it could be argued that in the local contexts SF were often viewed as an “additional pool of money” which could be used instead of municipal budgets. As explained by a member of the MC:

I must say that the OPs were designed to serve as a source of financing for a litany of miscellaneous measures; money would be allocated to anything from minor infrastructural improvements, cultural activities to field social work, health training or even waste collection. It rarely happened that these measures in anyway reinforced one another and worse they seemed to really replace programs which should be financed from public budget in the first place.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Interview #49, 2011

¹⁹⁵ Interview #72, 2011

¹⁹⁶ Interview #59, 2011

The disconnection of SF programming from wider domestic reforms has also contributed to the failure of the comprehensive approach to local strategies introduced as part of HP MRC Local Strategies. The expected preparation of local strategies by localities with substantial Roma populations was neither buttressed by any meaningful overarching strategy nor coordinated in a systematic manner. As already mentioned in previous chapters the Plenipotentiary Office possessed little authority or capacity to reinforce cooperation or provide oversight on severely a departmentalized system of governance. However what also contributed to the failure was that proposed initiatives seeking to use SF for a “quick fix” rather than for long-term comprehensive integration initiatives. As commented by a manager working in the Plenipotentiary Office:

The strategies were vague on how they will promote integration, instead they often listed an array of things that need to be fixed in the localities – from sidewalks, to community centres, to leaking pipes (...) however this should not be surprising given that nobody really presented these contenders with a general blueprint of what is acceptable and what is not. There was no conditionality, no common indicators (...) so everybody proposed what they thought was most important to their locality, not to the entire country or even region.¹⁹⁷

The Office further argued that there was little motivation to introduce comprehensive integration efforts requiring longer-time frames, aggregated budgets and working through partnerships. In particular measures directed at the Roma population were isolated from measures already provided on the ground. It is important to highlight that numerous localities in fact had no prior record of projects or programmes dealing with Roma integration (UNDP 2012). Thus, the presented local action plans for Roma communities were lacking strategic focus and were considered as “one-time only” investments. Not surprisingly they were neither sustainable nor particularly effective in reaching Roma beneficiaries.

The absence of coordinative and oversight mechanisms also negatively affected the accountability for SF initiatives targeted at social inclusion. As the organizations’ objectives were not aligned, a common purpose (or strategy) was not formalized. Different agencies with their own interests had no clear understanding of the work performed by other agents. As noted by a manager from SDF:

¹⁹⁷ Interview #53, 2011

Although public agencies were all aware that social exclusion requires a comprehensive approach, putting it in motion became virtually impossible (...) A lack of communication, incongruent procedures and the politicization of Roma issues meant that consensus was hard to come by (...) However, it was lack of guidance from the centre that allowed for this fragmentation, the top-down approach failed to provide direction or oversight (...) in many instances the localities were simply unaware of larger social inclusion plans or policies.¹⁹⁸

The absence of coordinative tools also meant that different SF stakeholders were not motivated to earmark funding for comprehensive Roma-integration projects (particularly as counterparts were not earmarked from public budgets) and often did not feel responsible for the results of SF projects in this area:

The responsibility for Roma issues was bounced around different ministries and agencies, but at the end of the day nobody was truly responsible for the delivery of comprehensive approaches (...) while public managers pointed to the Plenipotentiary Office, in reality it was only a coordinative body not a designer or implementer.¹⁹⁹

It is important to mention once again that in the institutional design of SF programming, the MAs were responsible predominantly for the efficient allocation of funds, and not their outputs or impacts²⁰⁰. Since they were not involved in the implementation and had limited monitoring capacity, the success was measured only in terms of money spent. Accountability for actual projects rested in the hands of project managers. However, as their projects were rarely connected to an overarching strategy, their effectiveness was difficult to evaluate. As pointed out by a Roma project manager:

Many projects claim to help the Roma, but there are no indicators available to check these claims (...) The MAs are not obliged to verify this, the Plenipotentiary has no resources to do it and the MC are not really involved in monitoring of individual projects. It is a system where accountability is simply lacking, and all is dependent on the good will of individuals.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Interview#50, 2011

¹⁹⁹ Interview #50, 2011

²⁰⁰ The only exception was the IB SDF, which was responsible for the allocation as well as implementation of SF projects – in partnership with localities and NGOs.

²⁰¹ Interview #68, 2011

Finally, the problems related to coordination severely impinged the development of innovative approaches. While, there was considerable inflow of projects advocating innovative methodologies, according to SDF and OSF Bratislava, the majority endorsed standard, one-time only initiatives, with little attention to the multidimensional aspect of social exclusion. While these dynamics were often ascribed to the lack of capacity of the local agents, the problem has been exaggerated by departmentalization, the absence of comprehensive evaluation processes and mechanisms for the dissemination and scaling-up of best practices. Moreover, innovative projects were by and large delivered by NGOs, and were not connected to regional or local actions. As commented by the OSF:

*Many pilot projects were in fact quite successful. However, they were not in any way linked to national or regional policies, often did not include public servants in their implementation, and worked against the interest of the localities (...) as such they only lasted for 2-3 years and after the funding period was over they were discontinued.*²⁰²

The lost opportunity for lesson learning and the inability of the government to coordinate local initiatives negatively affected general attitudes in the public sectors. According to interviewed public managers there was a widely spread sentiment that in the context of Roma integration, “nothing works”, and little can be done to prompt effective integration programmes.

The findings demonstrated that incongruous coordination efforts, and the blunt absence of strategic oversight, reinforced working in silos which in turn undermined the outputs of SF programming. SF were often used for projects not reflective of wider socio-economic developments, which dwarfed their sustainability and potential contribution to policy change. As in the Spanish case, the innovative approaches were sidelined. However, this was not dictated by the commitment to complementarity and incremental adjustments of existing programmes, but by the lack of mechanisms needed for dissemination and scaling-up of good practices. These shortcomings generated negative attitudes among public servants about the overall usefulness of social inclusion programmes for the Roma.

²⁰² Interview #62, 2011

5.7 Concluding remarks

The chapter has demonstrated empirically that the creation of synergies has strongly influenced the shape of SF outputs. The findings have largely confirmed the assumptions about the benefits and potential shortcomings of joined-up government. The analysis of the Spanish case showed that aligning SF strategies and procedures with domestic practices was pivotal in securing effective and sustainable SF outputs. While joining-up was not fully achieved, the central authorities and their regional counterparts were able to steer a complex system of governance so that the public bureaucracy became more open to inter-organizational communication and collaboration. At the same time the commitment to use SF as added-value to domestic programmes, has rather substantially curbed their potential to induce innovative thinking or promote the European vision of social inclusion. There was a strong proclivity to allocate funding to initiatives that did not encroach on accepted norms, procedures or political interests. In that sense SF programming was co-opted by the national and regional authorities who through adroit coordination were able to use EU funding for securing domestic interests. These dynamics were also made possible, given that Spain has had an already well-developed domestic institutional framework for advancing social inclusion action plans. As such SF rather than prompting modernization (a difficult and costly undertaking) were used to prop-up existing programs and services which at least on the surface did not require fundamental restructuring or concrete improvements.

The case of Slovakia demonstrates a very different dynamic. Although Slovakia appeared to adhere to the additionality doctrine, the political commitment to use EU funding in a complimentary manner was weak. The aspiration to use European funding for the development of new programmes and institutions, compounded with consistently centralized governance practices, reduced motivations and capacities for joining-up. A lack of steering mechanisms, able to induce the alignment of organizational procedures and interests, resulted in the emergence of a double-tier system, disconnecting SF management from the wider domestic bureaucratic apparatus. This in turn prompted excessive fragmentation and duplication of efforts undertaken in the area of social inclusion, and in many cases full-blown incongruity. The overtly bureaucratized system of SF programming was not easily accessible to non-involved departments

and agencies, which further prevented the nurturing of common goals, and in fact only further consolidated the working in silo practices. Somewhat paradoxically, Slovakia has appeared eager to comply with EU cohesion objectives and was willing to induce innovative thinking into its public administration. However, the double-tier dynamics severely encroached on these aspirations, as isolated SF interventions were not able to induce wider policy changes, or even minor alterations. The fact that Slovakia generally lacked domestic social inclusion strategies and thus had to develop new approaches only reinforced the double-tier dynamics. In the end the funding was used to satisfy an array of domestic interests, not always ready or willing to promote cohesive social inclusion strategies.

Overall these findings raise doubts about the potency of cohesion policy to induce domestic policy changes and foster development of cohesive social inclusion strategies. Looking at the two cases, it appears that SF were first and for most used to promote domestic interests and policies. While the Spanish success was attributed to skilful creation of synergies, the fact that existing domestic approaches were in themselves considered valuable is very relevant. It shows that successful SF outputs are strongly contingent on the overall effectiveness of domestic policies. As such they do not present themselves as mechanisms able to introduce innovating thinking or re-model domestic programmes. Considering the enthusiastic promotion of SF as “mending” instruments and engines for the development of innovative inclusion programmes for vulnerable groups and minorities, such findings severely subvert the normative position of entire cohesion policy.

The next chapter aims to empirically demonstrate that the effectiveness of SF outputs is contingent on the presence of the three variables already discussed and analyzed. To reveal this compounded influence I examine the performance of 6 SF projects implemented in Spain and Slovakia on these three variables. Focusing the analytical lens on micro-level developments will provide a more in-depth look at the interface among the explanatory variables and the influence it has on SF outputs.

Chapter 6 - Demonstrating the combined effect of the explanatory variables

Up to this point the three independent variables were investigated in isolation, a conscious choice dictated by acute complexity of cohesion policy and social inclusion themes. However, to strengthen the explanatory capacity of my research, it is necessary to consider their combined effect on policy outputs. The aim of this chapter is to empirically investigate the influence of all three variables on SF outputs. The main assumption of this chapter is that the achievement of effective SF outputs in the area of Roma inclusion is contingent on a) clear policy design that recognizes structural dimension of social exclusion b) design of partnership that relies on co-productive interactions that include experts and community stakeholders c) synchronization of SF interventions with domestic policies and exploitation of the added –value of SF. It is expected that neglect or inapt execution of only one of these three variables will negatively influence the implementation process, leading to ineffective outputs.

To test this hypothesis, I will examine these variables in the context of individual SF projects implemented in the area of social inclusion. I will scrutinize the design, activities and results of each project in order to demonstrate how they framed social-exclusion, executed partnership and coordinated their efforts with domestic development plans. Focusing the analytical lens on micro-level activities of SF programming is undertaken because in the multilevel system of cohesion policy, the projects are the final beneficiaries of SF allocations and thus are considered as the final stage of the implementation process - where the outputs are most pronounced. Moreover, the outputs of the SF projects are used by the evaluators as the main indicator of success or failure in the usage of SF. This makes them a valid unit of analysis for this exercise.

For the purpose of the analysis, 6 outlier cases were selected (three in Spain and three in Slovakia) that deviated from the population in terms of the outputs. This selection stems from the rationale that the general success of Spanish SF programming will not necessarily be translated into all delivered initiatives (particularly given the high volume of implemented projects). The same justification applies to Slovak SF programming, as there is a high likelihood that in the framework of SF programming certain cases will show at least some level of success. Testing the

three independent variables on such projects can better demonstrate that SF outputs are in fact influenced by all three variables.

The examined projects include: PROMOCIONA, Granada Employment and EDEM in Spain and National Project Field Social Work, From Benefits to Paid Work, Integrated Education in Slovakia.

Of course it could be argued that the analysis should be conducted in a larger sample of projects, however I maintain that at this point of the inquiry and given the scope and qualitative character of this research, it is more constructive to engage in an in-depth analysis of a smaller number of projects, which could provide a more comprehensive picture.

The following section of this chapter will commence with empirical investigation of each of the individual projects. The description of each project's characteristics and activities will be followed by the analysis of the effect of the three independent variables – policy design, partnership design and programmatic synergies - and delineation of main findings. The concluding remarks will review the main findings.

6.1 The SF projects in the Spanish context

The assessment of Spanish SF programming demonstrated that European funding can provide efficient and effective projects to vulnerable groups (CSES 2011a, b). Despite positive performance of the overall SF framework and well executed implementation of stipulated objectives and measures, Spain has not escaped significant shortcomings at the project level. The deepening economic crisis has definitively impacted the performance of SF allocations. However, as will be demonstrated below, the ineffective outputs of the examined projects appear more contingent on the framing, partnership, and synchronization efforts, which diverge from accepted standards embedded in the Spanish SF programming. This section scrutinizes three SF intervention: PROMOCIONA, a programme introduced as a multi-regional scheme within the OP FAD targeted at education of Roma children and youth; Granada Employment, a social-inclusion initiative introduced in the province of Andalusia, funded through the OP Employment

and Adaptability; and finally CODE a local employment initiative introduced in Seville in the excluded urban districts, co-financed through OP ESF Andalusia. All three projects were completed and are expected to be extended into the next funding period (2014-2020). Although, upon the implementation they have been viewed as examples of ‘good practice’ (Council of Europe Database; EURoma 2010)²⁰³, in the end not all of the intended objectives were realized. Throughout the course of implementation all three initiatives encountered administrative and management inefficiencies, faced outreach problems and difficulties in sustaining the efforts and scaling up the results. Below, I will demonstrate what generated these shortcomings.

6.2 PROMOCIONA – Education Programme

Promociona was launched in 2009, as a 4 year, multi-regional support and educational guidance programme, aimed at reducing drop-out rates among the Roma students enrolled in primary and secondary education²⁰⁴. It was developed in the framework of OP FAD, as a response to a comprehensive analysis of Spanish educational practices, conducted by the FSG and the Ministry of Education²⁰⁵. The initiative was envisioned as a preventive measure realized in primary and secondary schools across Spain, with co-financing provided by the Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy and the regional and local governments²⁰⁶. The FSG, as the IB of OP FAD and the main implementer of the Promociona programme, set the objective to ‘promote the educational mainstreaming of Roma students’ through individual and group work, cooperation with educational institutions and social environment, and awareness rising campaigns (FSG 2013).

In the first two years of its operation, Promociona was successful in bringing aboard numerous schools and attracting attention of Roma communities. The 2011 mid-term report, demonstrated that the programme has worked directly with a total of 1,235 Roma children and youth, 1,076

²⁰³ The examined interventions have many components, as they provide various measures in different localities and for different target groups. The ‘good practice’ evaluation conducted by the Council of Europe and EURoma has generally focused on a ‘grand design’ of the programme without comprehensive intake on the outputs delivered by its various components. Moreover, the emphasis was placed on the absorption and allocation capacity while little scrutiny was given to the way the ‘allocated funds’ have been utilized.

²⁰⁴ The description of the project can be found at:

<http://www.gitanos.org/quehacemos/areas/educacion/promociona.html>

²⁰⁵ See: <http://gitanos.org/actualidad/archivo/102969.html>

²⁰⁶ The yearly costs of running the programme account for close to € 500,000.

families and 476 school centres. At the end of 2011, measures were running in 27 cities in 14 regions of Spain, while the number of beneficiaries rose by approximately 8%. Moreover, the programme provided training opportunities for educators and community workers (150 actions were introduced for more than 8000 participants), and developed numerous awareness campaigns for breaking stereotypes and improving the social image of Roma communities²⁰⁷.

Nevertheless, in 2011 Promociona encountered several problems, which dwarfed realization of its main objectives. Firstly, securing of co-financing from local authorities, to manage different components of the programme, has proven progressively more difficult. According to FSG:

*The interest in funding Roma initiatives has subsided and it appears that in the midst of the economic crisis money is reverted to other priorities.*²⁰⁸

The management team of FSG also confirmed that in 2012 the number of contracts signed with individual schools was lower than expected, and numerous localities found it difficult to attract experienced pedagogues and community mediators. Moreover, Promociona has not been able to mainstream the delivered activities, which continued to provide only ‘supplementary’ assistance to few selected schools, targeted at a relatively small group of beneficiaries. In effect, the programmatic objective to “generate and enhance educational conditions” pertained to limited number of schools, and has not engendered institutional reforms (or political commitment to change) in the field of intercultural education.

6.2.1 Causal factors – failing to challenge the system

The initial success of Promociona could be attributed to FSG’s tactical presentation of education as a leading factor in tackling unemployment. This framing prompted both the central and regional ministries to commit necessary co-financing, but more importantly to officially endorse educational goals in SF programming (NSRF 2007). Nevertheless, the design of Promociona substantially deviated from the overall objectives stipulated by the SF programming, what in the

²⁰⁷ These included: “Get to know them before judging them” “Your prejudices are other people’s voices” “When I grow up I want to be...”

²⁰⁸ Interview #26, 2013

end resulted in dwindling commitment of the participating localities and institutions to support the initiative. Most importantly, the design failed to elaborate on the structural dimension of social exclusion, focusing instead on targeted action and behavioural change of benefiting groups and individuals. The distance between the educational attainment of the Spanish Roma minority and the rest of the population was assessed in terms of “inability to benefit from or access educational services”, a problematic often attributed to the attitudes towards an education. As expressed by a programme manager:

*The Roma population continue to see formal education as a threat to their cultural identity, programmes like Promociona aim to change this negative perception and encourage the Roma population, both children and adults, to reap benefits of education and to use it for their personal advancement.*²⁰⁹

From the start, this diagnosis prevented formulation of measures, which could push for institutional reforms (i.e. multicultural curriculums, equality training for educators and school management boards). Instead, the programme took shape of assistance, granted to pre-selected disadvantaged Roma pupils. Although, the tutorials and after school activities appeared to make a difference for individual students (What’s Working Report 2011), overall the adopted methodology lacked tools which could impact or transform the institutional landscape. In short, the Roma pupils were being prepared to fit into the mainstream education system, which in itself was not problematized and remained largely unchallenged.

The programme’s design also placed a strong emphasis on the ethnic dimension of exclusion, resulting in rather exclusive targeting of funds at Roma communities. Targeting SF along ethnic dimension diverged from the adopted ethnically neutral approaches endorsed by the SF programming. The determination to avoid ethnic or cultural references in talks about exclusion was also strongly anchored in the political discourse at the local governance levels. Thus the targeting methodology promoted by Promociona, was not well received by the local authorities. It became evident, that funding of “Roma projects” from public budgets was not the main priority on their political agenda, and the authorities were quite reluctant to promote them. As explained by the regional office of FSG:

²⁰⁹ Interview #25, 2011

During our presentations or negotiations with the localities, the same question would resurface, how will other vulnerable pupils benefit? (...) How will we rationalize the spending priorities to our non-Roma constituencies? In some cases the local authorities who were willing to provide their support asked us not to publicize their involvement.²¹⁰

The Promociona management team has not responded to these reservations, maintaining that some degree of affirmative action is indispensable to effectively promote Roma integration (FSG 2011). While such a stance appeared valid given the substantial underperformance of Roma pupils in comparison with other groups, FSG has failed to develop a methodology, which could expand the programme goals to address wider institutional factors (i.e. more culturally-sensitive curriculums). Thus it could be argued that an opportunity to mainstream Promociona measures was lost. Exclusive targeting has also put a strain on partnership practices established with the local authorities and schools. By and large the local authorities faced with shrinking budgetary transfer, were becoming more reluctant to allocate funding to “unpopular” groups. In effect in 2011 withdrawal of initial co-financing commitments has intensified.

However, the loss of local support can also be attributed to the design of partnership in the framework of Promociona. Although, a co-productive arrangement was maintained between the regional authorities and the IB (FSG) of the OP FAD, the participation of local authorities and schools was confined to the execution of pre-packaged initiatives. Local agents were not in fact engaged in the tailoring of the programme and held no decision-making capacity over it. This paternalistic approach to collaboration has left the local authorities and schools largely outside the area of influence, treating them as passive financiers and service deliverers. This generated hostile attitudes towards the programme and perhaps indirectly exempted the local authorities from feeling accountable to the programme’s results. In the interviews, the local authorities often maintained that Promociona is “a Roma project run by the Roma people for the Roma people”. As bluntly expressed by a city hall official in Granada:

²¹⁰ Interview #25, 2011

*This is an NGO initiative, while we might support it financially, we don't feel it is our responsibility to monitor its performance, this is a job for regional authorities and SF managers (...) our priorities lay somewhere else.*²¹¹

The involvement of the families and community leaders, presented as one of the main objectives of the programme, was also rather weakly institutionalized. While the programme provided extensive consultations to Roma communities (in hopes of increasing their active interest in the education of their children) parents had little opportunity to formulate interests or exert pressure on institutional factors²¹². According to education institutes (primary schools) reluctant participation of the local authority also meant that input of the final beneficiaries was often not recognized or taken into account during general political discussions about the future of Spanish education²¹³.

In terms of synergies, the programme performed much better, as it abided by legislative provisions and linked its own objectives with national and regional priorities (i.e. emphasizing 'preventive' dimension of the measures and their impact on reducing drop-out rates²¹⁴). However, once again the exclusive focus on the Roma has weakened the potential of Promociona to restructure existing educational practices. In general, the localities viewed Promociona as a strictly supplementary intervention²¹⁵. However, even the complimentary aspect of Promociona was dwarfed by the fact that it was not linked to existing Roma Integration Programs²¹⁶. According to the public servants working on these domestic initiatives, this has severely hindered inter-organizational communication and resource sharing, contributing to duplication of efforts and isolation of Promociona from wider integration developments²¹⁷.

²¹¹ Interview #17, 2011

²¹² An exception is an effort to encourage Roma parents to become members of parents associations, initiative undertaken in some participating localities (i.e. Seville).

²¹³ Interview #27, 2013

²¹⁴ It is important to mention that the one of the measures of Promociona, the support classes, resemble the model of 'aulas de acogida' (insertion classes) a national/regional strategy directed at what Spanish policy makers call 'normalization policy'. The aims of Promociona have also been aligned with the Constitutional Law for the Quality of Education of 2002 which prescribes equal rights of education for foreigners, as well as norms of coexistence in the educative centres and the need to develop language assistance (Ministry of Education 2009).

²¹⁵ Interview #17 2011

²¹⁶ *National Program for the Development of Roma and Regional Plans for the Roma Community.*

²¹⁷ Interview #11, 2011

Overall this case demonstrates that the three variables are not only needed if SF initiatives are to be effective, but are also strongly interlinked and tend to reinforce one another. The empirical analysis showed that the design of Promociona did not account for the structural dimension of social exclusion, which effectively hindered the realization of the mainstreaming objective and jeopardized the functioning of partnership. The exclusion of the local authorities from decision-making processes diverted their commitment away from the programme, thus reducing potential funding opportunities and political support. These dynamics combined with weak synchronization of Promociona methodology with national and regional Roma integration programmes, led to ineffective outputs, threatening the sustainability of the undertaken efforts.

6.3 Granada Employment Programme

The Granada Employment programme was introduced in 2008 by the Provincial Department of Culture, Youth and Local Development²¹⁸. The initiative was an answer to the alarming unemployment rates, which in 2010 according to OECD stood in a region at 27.7% and the recognition that the local resources were underutilized in the fight against social exclusion (Pérez & Sánchez 2013). Financed by the multiregional OP Employment and Adaptability with co-financing provided by the AC, and provincial authorities, the programme aimed to tackle barriers to meaningful employment and facilitate activation and insertion of the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups. The espoused objectives called for removal of barriers to equal and sustainable employment, fighting discrimination in the labour market and promoting gender equality. The initiative was developed through intensive collaboration among public and social entities including: socio-economic organizations, trade unions; public departments of Junta de Andalucía, Province of Granada, and organizations representing various disadvantaged groups. The total budget of the Project has been estimated at €5.6 million for two years. There were 166 municipalities that were to participate as beneficiaries of the programme.

Granada Employment Programme was composed of two main measures, managed and coordinated by the provincial authorities:

²¹⁸ Description of the project can be found at: <http://www.granadaempleo.es/>

1. Territorial Employment Pacts (TEP) in municipalities across Granada Province,
2. Integrated Itineraries for socio-labour insertion of disadvantaged groups.

The first measure had a territorial dimension, aimed at creation of local strategies for revitalization of the labour market in the most disadvantaged areas. It established a common employment strategy to help align local priorities with wider territorial needs. The second measure was envisioned as a “complementary component” to the territorial approach, aimed at providing support to groups at risk of social exclusion.

The 2011 evaluation report positively assessed the performance on the programme. The 14 TEPs were established bringing together more than 2000 public, private and social units under a common strategy. The development and implementation of the integrated itinerary inside employment initiatives, benefited close to 1000 persons at risk of exclusion – providing them with marketable skills as well as long-term employment contracts (i.e. in the municipality of Granada 188 persons received training and more than 60% gained full-time employment). The realization of more than 5000 workshops, conferences and lectures disseminated information to managers and service providers about existing procedures, barriers, technological innovations etc. According to the project stakeholders this has greatly enhanced knowledge (among the bureaucrats and NGOs) about insertion methodologies, equality issues and macro-level economic developments²¹⁹.

Notwithstanding the overall positive assessment, the programme hit serious stumbling blocks. The implementation of TEPs was significantly delayed and some smaller municipalities considered withdrawing their commitment. It was somewhat belatedly apprehended that to realize ambitious TEPs’ initiatives more funding (as well as time) was needed. It was realized that municipalities eager to benefit from EU funding failed to earmark their own operational resources needed for maintaining and running the initiative (Pérez & Sánchez 2013). In many ways the accumulated knowledge was not fully translated into specific local measures, as the localities lacked adequate technical and cognitive tools to proceed. Finally, the mainstreaming focus was hollowed-out and the common employment strategy began to resemble a strictly

²¹⁹ Interview #34, 2013

tokenistic endeavour, too ambitious to be effectively realized or sustained. These shortcomings, while related to mismanagement at the part of the localities, stemmed largely from inadequate attention to synergies and coordination.

6.3.1 Causal factors – weak coordination efforts

The initial effectiveness of Granada Employment programme could be linked to its strategic design, which strongly reflected the employment priorities of the SF programming. The identified problem was framed as ‘inadequate access to employment’ generated by overly bureaucratized system of employment measures and consistent discrimination in the labour market. Thus the designers considered the programme as a means to improve the performance of institutions, calling for procedural streamlining and creation of specialized labour insertion agencies (which would strongly adhere to the equality principle).

The comprehensible designation of responsibilities over the implementation and management of the different components of the programme (research, designing of itineraries etc.) facilitated the pooling of resources and experimentation with complex measures. Moreover, the design introduced equality conditionality, which required all the proposed measures to incorporate anti-discrimination incentives (i.e. training, monitoring, and performance evaluation). At the same time, the conditionality did not make any reference to discrimination on the ground of ethnicity, instead placing Roma under a generic term “all vulnerable and excluded groups”. In an interview project stakeholder insisted that targeting along the lines of ethnicity would be harmful to the solidarity component of the programme:

*Our aim is to facilitate the creation of local employment strategies, fitted to each individual context but reflective of macro-level factors. If some localities feel that they need to target an ethnic group, it is by all means a legitimate course of action, but we believe it would be unfair to make it a prerequisite or a focal point of this initiative. We want to focus much more on institutional improvements (...) we believe that in a long-term this will benefit all the excluded groups, including the Roma.*²²⁰

²²⁰ Interview #34, 2013

The effectiveness of the programme could also be attributed to the intense collaboration and institutionalization of the co-productive partnership, involving regional and provincial authorities working in close cooperation with the leading NGOs. The, reliance on expertise and regular information exchange contributed to the alignment of goals and priorities of various institutions. It also facilitated aggregation of resources and secured the accountability for programme's performance. What needs to be highlighted is that the partnership relied strongly on working through consensus. While this approach proved extremely costly, it did make all the participants feel a part of the project:

*Reaching consensus takes time and it is often very frustrating, but it is the only way to engage all the stakeholders, and not as passive recipients but accountable agents. We opted for engaging a smaller number of actors but with extensive experience dealing with labour inclusion. This helped us to create a well-informed strategy and in the end everybody felt that they could contribute to its realization.*²²¹

While the strategic design and partnership arrangements facilitated the effective realization of certain components of the programme (i.e. the integrated itineraries), the delays in the implementation of TEPs could be attributed to the lack of programmatic synergy. Despite the aim of linking local priorities with wider regional needs, the Granada Employment programme was essentially not linked in any way to existing labour policies (i.e. the agreement on employment policy and economic development for Andalusia). The added value of SF was largely abated due to the ambitions to address unemployment in a truly innovative manner:

*It is time to scrap the traditional ways of dealing with unemployment and try something new, something inherently reflective of indigenous needs; the bureaucratic approaches need to become more flexible and give way to communal initiatives, which at their core promote solidarity.*²²²

The determination to replace allegedly dysfunctional regional practices counterpoised the traditional commitment to use the SF as a buttress for existing practices. This conflict explains

²²¹ Interview #35, 2013

²²² Interview # 35, 2013

the difficulties in obtaining consensus regarding the programme's purpose between lower and higher tiers of government. As explained by a project stakeholder:

*The municipalities have been less involved in allocation of SF and are more open to innovation, whereas the provincial and regional bodies tend to be more conservative. They have always played a decisive role in exploiting the European resources, making sure that they support existing policies and political priorities (...) Although, the word innovation is often used, the regions see it as a way to improve what is on-the-ground. The replacement of existing approaches is often not even considered. They are not eager to experiment especially when larger sums of money are to be dispensed.*²²³

The inability (or unwillingness) to present the Granada Employment programme as a complementary strategy negatively affected co-financing negotiations. The missing links between the programme and Andalusian policies diminished the financial commitment of Junta de Andalucía, which was reluctant to provide the additional co-funding (exceeding the mandatory 15%). At the same time, the local authorities have failed to earmark local budgets for the implementation of TEPs, and have not clarified the role of local public servants (i.e. social workers) in the programme. Moreover, the responsibility over the Insertion Itineraries was not granted to the local employment offices, and was undertaken almost exclusively by the NGOs. The critics insisted that a lack of coordinating mechanisms created a procedural incongruity disconnecting the TEPs and the Integration Itineraries from general employment activities run by the local and provincial employment services. This not only led to procedural congestion and fragmentation of employment initiatives but threatened the impact of the entire programme (Pérez & Sánchez 2013). In fact, Granada Employment began to take form as an isolated initiative, albeit grand in scope and scale, as a result failing to mainstream its approaches and reshape the institutional landscape.

The analysis has shown that effective outputs of Granada Employment programme were offset by just one variable. While, the coherent strategic design and strong partnership, secured allocation of SF and accountability for the delivered services, the weak programmatic synergy jeopardized the implementation of the main components of the programme. The implementation of innovative actions has been largely constrained, as SF authorities remained committed to using

²²³ Interview #34, 2013

SF as reinforcement of existing interventions and methodologies, even if their impact was questionable. As such the Granada Employment initiative was unable to change the status quo (a goal it set out to achieve).

6.4 Transition to Employment in the South Industrial Park, Seville

In 2007 the Andalusian Department of Employment has invested €14.6 million in active employment policies undertaken in the framework of *The Comprehensive Employment Plan for South Industrial Park of Seville*. The local plan was developed by the Junta de Andalucía, Seville City Council and the Commissioner for the South Industrial Park, as a joint public intervention to promote social inclusion and employment in the most disadvantaged neighbourhood in the city of Seville. Under the framework, the plan Centro de Orientación y Dinamización para el Empleo (CODE) was established; an agency directly involved in designing, implementing and coordinating smaller labour inclusion projects. In the 2007-2013 funding period, CODE received the financial grants from the OP ESF Andalusia, as a result of the *Collaboration Protocol* signed on March 18, 2009 between the Government of Andalusia, the City Seville and the Commissioner for South Industrial Park.

The work of CODE has been positively evaluated and many of the implemented projects were coined as examples of “good practice” (RETOS 2011). Mid-term evaluations praised the role of CODE in generating enabling environment, which provided relevant training and labour insertion opportunities to vulnerable persons and groups at risk of exclusion. Since 2007, CODE in-house initiatives assisted more than 10,000 unemployed persons; the introduced educational interventions and awareness raising activities reached more than 15,000. The CODE was also successful in securing 12,714 employment contracts in the construction industry, mostly benefiting youth and long-term unemployed. Upon the visit to CODE headquarters the employment minister Manuel Recio stated that CODE’s work is “*an example to follow in terms of coordination and joint effort of the government to boost the labour market in the territories, to promote the formation and integration of the neighbourhoods*”. He added that it provides a

pathway for “*transformation of the labour market needs, and creation of a just and viable socio-economic model*”²²⁴.

Although the performance of the CODE was hailed as a success, a number of delivered projects were not as effective in meeting the overall objectives. One initiative that stands out is EDEM a 12-month pre-employment intervention introduced in 2011, aimed at improving the ‘employability’ among youth with no professional qualifications or work experience, and whose socio-economic status might negatively affect their employment prospects. Initiated and managed by the Delegation of Economy and Employment department in the City of Seville, the project was to take place in “areas in need of social transformation” decreed by the regional Andalusian government. However, its implementation was delayed for several months and proved extremely problematic. According to the records of CODE, the project failed to attract interest from the targeted area – the final beneficiaries but also experts and private firms. Consequently, the number of trainings had to be reduced, while the training completion rate fell below 5%. Moreover, the supplementary activities (community work, raising awareness) had not been implemented at all, and in the end the project provided only a few group trainings, while the labour placement measure was fully abandoned. Encountered difficulties have jeopardized the sustainability of undertaken efforts, and risked a total discontinuation of the project²²⁵.

6.4.1 Causal factors – a broken partnership

The general success of CODE and its in-house projects could be attributed to the clear strategic design and the acknowledgment that ‘institutional transformations’ are indispensable for ‘stimulating economic growth and generating equal employment opportunities’. Such a strategy has prompted an array of actions targeted at structural barriers (i.e. facilitation of contractual agreements with private sector, streamlining procedures of employment offices, creation of monitoring). The equality principle was mainstreamed in all the interventions, and disseminated through an array of workshops, conferences, and awareness raising activities. A special management team was created to develop methodologies for combining training activities with labour insertion initiatives. As explained by a CODE:

²²⁴ <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/empleo/www/noticias/detalle?id=3097>

²²⁵ At the time of writing this dissertation, the decision about its continuation was still pending.

*We work on three fronts. First our team reviews existing regulations for setting up social enterprises and developing labour placement initiatives, we identify barriers and negotiate them with local authorities. Second we develop an out-reach community programme to disseminate information about our initiatives but also to gather opinions from the potential beneficiaries. Finally on the basis of the collected data we develop a series of training initiatives in close cooperation with private entities.*²²⁶

While CODE's efforts were not explicitly directed at any ethnic group, its territorial dimension (targeting the most impoverished zone) essentially meant that a substantial number of Roma were able to benefit from provided services²²⁷. However, overall targeted actions were considered unnecessary or even counterproductive:

*Our projects are for all vulnerable youth and adults residing in the targeted area. The idea is to become a community contact point, where everybody can feel welcome and can expect to receive assistance and help. We strongly believe that targeting our projects at one group, is likely to provoke tensions, which are already quite strong.*²²⁸

The effective performance of CODE was further reinforced by a close alignment of its objectives and priorities with the Andalusian employment strategies, particularly the *Programme of Solidarity for Andalusia* (Decree 400/1990- Decree 2/1999) and the equal opportunity principle (Law 43/2006 of 29 December; Royal Decree 395/2007; Law 3/2007 of 22 March). The joint efforts undertaken by the local authorities, has helped to streamline the access to services, avoiding fragmentation and duplication. Consequently, CODE became a “one-stop shop” where information, services, training and labour insertion activities were made easily accessible to the residents of the South Industrial Park.

What has undermined CODE's operation, eventually leading to the implementation failure of EDEM, was the design of partnership, imposed on the organization by the local authorities. The Delegation of Economy and Employment as an initiator of the project has planned to involve a

²²⁶ Interview #31, 2013

²²⁷ Indeed, despite endorsing “ethnic neutral” rhetoric, more than 45 percent of participants were of Roma origin.

²²⁸ Interview #31, 2013

wide range of community stakeholders, allegedly with an aim to secure ‘participatory’ dimension of the project²²⁹. Although, the department conducted ex-ante evaluation of the situation in the targeted districts it has not consulted with the main local stakeholders, with that excluding their input from project design. As stated by a stakeholder in EDEM:

The project idea was solid, but the department has neither consulted us nor other organizations working in the area [i.e. FSG]. As a result a lot of objectives appeared rather ambitious and disconnected from the reality. The department lacked strong linkages to the community hence it has not really accounted for the potential risks, for example it assumed that everybody in the community will be excited to participate, failing to understand a great level of mistrust the residents hold towards public interventions”²³⁰.

The recruitment of potential partners was undertaken in an ad-hoc manner, with an array of formal and informal meetings undertaken with miscellaneous actors. Lack of vision regarding the scope and scale of participation resulted in trivial exchanges of ideas and opinions with no commitment made or common interests established. Moreover, no decision-making discretion was granted to selected partners, thus weakening formation of interdependencies. For example, the CODE was treated merely as a ‘location where trainings will take place’ without having any substantive say regarding the progress of the project. Subsequently, EDEM was not considered a priority among CODE’s employees:

Our human resources are stretched as it is, thus if the department wants to simply use our facilities, and pay for them, we are fine with that, but at the same time nobody should expect that we will go out of our way to make sure that project is running well. Either we are on board or not.”²³¹

The partnership with schools was also not consolidated, although talks with management were undertaken to identify potential beneficiaries, the exact degree and scope of cooperation was not outlined. In fact according to CODE’s education specialist, schools were expected to provide

²²⁹ An informant from the Seville City Hall commented that this strategy mirrored political aspiration of the single members of the department, who wanted to present themselves as community leaders, ‘close to the people’, in a time of growing frustration with the authorities . Interview #16, 2013

²³⁰ Interview #32, 2013

²³¹ Interview #31, 2013

assistance (disseminate information, counsel students on program benefits) without receiving funding or templates of action:

*You could argue that schools should put students well-being over financial or power issues, but it is difficult to commit to the project that does not really treat you as one of its vital components, gaining trust of these youth is extremely difficult. Why would you advertise to them a project of which you know nothing about?*²³²

Finally, the project bypassed the large NGOs already present in the areas (FSG, Asociación Tierras del Sur), hence losing an opportunity to gain access to local expertise and additional resources²³³.

This case has demonstrated that the strategic design of the CODE initiatives was closely aligned with the overarching SF programming what has strengthened coordinative efforts and contributed to the creation of synergies between local initiatives and provincial/regional programmes. At the same time the joint efforts have allowed CODE to serve as a reference point to all those interested in labour-insertion methodologies and services, and to design multifaceted approaches to social exclusion. However, the reluctance of the Delegation of Economy and Employment to nurture strong co-productive arrangements with the local experts and representatives has impinged on these comprehensive efforts. As the EDEM project was experiencing delays and could not demonstrate concrete outputs, the Government of Andalusia began to view the intervention with scepticism, preparing to withdraw the funding.

The empirical investigation of these three initiatives has demonstrated that ineffective outputs were often caused by an inadequate adherence to general objectives, measures and modus operandi championed by the overarching SF programming. The findings have validated the theoretical assumptions posed by this research, that all three variables are indispensable to enforce effective outputs. The next section aims to confirm that the assumption also holds valid in the context of Slovak SF programming.

²³² Interview #31, 2013

²³³ Both FSG and Asociación Tierras del Sur have been running employment initiatives with similar methodology and positive results. Both confirmed that they were not contacted or consulted by the authorities, despite close contact and previous involvement with CODE.

6.5 Slovakia – success stories

As demonstrated in the previous empirical chapters the failure of SF outputs stemmed from the neglect of structural dimensions of social exclusion, weakly institutionalized partnership and the lack of synergies. However, a number of projects were still able to provide effective SF outputs in the area of social exclusion, contradicting a widely held contention that SF assistance fails each and every time. As will be demonstrated below, the positive outputs were by and large influenced by the adopted framing, reliance on a co-productive partnership arrangement and accelerated coordinative efforts, facts which often did not reflect the standard embedded in the Slovak SF programming. Upon close examination, the three selected cases – the national programme Field Social Work; regional project From Benefits to Paid Work; and local initiative Inclusive Education – appeared to mirror the successful approaches developed in the Spanish contexts.

6.6 National Project “Field Social Work”

In the programming period 2007 – 2013, the SDF an IB for the OP E&SI was put in charge of improving social services targeted at the MRC. The Slovak government has been promoting social field work since 2002 (through various projects)²³⁴, but only in the second funding period (2007-2013) the ESF was allocated (under the Measure 2.1²³⁵) to further develop a demand-driven field work in the localities. The leading idea was to provide “additional” financial support to the municipalities, to advance their capacities to address endogenous needs and develop tailored approaches to social assistance. The SF experts and policy-makers were in consensus regarding the importance of social field work, and considered the undertaken initiatives of great value and demonstrated impact (Hrustič 2009). The social field work initiatives have created a number of positions for the social workers and their assistants (often Roma persons from the MRC). Between 2009 and 2010, 346 field social workers and 397 assistants were active in 229 community projects. Their work was based on regular consultation with the clients, mediation between the MRC and the local authorities, provision of assistance in accessing public services.

²³⁴ Since 2002 the field social work was implemented through numerous pilot projects and wider national policies. From 2004 it was run by the Ministry of Social Affairs that supported individual project to selected municipalities.

²³⁵ Support for the social inclusion through the development of social services, with particular focus on marginalized Roma communities.

Although the ongoing activities were positively evaluated, they were prone to discontinuity, uncertainty and irregular financing (see Hrustič 2009).

As a response to these shortcomings, in 2011 the SDF launched a national project *Field Social Work in the Communities*. This three-year initiative was to reinforce and systematize the ongoing efforts. The project was endowed with a €29,999,999.46 budget designated for 250 municipalities, where 860 social workers and assistants would be employed. The SDF made considerable efforts to stabilise social field work activities by anchoring the programme's financing for 3 years, abolishing the co-financing conditions for the localities (and NGOs) and introducing supervision and monitoring. More importantly the SDF has introduced a common methodology with a clearly articulated conditionality (i.e. anti-discrimination clause) regional coordination standards, supervision of field workers and performance indicators. In just two years, the project was championed as a “good practice” successfully channelling the funds to the most needed areas and increasing the absorption rate by 10% (SDF 2012).

6.6.1 Causal Factors – structural approach

The success of the programme can be linked to its overall design that presented the situation of the MRC as a structural issue, in need of long-term, comprehensive and mutually reinforcing measures. The stipulated objectives aimed to enforce changes in the methodological approaches to social work and strengthened institutional resources of social services (i.e. training, procedural streamlining, monitoring). It was stipulated that the work of social workers was to be systematically analyzed by a designated agency (with substantial discretion and decision-making capacity) in order to inform other policies and initiatives (in the area of housing, employment, education). As stated by SDF:

Any project that deals with social exclusion needs to focus on the performance of institutions that deliver relevant services. We aim to provide social workers with clear performance guidelines and the proper understanding of legislation and procedures. Their expertise and experience working with the excluded communities is of great value hence, there is a need to develop and consolidate relatively simple

*supervisory and feedback mechanisms. Only then this knowledge can inform the general workings of the Slovak social and integration policies.*²³⁶

As the design of the project moved away from framing social exclusion in terms of individual adaptability (thus going against the Slovak SF programming where exclusion is seen as a product of individual shortcomings) towards a more structural definition, it brought attention to the patterns of discrimination, under-resourced local services, and a general failure of the Slovak labour policies to “activate” Roma communities (Oravec and Bošelová 2006; Sirovátka 2008). Moreover, it presented social field work as a tool for modernizing public services, thus challenging a widely held perception that it is an initiative designed only for the benefit of the MRC. According to the SDF such reframing helped to secure greater SF allocations since it reflected the main objective of the SF programming “modernization of public administration” (Objective 4.3.6). While the focus on discrimination continued to be rather limited, the anti-discrimination conditionality was generally successful in curbing explicit racism among the local authorities:

*In the framework of the project it was no longer acceptable to use anti-Gypsy rhetoric or to explicitly re-direct funding to other priorities. The interested localities had to clearly demonstrate their integration strategies and efforts made to stop discrimination.*²³⁷

The design of the project has not only contributed to a general re-thinking of the way SF can best address social exclusion, but it also facilitated creation of new approaches to partnership and cooperation. Perhaps the most important feature of the partnership design employed in the project was its co-productive arrangements. Rather than following the logic of the SF programming and “off-loading” the responsibility for project implementation on the local authorities or the NGOs, the SDF assumed the responsibility over managerial and administrative matters. The localities were no longer required to go through complex application procedures as they were sub-contracted by SDF as delivery partners. Their eligibility was assessed in terms of the ongoing practices and commitments to integration. Furthermore, the responsibilities of the social workers were clearly stipulated and supervisory units were established (at the local and

²³⁶ Interview #50, 2011

²³⁷ Interview #50, 2011

regional level). More importantly cooperative regulations were institutionalized, in particular the contractual agreements between the social field workers and the local authorities. While this top-down approach was criticized as overly “constraining”²³⁸ the designers argued that it allowed for standardization of monitoring and evaluation without impinging on the flexibility and discretion of the service deliverers. This in turn reinforced compliance and accountability for the performance of the project:

*For years interaction between the social field workers and the local public servants has not followed any common standards or protocols, leading to various conflicts (...) the introduction of performance guidelines and incentives literally in just few months have fixed these issues. Before, the assistants to social workers were treated almost as volunteers, a lack of supervision meant that nobody was truly accountable for their performance but at the same time their hands were tied by procedures and local fraternities. Not surprisingly the turnover was extremely high and the social workers tended to lose their motivation rather quickly.*²³⁹

The introduction of supervisory and coordinative agents has also allowed for channelling of the local knowledge into policy-making. As expressed by a supervisor working in Sobrance:

*The social field workers are now able to give feedback about their experience into the policy-making apparatus, while more work is still needed to exploit these inputs, a system of regular reporting and meetings helps us to identify barriers and challenges and learn from them.*²⁴⁰

The partnership design has allowed for the alignment of fragmented goals and objectives. This in turn has strengthened coordination efforts and allowed for consolidation of synergies between the project and local development programmes. While, the SDF introduced numerous procedural changes and institutionalized performance reviews, the form of social services delivered was not substantially altered, allegedly to fit the methods endorsed by the local social services departments. Although the programme was criticized for buttressing “outdated methods”²⁴¹, the choice to support and sustain efforts already implemented on the ground proved very effective. According to the evaluation report, duplication was largely avoided and resources (financial,

²³⁸ Interview #63, 2011

²³⁹ Interview #71, 2011

²⁴⁰ Interview #57, 2011

²⁴¹ Interview #63, 2011

human and cognitive) were cumulated. Moreover, according to the project stakeholders, the central authorities began to see the project as an effective reinforcement of the Slovak Job Activation and Education Policies, which generated greater commitment to support it. The importance of continuing efforts rather than promoting constant introduction of new initiatives became the staple of the project. As expressed by a local Mayor:

*There is a predisposition to think that Roma projects need to be innovative, different or unique, since nothing worked thus far. This is not necessarily true, there are numerous positive examples of successful projects, the problem is that they are often discontinued due to the lack of support from the government.*²⁴²

The consolidation of synergy also changed the way SF assistance was viewed by the local mayors. According to the SDF, the social field work was no longer seen as a one-time assistance package, but a way to strengthen the overall workings of the local institutions²⁴³. While the wages of the social workers were financed strictly from the SF, an increasing number of localities planned their expenditures around the project's activities. The elimination of the competition-based allocations of SF only reinforced such planning efforts. It allowed the poorer and more isolated localities to benefit from SF without engaging their scarce resources in costly application procedures.

The national project constituted a clear example that the presence and interaction of the three variables can secure effective outputs even in an environment marked by failure. The design of the national project, its approach to partnership and coordination, has diverged from the model endorsed by the SF programming. This brings forward questions regarding a pending need for re-thinking of the modus operandi of the Slovak SF programming. However, it is doubtful that these questions will be addressed by the ruling authorities. At this point, the achievements of the project are severely jeopardized as the changes in the government resulted in the abandonment of the structural focus and synergies championed by the SDF. The widespread request to finance social field work from the state budget continues to be ignored by the new political elites. The majority of the field social work directed at the MRC continues to be financed strictly from the

²⁴² Mayors for Roma Inclusion Forum Meeting, Skalica, Slovakia 2011

²⁴³ Interview #50, 2011

ESF, running the risk of reinforcing the pervasive and ineffective practice of financing Roma inclusion initiatives strictly from European funds.

6.7 “From Benefits to the Paid Work”

In 2012, under the framework of OP Employment and Social Inclusion, the municipality of Banská Bystrica was granted € 313 000 (ESF contribution: € 266 000) to realize a pilot project “From Benefits to the Paid Work” aimed at tackling long-term unemployment in the locality. The project offered temporary subsidised employment to 40 long-term unemployed persons dependent on social assistance benefits²⁴⁴. The partners in the project included the municipality, the Regional Development Agency, the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and the Education Centre for Non-Profit Organisations. These entities have come together to find local solutions to long-term unemployment and exploit available local resources. Although relatively small in scope, the project tested innovative job insertion methodologies and managed to establish institutional links between social and employment services. Upon its completion the outputs were positively evaluated (i.e. 100% of participants completed their training, 27.5 % gained stable employment, and 11% updated their skills, at the same time the procedural cooperation between social and employment services was consolidated)²⁴⁵ and there is a real chance that the working methods will inform the future development of the nationwide programme and potential legislative amendments²⁴⁶.

The most important “achievement” of the project was the institutionalization of the intermediate labour market (ILM), a model of waged work in specially created temporary jobs that contribute to neighbourhood regeneration (i.e. gardening, street cleaning, maintenance work). According to the stakeholders it provided a more sustained progression of the individuals from welfare to work than the traditional activation policy practiced in Slovakia:

²⁴⁴ The description of the project can be found at: www.upsvar.sk/

²⁴⁵ The European Commission also praised the project for reaching out to the Roma communities and its ‘direct but not exclusive targeting methods’. According the project fiche 50% of all the participants had Romani background.

²⁴⁶ The partners involved in the project have been ‘lobbying’ the central government for amendments to the employment legislation, in particular the introduction of the terms “employer of an interim work” and “social public procurement” (Páleník 2013).

*Compared with other labour market initiatives targeted at the same group, our project offered better value for money after the adjustments were made for the value of the services provided. It also generated a higher job placement, higher incomes and longer retention of employment.*²⁴⁷

In effect the project methodology was considered by the local authorities as a blueprint for further actions and currently there are ongoing talks to implement similar efforts across the entire country.

6.7.1 Causal factors – tackling systemic barriers

The success of the project could be ascribed to its well planned design that recognized structural dimension of Roma exclusion and outlined clear objectives and measures to tackle systemic barriers, including discrimination in the labour market. Although the project emphasized the need for “personal adaptation” the very creation of ILM was based on the recognition that addressing long-term unemployment and exclusion²⁴⁸ necessitates changes in the institutional approach. The design (based on a comprehensive evaluation of the local labour conditions) emphasized the need to intensify efforts of bureaucrats (social and employment departments), device (or simplify) procedures for labour insertion and act as ‘supporters’ rather than strict ‘regulators’. Moreover, the project’s diagnostics asserted that cutting social support does not in fact serve as an incentive for finding employment, arguing that what is needed instead is constructive support which includes training, guidance and anti-discrimination measures (Filipová 2013). The project partner explained:

*It is irrational to think that reducing social support will motivate people to find employment, such approach is blind to existing barriers preventing people from entering or re-entering the labour market ... our comprehensive package acts on two fronts –it tackles structural barriers and provides individualized support that is the key to success.*²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷Interview #64, 2013

²⁴⁸It is worth mentioning that in the context of this project social exclusion is understood almost exclusively as long-term unemployment or non-participation in the labour market.

²⁴⁹Interview #66, 2013

What needs to be mentioned is that the Roma minority was not articulated as the main target group in the project design. Instead the eligibility of participants was assessed using indicators pertaining to ‘period of unemployment, registration in the unemployment office, and welfare provision status’ (Filipová 2013). Nevertheless, the transparency of the selection process, and focus on those ‘most excluded’ meant that close to 50% of participants were of Roma origin. In the interviews the project manager noted that presenting the project as one geared towards long-term unemployed and not specific community avoided stigmatization of the Roma and most importantly gained wide support of the city officials.

The performance of pilot project was further strengthened by the adopted partnership design, which consolidated co-productive arrangements between selected expert NGOs and relevant public agencies. The cooperation was based on consensus as all partners contributed to the final design of the project and were held accountable for its implementation. Clear designation of responsibilities and transparent communication channels facilitated formulation of a common methodology. According to the Regional Development Office, while conflict arose among the stakeholders, the overall effect of the co-productive partnership enforced accountability for project’s performance and reciprocity of resources²⁵⁰. Bringing on board qualified NGOs with experience working with vulnerable groups meant that the project design was more informed about the local needs. This according to the evaluation was a leading factor in prompting the adjustment of existing administrative procedures, simplifying support for labour placement and compensation (Filipová 2013). Overall, by gaining the support of the leading body (City Office of Banská Bystrica) and relying on the appointment of high quality managers (with assistance from Education Centre for Non-profit Organisations) ensured solid delivery infrastructure:

Only through strategic partnership the ILM can deliver effective outputs... sole training of individuals by one organization is futile without regulatory concessions provided by the local decision-makers and earmarking of the local resources²⁵¹.

Finally, the project was design in a way to complement the ongoing local labour-insertion initiatives. While the project aimed to test new approaches, efforts were made to coordinate them

²⁵⁰ Interview #66, 2013

²⁵¹ Interview#65, 2013

with existing employment and social services (i.e. recruiting beneficiaries registered in employment office). The creation of “temporary employment” adhered to legislative provisions as did the performance criteria for contracting (the local authorities were performing reviews and monitoring in line with outlined regulations). The participants received wages, at a level which related to local market rates which greatly influenced retention, motivation and progression of individual participants (Filipová 2013). The focus on job search was made an integral part of the process, and was reinforced by a close participation with the employment office. Finally, even though the project partners were often critical of the active labour measures, the project was presented as the improvement tool with an added value potential. As project partner explained:

*We recognize that basic infrastructure for labour insertion is in place, it is not about cancelling it and creating something new, but rather about thinking how the provided services could be improved.*²⁵²

This stance brought about criticisms, as some commentators argued that such measures are nothing more than a reinforcement of neo-liberal focus, embedded in the activation policies, and pointed out that the relationship between the project and employment services is not as effective as presented²⁵³. However, the endorsement of ‘complementarity’ has opened the door for a dialogue between the local and national authorities, and strengthened the position of the model as a viable policy alternative:

*We are dependent on the central government and their funding, if we alienate them we will be left with no resources after the SF run out, it is all about compromise and incremental changes ...we provided a good service and our methods could serve as a jumpstart for needed reforms.*²⁵⁴

In fact the promotion of incremental changes appeared to be fruitful as the central authorities began to consider the implementation of the initiative as a national project (albeit with the help of SF from the 2014-2020 funding period with no special funds earmarked from the state budgets). Moreover as explained by a project stakeholder:

²⁵² Interview# 66, 2013

²⁵³ Conference “From Pilots to Outcomes” Brussels, Belgium 2013

²⁵⁴ Interview #65, 2013

*There is a shift in thinking about long-term unemployment; it is no longer viewed as an individual matter, a product of some sort of pathology. The civil servants are beginning to realize that support infrastructure needs to be created. The unemployed need to find motivation to work but pathways to employment need to be improved and sustained.*²⁵⁵

The implementation of the ILM model in Banská Bystrica demonstrated that the overarching design of the project, the adopted co-productive partnership and synergy, have positively affected the outputs of the initiatives. What is worth emphasizing is that the focus on the structural dimension of exclusion almost automatically led to active participation of the local public servants. This has induced a commitment to ‘mutual responsibility’ over the improvements in employment policies and sustainable economic growth. At the same time a strong leadership of the local authorities, affirmed that institutional adaptations are needed, and should become one of the government’s key priorities. The experience of Banská Bystrica also showed that positive outputs can be achieved even without identifying the Roma as the main target group:

*This project is small, so it is probably not very representative of the entire country, but I really believe that moving away from ethnic targeting of SF projects can end the deadlock and reluctance of the local authorities to sponsor inclusion programs. After all, the long-term unemployed Roma are not that different from the long-term unemployed non-Roma, in fact there is evidence that both groups struggle with similar barriers and problems.*²⁵⁶

The project from Banská Bystrica has demonstrated that effective outputs are contingent on the three variables which are largely lacking in the general operation of the Slovak SF programming. It appears that only by rejecting the common rules, SF projects can provide needed and effective assistance. Hence, once again questions regarding the general approaches championed by Slovakia are questioned. At the same time it appears that Slovak project managers are more capable at challenging the overarching policy-design than their counterparts in Spain. This raises issues about the capacity of the leading SF managers to ‘control’ the on-the-ground activities. Perhaps it could be argued that the Slovak authorities are more willing or prepared to experiment with the usage of SF.

²⁵⁵ Interview #64, 2013

²⁵⁶ Interview #65, 2013

6.8 Spišský Hrhov – integrated education

Over the last ten years, a small municipality Spišský Hrhov in Eastern Slovakia has been praised for its work on Roma integration. Located in Levoča District it has 1355 inhabitants, 300 of which are Roma. Since 2000 the locality has introduced an array of effective integration programmes in the area of employment and housing. However, in the context of SF programming the initiatives that stand out are in the field of education. According to the Council of Europe's 'Good Practice' catalogue the work undertaken by the local elementary school provides a 'positive example of problem-free co-existence, cooperation and removal of minority tensions and barriers'. The public countryside school has 9 grades and in accordance with international standards for classification of education (ISCED) offers a primary education for approximately 270 pupils and a pre-primary education for 60 pupils. Educational activities have been provided by 20 fully qualified teachers and professional employees (including three Roma assistants). From the total number of pupils, more than half (exactly 51%) are of Roma origin, a scenario that significantly influences the character of the school's educational programme. The elements of inclusion and a multicultural dimension are strongly supported and the school relies on strong cooperation with the NGOs (i.e. People in Need). This cooperation has resulted in numerous in-house projects and joint initiatives which promoted desegregation and inter-cultural dialogue²⁵⁷. Although a high drop-out rate continues to be an issue (especially among girls) second chance initiatives have been offered, together with socio-economical support, what provided means as well as motivation for continuing education. Presently, close to 90% of pupils complete their compulsory education.

For the period 2007-2013 the school received, via the Ministry of Education, grants from ESF amounting to €227,050, for a 24 month project *Social Inclusion of Students through Improved Education*. The initiative was targeted at 131 school pupils and 11 educators. The project was linked to the OP Education under the objective *Securing long-term competitiveness of the Slovak Republic by adapting education system to knowledge society*. It also espoused the internal aims of the school including;

²⁵⁷ The description of the project can be found at: www.skolahrhov.sk/sk/o-skole/ and <http://goodpracticeroma.ppa.coe.int/en/pdf/127>

- Facilitating access to formal education and the acquisition of skills needed in the labor market and,
- The use of innovative forms and methods of teaching, and development of competencies among the educators.

At the end of 2013, the school has undergone extensive modernization, championing innovative educational methodologies, which combined “scenario-based instructions” and communication technology with leisure and motivational activities. In the region it has earned the reputation as a modern, rapidly developing institution, where school-pupil-parent relations are an elementary element in the process of management and communication (Čupka 2012).

6.8.1 The causal factors – strategic planning

This case demonstrates that effective outputs of education initiatives were greatly influenced by the adopted strategic design. First and foremost, the designed has moved away from associating the patterns of social exclusion with individual or group adaptability. The endorsed integration action-plans emphasize the structural dimension of social exclusion, identifying discrimination, weakly institutionalized social support system, and low quality of education as the main causes of marginalization:

*We consistently lack resources to develop a high quality education for all, but without strong systemic support the vulnerable communities simply have no chance to get out of the poverty trap. It is easy to blame the poor but it is much harder to accept that our institutions are weak, under-resourced and unprepared to face modern day problems.*²⁵⁸

This stance was reflected in the objectives of the project, which called for the development and modernization of school’s management, teaching methods and outreach programmes. The measures were geared towards cognitive developments; innovation of teaching methodologies (adequate to pupils’ need and skills), utilization of ICT²⁵⁹ in the education process and training of pedagogues. The school budget was earmarked for acquisition of equipment, assessment exercises and training sessions. Within the scope of the project, one extra Roma teacher assistant

²⁵⁸ Interview #67, 2011

²⁵⁹ Information and communication technology

was employed to work with the students on an individual basis. Although, there were some criticisms concerning residual attention to desegregation, the school convincingly argued that:

*Modernization of teaching methodology is the key, we need to train teachers first so they can be able to provide pupils with best instruction, we need technology which would allow for setting in motion innovative education processes. It is not the best idea to focus only on securing quota of Roma and non-Roma children in each classroom, especially if they will not get the best possible attention they need.*²⁶⁰

While the motivation of individual pupils was often stressed as a factor influencing a high drop-out rate and academic underperformance, socio-economic factors were strongly acknowledged within the design. This legitimized provision of economic support to the vulnerable students and their families. Moreover, teaching instructors were to consider “immediate environment of the children and their problems stemming from everyday life”²⁶¹ in order to provide individual guidance when necessary. The teachers and teacher’s assistants received systematic training and were encouraged to develop tailored courses reflecting the needs and interests of children (i.e. Roma culture, leadership training, early childhood education programs).

The conviction that educational integration requires rethinking of the standard methodologies and procedures motivated the management to seek expert opinions and international assistance. The management has formed extensive networks with various organizations, but most importantly it motivated the local authorities and private firms to take an active part in the school and its activities. The reliance on working through partnership facilitated aggregation of resources and allowed for expanding the scope and sustainability of the introduced measures. Well designed management structures²⁶² with clear designation of responsibilities, improved the operational efficiency but more importantly it gave rise to community interest and demand for high quality education. As explained by a school employee:

²⁶⁰ Interview #67, 2011

²⁶¹ See www.skolahrhov.sk/data/projekty/projekt.pdf

²⁶² The external assessment by the European Council Thematic Team has extensively praised the well designed and executed management, based on clear objectives, performance indicators, feedback mechanism, and transparent communication (CAHROM 2012).

*The collaboration was crucial in nurturing the notion that everybody is in some form responsible for the education of children, Roma and non-Roma. The community has begun to see the empowering potential of education. Changing of attitudes is a key, without respect and commitment to quality education, no amount of money will be really effective.*²⁶³

Finally, the measures were design to ensure communication with the local employers (i.e. companies in Prešov, as well as local social enterprises) in an effort to provide internships and part-time employment opportunities for pupils who completed their compulsory education²⁶⁴.

The school also took steps to coordinate its activities with existing legislative provisions (i.e. teacher's assistants, and zero grade curriculums). The school's management board delegated a person to communicate directly with the local authorities and keep close contact with the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education. Moreover, the school management has undergone training on the use and management of SF and maintained communication with the MAs of the OP Education and OP E&SI. While SF were used to prompt modernization and development of innovative curriculums and pedagogical approaches, efforts were made to adhere to regional and national educational reforms and development plans:

*Sometimes it is extremely difficult to promote innovation while adhering to legislative regulations, as we are constrained by bureaucratic tenets, however with the right planning and support of the local authorities, we can push our agenda forward.*²⁶⁵

The integration objectives were also reflective of the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration, up to 2020. In line with the principles and recommendations of the strategy, the school developed material about Roma history and culture and added it to the main curriculum. The aim was to positively portray the contribution of this ethnic group to the national heritage.

Once again this case has demonstrated that attention to structural dimensions of exclusion is indispensable for effective SF outputs. It also showed that using SF as a mean to improve institutional approaches to exclusion is best realized through partnership, which serves to inform

²⁶³ Interview #67, 2011

²⁶⁴ The creation of links between education and employment was envisioned as a 'motivation tool' for pupils as well as parents, but also allowed to assess the employment needs and how they could be met by education methodologies.

²⁶⁵ Interview #67, 2011

the proposed measures and facilitates their efficient implementation. In this particular case, the school's efforts to coordinate its plans and activities with general education legislation and integration strategies, not only have not impinged on innovation and modernization, but in fact opened the doors for policy learning and potential scaling up of localized practices.

6.9 Concluding remarks

This chapter demonstrated empirically that SF effective outputs are contingent on all three variables – strategic design, partnership design and programmatic synergy. It showed that all three factors are interconnected and tend to reinforce one another. What appeared particularly pronounced was the influence of the adopted framing on the formation of partnership arrangements and creation of programmatic synergies. As a result, the chapter has further confirmed the main argument of this work regarding the structuring effect of an overarching policy design on the implementation process. Nevertheless the exploitation of the added value of SF and the reliance on co-productive partnership have also been instrumental in redefining official goals and “re-directing” the implementation process.

The findings also reconfirmed other arguments presented in this work. Firstly, it was demonstrated that the recognition of institutional dimension of social exclusion and adoption of ethnically neutral targeting of funding is conducive to the effective outputs, even when general programming endorses opposite framing and intervention methodologies. Secondly, it was confirmed that effective outputs are best secured by a rather exclusive co-productive partnership based on the involvement of experts with strong decision-making capacities and experience working on-the-ground. With that challenging the argument that community empowerment is necessary if SF are to be effectively implemented. Finally, it verifies the argument that programmatic synergy is crucial if SF interventions are to be effective, showing that in the modern governance, reinforcement of existing measures is more pronounced and valued than innovation and experimentation.

Interestingly, the findings demonstrated that in both countries the results were due to the non compliance of the individual projects with the SF programming framework. In that it could be

inferred that ideational and procedural character of the Spanish SF programming has been in general more effective than the Slovak one. At the same time, the intentions of the Spanish SF projects to introduce services valued by the Roma community (i.e. Promociona affirmative action plans) or strive for innovative approaches (Granada Employment) were unable to challenge or by-pass SF programming stipulations. It follows that potential improvements of the general workings of the Spanish inclusion strategies were strongly undermined. At the same time, the success of the Slovak SF projects by and large failed to prompt changes in the general approach to SF allocations. While this shows the strong structuring influence of the overarching strategic action plans, it also somewhat pessimistically demonstrates the residual influence the local initiatives have on the shape and aim of cohesion policy.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

The use of SF by member states for the development of comprehensive and context sensitive inclusion policies for Roma communities has proven to be highly problematic and not free of controversies. The zealous promotion of SF as highly suitable instruments for addressing systemic causes of inequality and facilitating changes towards a substantive equality for Roma people (EC 2008:5) has not resulted in tangible or expected results. Perplexingly, the heightened political attention to Roma exclusion has actually corresponded with the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of numerous Roma communities and a growing anti-Gypsism across all member states. The EC has blamed the situation on the low accessibility of the funds by marginalized Roma communities and insufficient use of the funds for broader inclusion initiatives (EC 2010c). Paradoxically, the availability of generous financial provisions has presented the risk of indirect discrimination of the Roma and sustainment of their exclusion from development and quality public services (Kocze et al, 2014).

Nevertheless, to say that the mishandling of SF has been universal would be a grave overstatement. Mounting empirical data has demonstrated a clear variation in the outputs across member states. As demonstrated in the introduction of this dissertation, the existing cross-country assessments identified Spain as the most successful case, with a sound record of absorption and allocation of funding to inclusion strategies. In turn, Slovak performance was presented as least effective, falling behind other member states. This divergence has often been considered as self-explanatory, with stakeholders confidently claiming that Spain as a richer and more experienced country has had a solid institutional capacity to effectively exploit European financial transfers. Many commentators insisted that diverging outputs were also connected to different degree of compliance with EU regulations, and the existence of political will to address Roma exclusion (EURoma 2012).

However, these contentions have been mainly anecdotal, based on ideological convictions not necessarily backed by a solid empirical proof. The largely descriptive report literature might have identified the diverging SF outputs but has failed to provide analytically sound explanations of its causes. Thus, while one learned where SF were more effective, the causal relationships

were left obscured and highly politicized. Moreover, the existing theoretical literature on Europeanization and cohesion policy proved unable to fully account for the specificity of Spanish success and Slovakian failure. Given the urgency of the Roma predicament and the considerable potential of SF to impose more effective inclusion strategies, this research sought to answer the imperative question: what are the causes of diverging outputs in the utilization of SF for Roma inclusion in Spain and Slovakia?

To answer this question I chose to focus on the implementation process, exploring policy-making dynamics that take place after the transposition of EU directives and recommendations. Relying on implementation and governance scholarship I tested the impact of domestic variables – conceptualized as policy design, partnership and coordination – on the SF outputs. The expansive analytical framework enabled me to capture a set of often implicit relationships and delivered findings that challenged widely-held empirical and theoretical perceptions about the performance of SF in the area of Roma exclusion.

In this concluding chapter I summarize my main empirical finding, once again outlining how the results were obtained. I then discuss the theoretical and policy implications and contributions of my findings. Subsequently I outline the limitations of this study and propose ideas for future research.

7.1 Empirical findings

The main empirical findings are chapter specific and were summarized within the respective empirical chapters: (Chapter 3 Policy Design, Chapter 4 Partnership Design, Chapter 5 Programmatic Synergy and Chapter 6 Combining Effect). This section provides a synthesis of the main findings that answered the posed research question.

7.1.1 Implementation patterns

Firstly, the investigation has captured important patterns characterizing the general workings of SF implementation processes in the area of social inclusion. The analysis of different stages of implementation demonstrated that SF outputs in the two countries were largely structured by the

overarching action plans –the SF programming. The top-down focus unveiled that the design of SF programming mandated significant behavioural adjustment of the leading SF and social inclusion stakeholders. While the principal implementation agencies were given considerable discretion, they worked through the state and predetermined rules and expectations. They internalized the provided objectives and made use of tools supplied by the centre (or a region in a more federalist setting). While manipulation certainly took place, blunt non-compliance with the programming was penalized. These dynamics attest that SF programming follows a structured top-down logic of implementation, where local authorities and social actors are in fact delivering programs that adhere to political priorities and overarching objectives. This observation allows for making a confident statement that the utilization of SF in the area of social inclusion has been much more driven by a vertical chain of command than many cohesion scholars would like to admit.

This does not mean that the implementation of SF is an example of a hermetic and strictly hierarchical system of governance. The analytical focus on decentralization and devolution of power characterizing modern governance showed that in fact a growing number of actors can influence policy-making processes. However, while governance literature tends to present devolution as an intense process that alters power relations (Rhodes 1997; Osborne 2010) in the context of SF programming participatory dynamics appeared fairly restricted. In both Spain and Slovakia it was still the central or regional authorities that dictated partnership opportunities and selected “suitable” partners. While powerful groups were in position to lobby for policy influence, the disenfranchised and less organized interests had to adhere to the imposed rules. In short, the participation of local and social actors was not necessarily open and all-inclusive and the central authorities continued to act as gatekeepers, demarcating the activities and influence of potential partners. More importantly, the empowerment of vulnerable communities through partnership was weak if not non-existent, showing that despite strong recommendations flowing from the EU, the proper tools for and clear conceptualization of what is understood as “empowerment” were missing. This finding alone challenges the theoretical observations about the role of social actors in decentralized policy-making; in particular the extensive influence and decision-making power they hold over planning and implementation.

The structuring effect of the overarching action plans was also mediated by bureaucratic protocol, which remained largely resistant to required administrative changes. The analytical focus on administrative instruments used to coordinate SF programming showed that these resembled deeply consolidated administrative practices. In other words, depending on the capacity of the administrative apparatus the SF were managed either along the national and local action plans or in isolation from general policy-making practices. The findings showed that in places where domestic governance has had strong tradition of coordination and joined-up government, the efforts to coordinate SF programming with domestic bureaucratic practices were greatly facilitated. In turn, where the governing apparatus was characterized by departmentalization, the SF programming followed a similar logic, working largely in isolation from domestic approaches. This finding reminds us that the strength of cohesion policy to generate policy and institutional convergence is greatly impeded by bureaucratic path dependencies. Perhaps more importantly, it shows that any analysis of policy outputs needs to pay careful attention to administrative workings, as the political devil is very much in the details.

While the empirical investigation exposed implementation patterns that challenge the theoretical perception about the management of cohesion in domestic settings, the main aim of this research was to identify a set of conditions needed to secure effective SF outputs. The scrupulous content analysis triangulated with semi-structured interviews has in fact identified strong causal relationships driving successful outputs.

7.1.2 Achieving successful outputs– ideas matter

One of the key conditions that influenced the diverging SF outputs was the strength of overarching SF action strategy – the SF programming. However, while the clarity and instrumentality of the strategies had some impact, facilitating efficient absorption, the deciding element of the strategy was the framing of the social exclusion problem. The theoretical assessment presented in Chapter 3 established that social exclusion is largely a constructed concept, strongly influenced by normative contentions about the causes of poverty and marginalization (Daly 2006; Atkinson & Davoudi 2000). The empirical investigation has confirmed this theoretical assumption, showing that while policy-makers relied on some empirical assessments to formulate the definitions of Roma exclusion, these assessments were

“mediated” by the existing cognitive and moral maps that oriented the actions and routines of policy-makers. In turn these politically “accepted” definitions legitimized a specific course of action, including the objectives, priorities and policy targets. The content analysis of the Spanish and Slovak SF programmings unveiled very different framing of the problem to be ameliorated. It also revealed different action strategies that defy widely-held notions about the “appropriate” way to effectively assess and address Roma exclusion.

In the case of Spain the framing of social exclusion in terms of structural barriers in the field of employment prompted the adoption of mainstreaming approach to exclusion. The content analysis triangulated with interviews with public managers confirmed that institutionalization of mainstreaming generated an array of anti-discrimination measures that benefited directly or indirectly Roma communities. However, the residual definition of exclusion (in terms of limited access to the labour market) essentially meant that inclusion efforts were confined to one specific sector – employment. While this approach undermined the multidimensional aspect of exclusion, thus going against EU recommendations, it did strengthen the overall managerial efficiency of the SF and somewhat unexpectedly managed to reach a higher number of beneficiaries. The absence of affirmative action strategies and negligent attention to “specificity” of Roma exclusion generated another counterintuitive result, as the expected redirection of SF away from the Roma did not take place. In fact this “ethnically neutral” approach fostered greater political attention to patterns of social exclusion and reinforced inter-group solidarity; most visible in an enhanced cooperation between mainstream NGOs and Roma-led organizations and associations.

In contrast, Slovak SF programming presented social exclusion as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing a wide range of policy areas, which mirrored the priorities of the EC (i.e. employment, education, housing, health). However, this conceptualization has reinforced the fragmentation of objectives and priorities resulting in miscellaneous interventions, which lacked the multifaceted dimension. Compiled with framing of social exclusion as the lack of individual or group adaptability it missed an opportunity to address institutional discrimination and barriers faced by the Roma when accessing high quality public services. The neglect of the structural dimension of social exclusion, clearly visible in the strategic documents, enforced channelling of funding towards measures that aimed to change the behaviour of target groups –

Roma communities. The adopted targeted approach was supposed to offset the pervasive practice of re-directing funding from the most marginalized communities, instead leading to the isolation of Roma measures from regional and local development strategies. This de facto reinforced the re-direction of funding to other priorities. While targeting appeared sensitive to the specificity of the conditions in Roma settlements, it in fact contributed to the ethnicization of the problem. As confirmed by the stakeholders the opportunity for systemic transformation was effectively lost, and the Roma could benefit only from short-lived training and consulting activities, not linked to public services or poverty reduction programmes.

Overall, while the multidimensional aspect of Roma deprivation is irrefutable, in the context of SF programming the findings show that the sectoral approach to social exclusion was more effective. It allowed for formulation of precise priorities and objectives, streamlining of project-calls management and aggregation of funding. In the end this allowed for creating projects larger in scope with considerable potential for policy influence. The findings also refute the general assumptions regarding benefits of affirmative action and targeted approaches. The research revealed that targeting of SF at Roma minority groups without resources provided for institutional ‘transformations’ (i.e. anti-discrimination and equality principles) was ultimately counterproductive. In Slovakia it created a false impression that Roma are benefiting from tailored programmes that helped them to access public services and assistance, when in practice, only limited funds were used to develop high-quality public services, tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups. This, as was revealed in the interviews with NGOs, led to disenchantment and de-legitimization of the entire SF programming. What needs to be highlighted is that while Spain aimed to tackle exclusion in a long-term and incremental manner, Slovakia opted for quick-fixes with no long-term strategic planning. The first strategy appeared more effective, even if the immediate results proved difficult to quantify.

In short, the findings support the argument that the definition of problems constitutes a leading factor in generating effective implementation outputs. Focusing the analysis exclusively on the solutions and managerial capacities of the implementation bodies hides the fact that these are shaped by the very perceptions of the problem, which are not always reflective of on-the-ground

realities. Moreover, acknowledging the structural causes of social-exclusion and opting for sectoral and ethnically neutral approaches may constitute a condition for successful outputs.

7.1.3 Effective outputs – representation dilemma

The empirical investigation also generated interesting findings regarding the role of participation in shaping the SF outputs. In chapter 4, the analytical focus on the aims and operation of partnership demonstrated that neither of the two countries took upon themselves to empower vulnerable communities through participation. However this neglect has neither offset the effectiveness of SF outputs nor substantially contributed to their underperformance. This rather surprising finding contradicts widely held convictions that the empowerment of marginalized groups is imperative for securing effective and legitimate policies. In fact the research clearly showed that successful outputs were contingent on a rather constrained and corporatist partnership model, while aims to ‘democratize’ participation proved largely ineffectual.

The analysis of the partnership principle, in terms of who participates, how and to what effect, showed that successful SF outputs in Spain were strongly influenced by the institutionalization of a corporatist partnership model. First and foremost the adopted partnership design provided participatory opportunities to a limited number of organizations and interests. However it also provided technical support for building participatory capacity among these selected actors. The enabling strategy has prepared the local agents to act as equal partners for the MAs and regional and central authorities. This role was reinforced with clear designation of responsibility and reliance on consensus making. The conscious move away from all-inclusive participation did in fact strengthen collaboration and eased the difficulties in arriving at a common stance. The SF stakeholders confirmed that “safety in numbers” contributed to efficient and effective management of SF and streamlining of priorities and objectives. While critics highlighted the pervasive co-opting of civil society, it is difficult to deny that this strategy has contributed to an overall success of SF programming. Organizations such as FSG became a reference point for all public agents, serving the role of a mediator between highly complex bureaucratic system and the needs and expectations of Roma organizations and associations.

Thus the prioritization of substantive representation over a descriptive one secured the successful outputs. Selecting organizations on the grounds of their “experience” in the area of social exclusion (rather than their ethnic background) fostered an inflow of local knowledge into policy-making and constructed a sense of solidarity among the Roma and non-Roma led organizations. The reliance on expertise and know-how was reinforced by the ceding of authority to new participants who now held considerable discretion over vital decision-making. While the Spanish partnership design resembled a highly corporatist arrangement and provided no political empowerment for the marginalized Roma communities, it neither diminished the legitimacy of SF nor re-directed SF to other priorities. In fact it managed to consolidate Roma issues on the political agenda, enhanced the knowledge about Roma circumstances among bureaucratic circles and secured legitimate interventions. As such the Spanish experience clearly negates the widely maintained view that descriptive representation of Roma is a pre-condition for effective and legitimate public provisions.

In contrast the Slovak endorsement of the all-inclusive recruitment of partners was not reinforced with technical assistance and clearly designated decision-making responsibilities. The aim to gain input from a wide array of miscellaneous actors was based on the conviction that ‘wider participation’ will deliver more informed and legitimate action plans. However, this strategy appeared largely tokenistic as the partnership design did not provide for the mediation mechanisms needed to organize the diverse voices. This severely impinged on the possibility to form a common stance and demands. The authorities have also failed to provide capacity building assistance to less organized voices, which almost automatically excluded Roma interests from the debates. Moreover, as explained by the interviewed stakeholders, partnership took the form of strict consultations, stripping the new partners of influence over important decisions. This meant that input was “filtered” by the authorities, who continued to promote their own priorities, while holding a pretence of equal collaboration. The local and social actors were thus forced to implement projects that did not necessarily reflect the local conditions and had to use their scarce resources to compete in bureaucratized project-calls. As such the absorption and allocation of SF as well as the legitimacy of presented projects were heavily undermined.

Another factor that severely affected the outputs was the baffling neglect to engage organizations with strong ties to the communities and experience in delivering social inclusion services. Upon close scrutiny this reluctance had a strong normative underpinning. Interviews confirmed that it was based on the conviction that the active participation of Roma communities requires descriptive representation. While ideationally this addressed the ongoing dissatisfaction with the ‘bureaucratic cadre’ representing Roma interests, in reality it simply off-loaded the responsibility over social inclusion programmes onto Roma representatives. Roma issues were presented by the authorities as the responsibility of the Roma people, which in fact served as an ‘excuse’ to delegate Roma issues onto communities, who possessed little resources and more importantly no decision-making authority. Moreover, the lack of strong Roma lobby groups meant that Roma representatives were “selected” by the authorities, with little regard given to their legitimacy or experience working with social exclusion issues. Often the only prerequisite for participation was ‘ethnic background’. Findings showed that such strategy contributed to creation of an array of short-lived initiatives that were not viewed as legitimate among the beneficiaries.

Overall, the findings clearly demonstrate that partnership design strongly affected SF outputs. Nevertheless, while issues such as the institutionalization of partnership and power ceding confirm the theoretical expectations, the role of “representativeness” in policy-making challenges widely held assumptions. The empirical research showed that in the context of SF programming, being a highly bureaucratized and specialized system of money transfers, descriptive representation alone is not able to secure effective outputs for marginalized and disenfranchised communities (particularly if capacity building assistance is not provided). A level of expertise is essential for reaching and managing complex SF procedures and projects. While empowering of disenfranchised groups is promoted as indispensable for cohesive and just development, the very structure of SF programming limits the effectiveness of such a strategy. It appears that in the current bureaucratic setting of cohesion policy it is the substantive representation, and corporatist partnership that can deliver the most effective outputs. While the EC maintains that empowerment is at the core of partnership principle, it does not offer actual tools or ideas regarding how this aim could be realized. The existing cohesion rules continue to favour powerful interests, a dynamic already well documented by various cohesion scholars (Olsson

2003; Bache 2010; De Rynck & McAleavey 2001) and to support representation with dubious legitimacy claims.

7.1.4 Effective outputs – innovation as an obstacle

Finally, the research demonstrated that an important condition for securing effective SF outputs was the creation of synergies between SF programming and domestic social exclusion programmes. However, the analysis of administrative tools and processes presented in chapter 5 revealed a crucial trade-off between effective outputs and innovative approaches. The findings showed that aims to establish innovative SF approaches to social exclusion were unable to ‘break-through’ the consolidated administrative protocols. Thus successful outputs were secured when the SF were mainly used to reinforce existing practices, even when the innovative approaches presented a more enticing alternative. This finding confirms that SF tend to add value to the already existing programme rather than serving as a springboard for innovation and modernization. As such their potential to induce institutional change is rather limited, and there is in fact a great risk of reinforcing suboptimal practices.

The Spanish case clearly demonstrated this dynamic. The political determination to exploit the added value of SF resulted in channelling funds towards existing social strategies and measures. In this manner Spain has managed to strengthen the efficiency of implementation processes (by eliminating duplications and contradictions) and secure sustainability of introduced interventions. While effort to join-up SF management bodies and individual ministries was not fully achieved, the central administration and its regional counterparts were able to steer a complex system of governance so that the public bureaucracy became more open to inter-organizational communication and gained more knowledge about the workings of SF programming.

However, this well executed alignment has substantially dwarfed the pursuit of innovative solutions. As demonstrated in the case-study analysis, projects that offered original methodologies that went against the administrative status-quo were less likely to secure funding and were often not considered as legitimate or even needed alternatives. According to the interviews there was an explicit pressure to link the objectives and modus operandi of individual projects to existing practices. In many ways this was a legitimate expectation given that in Spain

there were already expansive social-inclusion interventions in place. Thus moulding new ideas to the existing templates was seen as an efficient strategy that prevented dilution of funding. Moreover, with a fairly well institutionalized coordinative system Spanish authorities found it easier to link SF programming to domestic social inclusion programmes than to engage in innovative programme building. The incremental approach to addressing social exclusion only reinforced this dynamic.

In Slovakia, EU transfers were seen as a useful instrument for developing new ways of addressing social exclusion and modernizing public administration. This from the very start has undermined the complementary approach so well institutionalized in Spain. However, the creation of synergies was predominately impinged by insipid coordination efforts and an inherently compartmentalized public administration. Inability (or unwillingness) to link SF to the ongoing practices resulted in creation of a double tier system, characterized by conflicting objectives, incompatible priorities and dramatically different administrative regulations. The overtly bureaucratized system of SF programming was not easily accessible to the non-involved public departments and agencies, which prevented reciprocity, and in fact only further consolidated the practice of working in silos.

Somewhat paradoxically, Slovakia has appeared quite eager to comply with cohesion objectives and was willing to induce innovative thinking into its public administration. However, the double-tier dynamic severely dwarfed these aspirations, as isolated SF interventions were not able to induce wider administrative changes or even minor alterations. The very design of SF interventions often required distinctive administrative procedures not used in the overall system of governance. This generated resistance from the domestic public servants who did not possess the proper knowledge or skills to manage and monitor SF projects. The fact that Slovakia generally lacked domestic social inclusion strategies (particularly at the local level) only reinforced the channelling of funding to isolated and short lived interventions, which were rarely scaled-up or disseminated. Even as some of the projects presented innovative solutions to Roma exclusion the administrative capacity to coordinate their practices with domestic development plans was lacking. This in turn only exaggerated the perception that nothing works and the Roma quandary cannot be “fixed”.

In sum the findings showed that administrative coordination is a crucial factor in exploiting the added value of SF programming and delivering successful outputs. The ability to compound different priorities, administrative protocols and intrinsic departmental values secured a more efficient management and sustainability of SF interventions. However, it is crucial to understand that coordinative traditions within a country as well as the presence of endogenous social inclusion action plans are indispensable for achieving some degree of synchronization between SF programming and domestic development plans. This observation provides a rather pessimistic outlook on the potential of cohesion policy to facilitate innovative policy-thinking and generate policy convergence. Instead, the SF tend to reinforce existing domestic practices even if these are not reflective of cohesive goals or do not deliver effective interventions. In this light the success of Spain is more reflective of the domestic attention to social exclusion than of European pressure or involvement.

7.1.5 Interlinked dynamics

While the findings identified conditions that influenced the overall success of the SF outputs, the micro-level analysis of six case-studies demonstrated that all three factors (policy design, partnership design and synergies) need to be present if the SF projects are to be effective. Thus, SF programming that frames exclusion as a structural phenomenon but does not provide for enabling governance that brings in social actors as active decision-makers, will most likely generate top-down approaches not informed by local knowledge and implemented by actors unfamiliar with target groups and on-the-ground realities. In the same manner, even when policy problems are well defined and social actors are present, the lack of coordinating mechanisms able to link SF programming to ongoing reforms and policies will severely reduce potential impact (i.e. foreseen institutional change) and sustainability of SF projects. Although it could be argued that as it structures the implementation process, the strength of policy design together with appropriate framing is the leading factor of success, on its own it runs a great risk of reinforcing strictly bureaucratized interventions that might strengthen efficient implementation but undermine the importance of equal distribution and sustainable interventions.

7.2 Theoretical implications

In this section I will describe in what way my research contributed to general public policy scholarship. This thesis has shown that Europeanization theory is unable to significantly explain why EU SF programmes are more effective in certain places. The traditional focus on compliance or “goodness of fit” provides important insights regarding domestic resistance and the importance of domestic factors in transposing EU directives (Sedelmeier 2006; Börzel et al, 2007). However, this line of research does not account for the processes that happen after transposition, which leaves the false impression that scrupulous incorporation of EU rules and recommendations into domestic legislation automatically generates effective policy outputs. My research confirmed that this causal relationship is excessively weak, given that the presence of compliance factors still generated variation in outputs. In fact, as it was demonstrated by the Spanish case the “diluted” adherence to EU recommendations provided for more effective use of SF in facilitating social inclusion.

The findings confirmed that SF outputs are first and foremost a result of different implementation strategies adopted by the countries. With that this thesis provides a new analytical angle for studying the effectiveness of European cohesion policy and possibly other European policies. It argues that the analysis of Europeanization processes should go beyond an inquiry of national legislation and scrutinize in detail the implementation process, with all its complexity and irregularity. Only then it is possible to see whether European objectives are contributing to institutional isomorphism at the lower tiers of governance, but even more importantly to unveil whether they bring in “positive” interventions that meet the needs and expectation of the policy target.

The empirical analysis shows an uneasy relationship between what the EU considers as effective or needed and what is anticipated by local actors and stakeholders. It could be said that the EU does not always fully “understand” the intricacies of domestic policy-making (consolidated political, institutional, and procedural practices) and believes that sole financial incentives will generate far-reaching changes and adjustments in policy-making landscape. However, the

meritocracy based and competitive EU funding mechanisms tend to disadvantage Roma communities and in some instances reinforce suboptimal practices. Without changing the programming mechanisms so that they reflect domestic policies and governance practices, there is a risk that SF will continue to by-pass the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and communities.

The adopted analytical framework and findings it generated also contribute to implementation scholarship. Thus far the mainstream approach to studying policy implementation had a very rationalist approach. This often resulted in presentation of a long list of instrumental variables that may affect implementation (some following the top-down approach and some opting for a bottom up perspective). However, these variables were rarely considered against ongoing changes in modern governance, in particular decentralization and outsourcing. Moreover they failed to account for intrinsic ideas, which influence the workings of policy-makers, and paid surprisingly little attention to administrative path dependencies. Thus what was produced were simple flow charts that showed linear and highly structured causal interactions, giving an impression that policy actions address well-defined problems in an optimal manner.

The core assumption of this work was that “more” is needed to capture the complexity of SF programming. Hence the analysis focused on the ideas underlying policy-making and analyzed implementation against the fluid system of modern governance. The empirical finding confirmed that implementation is strongly affected by normative ideas which often defy rational calculations, while its linear course is mediated by a quickly decentralizing system of governance, representative dilemmas and coordination challenges. As such this research developed an expansive yet analytically rigorous model fit not only to study SF programming but also other complex policies in the realm of social inclusion and equality. It created conceptual bridges between the rational perspective pertaining to the utility of policy instruments and constructivist approaches that shed critical light on the objectivity of official objectives.

Rather than investigating the effect of an array of highly diverse variables, my analytical model allowed for capturing salient patterns of implementation, which lend themselves to comparative scrutiny. While maintaining the top-down perspective on implementation, my research was also

able to capture a bounded relationship, whereby the statutes at once constrain behaviour of the implementers and are themselves influenced by an ongoing devolution of governance and settled bureaucratic routines. With that it mended the gap between implementation and governance scholarship showing that realization of policies continues to follow a vertical path even though the number of stakeholders is on the rise and administrative procedures are becoming more horizontal. It showed that any investigation of implementation process needs to explore the role of ideas, agency and administrative practices, paying attention to the way these interact and reinforce one another. To my knowledge it is the first such an attempt to study policy implementation, which in general has been more focused on the details of program implementation thus losing sight of the macro-level political and administrative variables which structure the entire process.

The findings of my research also have important implications for equality scholarship. First, they show that the mainstreaming of equality, generally promoted by gender scholars is equally applicable to other aspects of inequality, in the context of my investigation into ethnicity but also into the socio-economic standing of some groups. The arguments developed by mainstreaming scholars (Verloo 2005; Woodward 2003; Lombardo 2005) allowed me to capture the dynamic whereby reliance on narrow targeting of funding in fact reinforced the isolation of Roma issues from the general domestic development plans and reforms. At the same time my empirical analysis showed that mainstreaming, when reinforced with clear objectives, priorities and tools does not run the risk (as professed by its critics) of weakening political attention to the pending interests of specific groups, but rather links them to general priorities. This in the long-term may contribute to effective institutional transformations more sensitive to equality and cohesion. The findings from the Spanish and Slovak cases clearly show that targeting SF at a specific minority at best delivers immediate responses without generating needed systemic change. More importantly when not well implemented (due to inadequate policy design and limited participation of social actors) it actually contributes to further isolation of vital objectives from the mainstream reforms, and in the particular case of the Roma, ethnicizes and stigmatizes conditions of marginalization and exclusion.

The research also generated new ways of thinking about participation in policy-making. Governance literature has contributed strong arguments related to expertise and community participation, demonstrating an intrinsic trade-off between devolution of power and efficient implementation of policies (Geddes 2010; Taylor 2007; Peters & Pierre 2004). However, the literature paid less attention to the legitimacy of representation, giving an impression that community participation (a concept that is rarely operationalized) is enough to secure adequate public interventions. The findings of this dissertation showed that while tapping into local knowledge and support of social and local partners by the governing apparatus is crucial, it does not always resolve issues of legitimate representation. More importantly it shows that community participation still takes place in the “shadow of hierarchy” and by and large privileges actors who are well organized and who are less likely to challenge the status quo. While substantive representation provides a pathway to community empowerment (by bringing issues of vulnerable groups to the discussion table) it also reinforces the system of meritocracy and consolidates the view that only through technical expertise policies may improve.

Finally, the findings have a broader remit and can be stretched to cover other policy areas. They show that partnership in policy-making is still very much dictated by the governing elite, who recruit “adequate partners”, provide them with capacity building resources, and decision-making discretion. While now there are more opportunities to influence policy-making by external voices, these are still reserved to strong and well-organized interests, with the capacity to take over the provision of services. In this context disenfranchised groups continue to act on the fringes of the system while their interests are either neglected or represented by experts who rely on textbook knowledge or lack legitimacy in the local constituencies. Thus while partnerships have the potential to help rebalance the central–local relationship and improve governance effectiveness and outputs, they also can undermine accountability and lack the power and capacity to exercise serious influence within the state apparatus. Partnership, as a prominent instrument of governance, should always be investigated with both of these possibilities in mind.

7.3 Policy implications

SF programming with extended theoretical underpinning has been presented as an effective tool for developing and implementing comprehensive Roma inclusion strategies. However, evidence from several studies (CSES 2011; UNDP 2012) including this dissertation seems to point out that the exploitation of EU funds for Roma social inclusion programmes has been highly uneven. The study has used its empirical findings to show that the inconsistent performance was not related to the money available or lack of political will. Rather success and failure were strongly contingent on the strategic planning, partnership arrangements and the use of funding for broader inclusion initiatives. The theoretical arguments for this justification suggest the need for policy review - in particular the planning and programming mechanisms of cohesion policy.

To begin with, there is a need to reassess the very concept of Roma social exclusion. While the existing data describing the current situation of Roma minorities presents a comprehensive overview of marginalization patterns, the dissertation showed that policy-makers are prone to normative judgements. The politicization of the Roma question and an exaggerated focus on the specificity of Roma poverty tends to distract attention from fundamental societal inequalities about which the conventional political wisdom believes little can be done. Ignoring the structural causes of exclusion (i.e. dismantling of the welfare state, institutional discrimination) allows for presenting the Roma as people living on the margins of society who display deviant modes of behaviour (i.e. welfare dependency) and are unable or unwilling to benefit from public provisions. Paradoxically, EC recommendations to target SF at the most marginalized groups have only reinforced these negative and misleading perceptions. While targeting was supposed to address the problem of low accessibility of the funds by Roma communities, in the case of Slovakia it contributed to ethnicization of the problem, and reliance on short-lived interventions with little impact on the wider policy landscape. In this light, it appears necessary to re-think the uncritical furtherance of targeting measures and promotion of “specific” Roma inclusion strategies.

I would not wish to make a claim that Roma exclusion should be totally eliminated as a concept guiding policy-making and that targeting action should be fully abandoned. There is enough

evidence showing a stark difference in living conditions between the Roma and other groups to justify the need for tailored public interventions. However, rather than continuing with the debates on how to channel SF towards the Roma quandary, discussions should account for wider issues of inequality and uneven socio-economic development. This dissertation showed the success factor lies in a well-institutionalized mainstreaming of equality measures that takes account of institutional discrimination and barriers to accessing high quality public services. As such it provides a theoretical basis to conceptualize how targeted interventions for Roma may be combined with national/regional poverty reduction programs and anti-discrimination measures. Perhaps, this research can add to the ongoing debate about “explicit but not exclusive targeting”, a concept that thus far has not been comprehensively operationalized.

Remaining on the topic of the conceptualization of social exclusion, another issue that needs to be highlighted is the focus on the multidimensionality of exclusion. It is indisputable that social exclusion has multiple and interrelated causes that require multifaceted approaches. However, the findings showed that in the current meritocracy based and competitive regulatory framework of SF programming, comprehensive interventions are highly implausible. In fact sectoral approaches based on channelling SF towards concretely outlined priorities (i.e. tackling unemployment) brought about more substantial assistance and generated some policy impact. This brings forth an urgent question regarding policy tools needed to address multiple policy areas and whether effective implementation of SF in one sector can really be counted as success. The theoretical arguments presented in this research point to the need of joined-up government, able to overcome practices of working in silos and an inherent bureaucratic compartmentalization. While the recommendations of EU stakeholders to focus SF on numerous priority areas appear reasonable, thus far the discussion on how such an ideal could be realized has been rather subdued (limited to regulations allowing of compounding funding from ESF with ERDF). By pointing out these issues my research can serve as an important reminder that comprehensive exploitation of SF requires profound reconstructions of domestic administrative structures and procedures, and necessitates consolidation of collaborative values and inter-departmental dialogue. While such processes take time, it is imperative that cohesion policy architects begin to address these issues, through conditionality or other incentives.

Another important aspect in need of revision is the partnership principle regulations. It is now a common truth that genuine participation of the least powerful and at-risk groups in society, such as the Roma, offers better chances for ensuring effective, legitimate, and equitable policy responses. The concept of empowerment has become a common mantra in the discussions on Roma inclusion (EURoma 2014). However, once again, the EC recommendations resemble more of an idealist belief than a concrete policy action plan. The findings of this research showed that successful SF outputs were in fact delivered through fairly corporatist partnership arrangements, with little (if any) attention given to community empowerment. Nonetheless, the focus on expertise and the community work experience of participating organizations has managed to secure legitimate SF intervention. While not free of controversies, partnership more focused on co-production appeared much more effective in navigating the overly complex system of SF allocations. This is not to say that efforts to empower Roma communities should be discarded and SF should continue to be managed by a highly professionalized cadre, and tightly-knit expert networks. The theoretical arguments presented in this research, show that genuine participation is contingent on the enabling government that is willing to provide tailored capacity building assistance, and cede decision-making authority to local and social actors with close ties to the communities. These insights alone can set path for a more critical debate on partnership, in particular the regulation (Article 8) that calls for the engagement of the most competent partners, without providing any indicators or guidelines for engaging the most vulnerable groups.

I hope that this work can contribute to the growing report literature about approaches to Roma integration. By showing that policy implementation failure is often more driven by conceptual and bureaucratic dynamics, rather than by strict anti-Gypsism and lack of political will, this research may turn the attention of policy-makers to the more implicit and ideational aspects of policy-making. Moreover, it can compel SF and Roma-inclusion stakeholders to examine Roma-inclusion plans and policies against the wider workings of modern governance, in particular the leading political ideologies about social exclusion and inequality, bureaucratic protocols and collaborative traditions.

7.4 Limitations of the study and recommendation for future research

While this dissertation has provided a fairly comprehensive picture of the implementation processes and viably explained the empirical puzzle, there is still space to expand the scope and depth of this research. Thus I view this work as a first important step which can serve as a fundament for further research.

Perhaps the most important limitation of this work is the conceptualization of success and failure in terms of implementation outputs. While the rationale for this approach was comprehensively explained in the introduction and all efforts were made to generate measurable indicators of success and failure, I believe that there is a need to push the analysis further. For future research I propose to examine the impact of SF on final beneficiaries (i.e. Roma communities). Growing quantitative data on the performance of SF (and the upcoming post-ante evaluation reports of cohesion policy) can serve as an important data-base to commence with such an examination.

However, what is really needed is a comprehensive and systematized collection of opinions and experiences of individual project managers and projects participants via surveys and focus groups. Focusing on the actual beneficiaries rather than on policy-makers may further expose issues pertaining to the legitimacy of SF interventions, and capture the often implicit variance between perceptions of the managers and project participants. Such an investigation could probe whether the Spanish success is also perceived as such by the project beneficiaries (a timely investigation considering a growing criticism of the Spanish-model).

Another limitation of this dissertation was the relatively short time-frame dictated by the span of EU membership of Slovakia and relative novelty of SF engagement with Roma exclusion. While, the findings were still expansive and delivered important theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of cohesion policy and social exclusion, the extending of the time-frame is indeed necessary. Especially given the escalation and deepening of the European economic crisis, which acutely affected Spain and led to the endorsement of austerity measures. Since my research covered a period of relative socio-economic stability, during which both

countries experienced similar economic growth, narrow attention was paid to macro-level economic factors. However, the severe changes in the macro-level socio economic conditions now necessitate greater analytical attention. Ongoing cuts in public spending and skyrocketing unemployment rates will most likely impinge the development and sustenance of comprehensive social inclusion strategies targeted at the most vulnerable groups (re-direction of SF from social inclusion programmes is already visible). Thus, it is important to extend the analysis to the next funding period 2014-2020 and assess it against previous SF programmings. Because, as argued by implementation scholars, only a longitudinal examination of implementation can generate a better picture of what works and what does not, and under what conditions (Winter 2005).

Finally, the research has engaged in comparative analysis of only two countries, (focusing analytical attention on two convergence regions). While this approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of extremely complex implementation processes, it provided a highly contextual picture. The next step would be to apply my analytical model to a larger set of cases (different countries or different regions) to see if SF outputs are indeed determined by the combination of these particular implementation variables. Additionally, it would be useful to extend the analysis to other SF in particular the ERDF, now more directed at promotion of integrated approaches and applicable to social exclusions patterns²⁶⁶.

In a nutshell the future research aims to:

- Survey the project beneficiaries, with a purpose to measure SF impact
- Expand the comparison to other courtiers or regions
- Focus on ESF as well as the ERDF to see if patterns are similar
- Expand the time-frame to capture the potential influence of macro-level variables (i.e. political-economy)

²⁶⁶ Under the Thematic Objective 9, the ERDF regulation includes an investment priority that focuses on promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination; this includes the provision of support for physical, economic and social regeneration in urban and rural areas.

7.5 Concluding comments

The urgency of the Roma predicament requires an imperative action. The latest policy developments have opened a window of opportunity for addressing the dire marginalization and socio-economic hardships experienced by the majority of Roma communities. Regrettably, the set of policy instruments committed to Roma inclusion have yet to provide tangible and lasting results. Therefore, it is a vital task for academics and policy experts alike to ardently analyze all the possible reasons encumbering a designated course of action. Perhaps even more importantly there is a need to analytically examine instances where inclusion policies have been able to generate positive impacts. The aim of this dissertation has been to give the reader a good understanding of the workings of the key EU financial instruments in the area of Roma exclusion, and explain why the variation in outputs occurs. I am confident that this project not only provides a comprehensive explanation but is also both literature and policy relevant. The findings bring about germane questions and challenge the conventional claims held by public policy scholarship. European financial instruments are a very attractive tool. However, this research showed that to reinforce their potential to generate better and lasting interventions a conceptual and instrumental change is critically needed.

I truly believe that my work has set the standard and direction for comprehensive and analytically rigorous investigation. I am both excited and honoured to be given an opportunity to engage in important research that contributes to the discipline of public policy.

Appendix A - List of Interviews

Spain: Government Officials/ Strategic Level SF Stakeholders

1. Victoria Berrocal Ruiz, Administrative Unit of ESF, Madrid , Spain 07/06/2011
2. Marta Garca, Administrative Unit of ESF, Madrid, Spain 07/06/2011
3. Susana Climent, Administrative Unit of ESF, Madrid, Spain 07/06/2011
4. Rocío Ariño Serrano, Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, Madrid, Spain 14/06/2011
5. Mónica García Aragón, Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, Madrid, Spain 14/06/2011
6. Matilde Barrio Samperio, Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, Madrid, Spain 14/06/2011
7. Purificación Llaquet Baldellou, Ministry of Education, Madrid Spain 27/06/2011
8. Alia Chahin, Advisory Office for the Promotion of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Ethnicity and Race, Madrid, Spain 16/06/2011
9. Jesús Moreno, Andalusian Regional Ministry of Economy, Innovation and Science, General Directorate for European Funds and Planning (ESF Unit) Seville, Spain 22/06/2011
10. Valentín Velázquez, Andalusian Regional Ministry of Economy, Innovation and Science, General Directorate for European Funds and Planning (ESF Unit) Seville, Spain 22/06/2011
11. Juan Carlos Navarro Zafra Andalusian Regional Ministry for Equality y Social Welfare, Secretariat for Roma Communities, Seville, Spain 22/06/2011
12. Senior Public Servant, Andalusian Regional Ministry for Equality and Social Welfare, Seville 22/06/2011
13. Manuel Vazquez Uceda, Andalusian Regional Ministry of Education ,Directorate General for Innovation and Teacher Training, Seville, Andalusia 21/06/2011
14. Senior Public Servant, Andalusian Ministry of Local Administration and Institutional Relations, Seville, Spain 21/06/2011

15. Manuela Millán Hernández, Provincial Office of Seville, Social Cohesion and Equality, Seville, Spain 24/06/2011
16. Public Administrator, Seville City Hall, 08/10/2013 (phone interview)
17. Senior Public Servant, Granada City Hall, Department of Education, Consumption and Employment, Granada, Spain 18/06/2011
18. Senior Public Servant, Granada City Hall, Department of Social Services, Granada, Spain 18/06/2011
19. ESF Independent Evaluator, Madrid, Spain 14/06/2011
20. Monitoring Committee ESF, (Territorial Unit of Employment) Seville, Spain 21/06/2011
21. Monitoring Committee ESF, (Economic and Social Council) Madrid, Spain 14/06/2011

Project level SF Stakeholders

22. Isidoro Rodriguez, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Brussels, Belgium 6/6/2012
23. Belén Sanchez-Rubio, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Madrid, Spain 13/6/2011
24. Isabel Rueda, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Madrid, Spain 13/06/2011
25. Juan Manuel Reyes Campos, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Seville, Spain 20/06/2011
26. Carolina Fernandez, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Zagreb, Croatia 28/02/2013
27. Primary School “Onuba” Huelva, Spain 05/03/2013 (phone interview)
28. CARITAS, Madrid, Spain 12/06/2011
29. Maika Sanchez, Madrid, Spain Red Cross 27/06/2011
30. Maria Tussi, Fundación ONCE, Madrid, Spain 27/06/2011 (phone interview)
31. CODE, Seville, Spain 01/10/2013 (phone interview)
32. Sevilla City Hall, Economy and Employment Department EDEM, Seville, Spain 27/03/2013 (phone interview)
33. Isabel Soto Andalusian Federation of Workers Cooperatives, Seville, Spain 14/03/2013 (phone interview)
34. Raquel López Cruz , Consortium of Western Granada, Huétor-Tájar, Spain 06/03/2013 (phone interview)
35. Administrative Division (Comarca) Guadix, Spain 06/03/2013 (phone interview)

Non-Governmental Organizations

- 36. Tamara Amador Martin, FAKALI, Seville, Spain 23/06/2011
- 37. José Chamizo de la Rubia, Sevilla ACOGE, Seville, Spain 23/06/2011)
- 38. Member of Anaquerando Gypsy Association, Granada, Spain 19/06/2011
- 39. Member of Association of Gypsy Women (ROMI), Granada, Spain 16/06/2011
- 40. Member of Association Union of Gypsy Women (UMUGIA), Cordoba, Spain 20/06/2011
- 41. Ram de Torres Lez, La Chanca, Almer, Spain 27/06/2011 (phone interview)
- 42. César Arroyo, Asociación Socioeducative Llere, Brussels, Belgium 6/6/12

Slovakia: Government Officials/ Strategic Level SF Stakeholders

- 43. Martin Vavrinčík, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Skalica, Slovakia 13/05/2011
- 44. Public Servant, Ministry of Interior, Bratislava, Slovakia 14/05/2013
- 45. Juray Kuruc, Ministry of Interior, Coordinator for For the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Bratislava, Slovakia 26/07/2011
- 46. Zuzana Polačková, Managing Authority, OP Employment and Social Inclusion, Bratislava, 26/07/2011
- 47. Renata Drienska, Managing Authority, Employment and Social Inclusion, Prague 11/05/2011
- 48. Public Servant, Managing Authority, OP Technical Assistance, Bratislava, Slovakia 04/10/2011
- 49. Public Servant, Managing Authority, OP Education, Bratislava, 04/10/2011
- 50. Marek Hojsík Social Development Fund, Bratislava, Slovakia, 26/07/2011
- 51. Richard Brooš, Managing Authority, OP Regional Development, Bratislava, Slovakia 26/07/2011
- 52. Miroslav Pollák, The Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities, Bratislava, Slovakia, 05/10/2011
- 53. Monika Matysová, The Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities, Bratislava, Slovakia 26/07/2011

54. Tibor Železník, Self-Government, Košice, Slovakia 28/07/2011
55. Nicole Fuchsová, Regional Development Agency, Presov, Slovakia 26/07/2011 (Skype Interview)
56. Peter Nemeth, Regional Development Agency, Presov, Slovakia 26/07/2011 (Skype Interview)
57. Social Field Work Supervisor (working in Sobrance) Košice, Slovakia 28/07/2011
58. Social Partner Representative Member Monitoring Committee , Bratislava 03/03/2011
59. NGO Representative Member Monitoring Committee, Bratislava 03/03/2011
60. Local Authority Representative (Eastern Slovakia) Member Monitoring Committee , Košice 02/03/2011

Project level SF Stakeholders

61. Klára Orgovánová, Roma Institute, Bratislava, Slovakia 26/07/2011
62. Alena Pániková, Open Society Foundation, Bratislava, Slovakia 23/07/2011
63. Valentina Petrus, Open Society Foundation, Bratislava, Slovakia 23/07/2011
64. Education Centre for Non Profit Organizations, Banská Bystrica Slovakia 13/06/2013 (Skype Interview)
65. Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia 13/06/2013 (Skype Interview)
66. Regional Development Office, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia 18/06/2013 (Skype Interview)
67. Mária Kuchčáková, School Spišský Hrhov, Slovakia 01/02/2011 (Skype Interview)

Non-Governmental Organizations

68. Jozef Chomanič, Civic Association for Support and Developmet of the Regions in Slovakia, Bratislava, Slovakia 26/07/2011
69. Miroslava Hapalová, People in Need, Bratislava, Slovakia 23/07/2011
70. Jana Luptáková, Forum for Roma Women (Detva), Banska Bystrica 27/07/2011
71. Tomáš Hrustič, Institute of Ethnology, Bratislava, Slovakia 23/05/2011 (Skype Interview)

72. Ivan Mako, Association of Young Roma (Banska Bystrica) Bratislava, Slovakia
26/07/2011
73. Vojtej Kokeny, Roma Leader, Skalica, Slovakia 14/05/2011

Appendix B – Conferences

24-25.06.2010 (Bratislava, Slovakia)

Decade of Roma Inclusion, 18th International Steering Committee Meeting, (Discussion Group: Discrimination and anti-Gypsism)

14.05.2011 (Skalica, Slovakia)

Mayors for Roma Inclusion Forum Meeting, (Discussion Group: Priorities of Mayors for Roma Inclusion Forum to the Financial Period 2014+)

11-12.05.2011 (Prague, Czech Republic)

EURoma Meeting Agenda

23.05.211 (Bratislava, Slovakia)

European Commission, High Level Event on the Structural Funds contribution to Roma integration in Slovakia (Discussion Group: Comprehensive approach for Marginalized Roma Communities)

25.05.2011 (Košice, Slovakia)

European Commission, High Level Event on the Structural Funds contribution to Roma integration in Slovakia, (Discussion Group: How to reach better education for Roma children? Unlocking the potential – education for Roma children)

17.04.2012 (Budapest, Hungary)

Central European University, 2nd Annual Round Table Debate EU Politics – Views from Central Europe, Budapest, Hungary

06.06.2012 (Brussels, Belgium)

European Commission, Dissemination Conference “Early Childhood Education and Care: Lessons from the EU Parliament – DG Regional Policy Pilot Project”

28.02.2013 (Zagreb, Croatia)

Decade of Roma Inclusion, “Perspectives on EU Funding for Roma Inclusion”,

15/03/2013 (Brussels, Belgium)

European Commission, "From pilots to outcomes' Evidence-based lessons on socio-economic inclusion of Roma communities"

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Slovakia

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Spain

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