Negotiating Deservingness: Marginalised Roma, Inclusion Policies and the Local State

Abstract

Focusing on the concept of symbolic boundaries, this study examines the moral boundary construction and processes of categorization of local municipal representatives who implement existing inclusion policies and welfare officials who offer social help to needy persons. The findings reveal how these agents (local state actors) negotiate who deserves and does not deserve inclusion and help and how, through their practices, they construct the boundaries of belonging to the local community. I also highlight the contemporary paradox of inclusion policies. Utilizing Michèle Lamont´s conceptualization of social vs. symbolic boundaries and Jeffrey Alexander´s concept of binary oppositions within the civil sphere, I demonstrate how symbolic boundaries are constituted in social actors' everyday work practices and narratives.

Keywords: Symbolic and Social Boundaries, Local State Actors, Inclusion/Exclusion, Morality, Inclusion Policies, Ethnographic Studies, Czech Republic

I. Introduction

Focusing on the concepts of symbolic boundaries by Michèle Lamont and Jeffrey Alexander´s binary opposition of civil sphere I will analyze categorization processes occurring on the part of local municipality representatives who should implement the current inclusion policy into practice and on the part of welfare officials who distribute social assistance to needy persons. In their everyday action and classifications, these local state actors negotiate who deserves help and who deserves inclusion/exclusion. Through their narratives and practices they create symbolic boundaries between deserving/undeserving, moral/immoral clients and citizen and in this way they also construct and negotiate boundaries of belonging to local community and reproduce existing social inequalities.

Most of the recent published studies in the Czech Republic concerning Roma social exclusion and marginalization concentrate on the mechanism of exclusion exploring the strategies from the perspectives of those who are excluded and marginalised (see e.g. Hirt, Jakoubek 2006, GAC 2006). However, there is a lack of research concerning everyday relations between marginalised Roma and the local state actors and institutions, which are crucial for studying various patterns of inequality reproduction.

The role of the local state actors in relation to poor and marginalised population is important especially in the context of recent transformation and decentralisation processes which took part after the fall of communist regime in 1989. Decentralization processes empowered local authorities and gave them responsibilities previously attended to by central state institutions. These processes enhanced local independence but at the same time brought more responsibilities for local governments (and also local budgets) by making them more responsible for care for the local poor citizens (see Thelen at al. 2011).

The boundary work of local state actors is touching also the contemporary efforts of the Czech government to implement inclusion policy at local level. From the 1990s, the Czech government regularly approves new 'Conceptions of Roma Integration', which propose general recommendations and arrangements for municipalities and towns for the integration of "members of Roma communities". In 2005, the Czech Republic joined the international initiative "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015" of twelve states. The initiative represents the political commitment of these states to resolve poverty, social exclusion and discrimination of the "Roma community" on both national and regional level.[1] One of the main priorities of the 'National Action Plan' appointed by the Czech government was the implementation of inclusive policies at local level.[2] In 2008, a new department of the Czech government, the 'Agency for Social Inclusion in Romany Localities' (Agency) was established. This institution currently represents an instrument of the Czech government to implement its inclusion policies at local level. The state inclusion policies and efforts to implement them create an important context for my ethnographic findings. It seems there is a tension between the state policies and between the practices of those who should implement them at local level. In this context, I will point out the contemporary *paradox of inclusion policies*.

The main research question addressed in the paper concerns how local state actors address the following aspects of the construction of inequality and inclusion/exclusion processes: "Who *deserves inclusion? Who is a worthy/unworthy citizen? Who deserves help*?"

In the following sections I will introduce the broader context of my ethnographic research and I will situate my work within the space of existing academic literature concerning symbolic boundaries and boundaries of belonging; In the two empirical chapters, I will introduce the practices and narratives

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[1] These states include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Spain (vláda.cz).

[2] Decade of Roma Inclusion, Czech Priorities (vláda.cz).

of local government representatives and welfare officials responsible for the distribution of social assistance to the needy and I will show how they negotiate who deserves inclusion and help. In the conclusion, I want to point out importance of symbolic boundaries and the way they are crucial in creating and maintaining inequalities.

II. Theory: Conceptualizing Social and Symbolic Boundaries

Symbolic boundaries are constituted in everyday interactions among various agents/institutions through the processes of classification. Boundaries are present in public discourses, in municipality offices, but especially in people's everyday "thinking" and "doing". The crucial processes for boundary construction constitute practices of *categorization* and *classification*. They represent normative social action and have power, through which social actors participate in the production of moral and social order (Šanderová 2009: 29). Through the processes of categorization, people give meaning to the surrounding world (ibid) but some of them (more than others) stand in the background of various inequalities. In my research, I am interested in the distinctions dividing ordinary/marginal, worthy/unworthy, active/inactive and moral/immoral members of society and citizens. Similarly to British anthropologist and geographer David Sibley, I will focus on processes of boundary erection by groups in society who consider themselves to be normal or mainstream (Sibley 1999).

The study of boundaries has its tradition in the social sciences, and recently, it has been systematically re-introduced by sociologists Michèle Lamont (see for example Lamont and Molnar 2002; Lamont and Fournier 1992 or Lamont 2000). According to Lamont, *"between groups and society, there always has been, and always will be, boundaries and differences"* and *"one of the most important challenges that we face today is understanding how we create boundaries and what the social consequences of such actions are"* (Lamont and Fournier 1992: 1). According to Lamont, these distinctions can be expressed through normative interdictions, cultural attitudes and practices, and more generally through patterns of likes and dislikes. They play an important role in the creation of inequality and the exercise of power (Lamont and Molnar 2002). Lamont stresses especially the moral dimension of boundary work: In her cross-national comparative studies, she analyzes how people in their narratives create class, racial and moral boundaries to categorize others as "worthy" or "unworthy".

Lamont analytically differentiates *symbolic* and *social boundaries* (see Lamont and Molnar 2002; Lamont and Fournier 1992). *Symbolic boundaries* are conceptual distinctions by which people categorize objects, other people and practices, they also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Lamont and Molnar 2002). *Social boundaries* are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and distribution of resources and social opportunities (ibid). The former exist at the intersubjective level, whereas the latter manifest themselves as groupings of individuals. Anyway according to Lamont, symbolic boundaries have to be widely agreed upon to take on constraining character and only in this case, they can become social boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 169). That means the symbolic is a "necessary but insufficient" condition for the establishment of a social boundary (Lamont 1992; Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Molnar 2002). Although they are both equally real, the symbolic has only relative autonomy in her work. Lamont, however, does not stress the opposite direction; the one saying that social boundaries are a necessary but insufficient condition for the establishment of symbolic boundaries (see Sciortino p. 20 forthcoming). In the case of the majority Czech and Slovakian Roma, there is a quite obvious social boundary in Lamont's terms. Numerous studies refer to the poverty and marginality of the Roma at the labour market, in housing or education (see e.g. GAC 2006). However, what I am trying to point out is that the processes of Roma exclusion and their marginality are not caused primarily by their poverty, unemployment or low degree of education but in symbolic categorizations which are crucial in maintaining inequalities. Similarly to Lamont, I would like to stress the moral dimension of boundary work but contrarily to her conceptualization, I would like to stress the importance and meaning of symbolic boundaries and their power not only in the discourse of classification, but ultimately, in creating social inequalities.

The Boundaries of "Belonging"

Jeffrey Alexander theorizes about symbolic boundaries in relation to his concept of the *civil sphere*. He focuses on the manner in which *civil-symbolic boundaries give meaning* to the subordination of particular groups and individuals and in this way, they construct and legitimize the inequality of these groups (Alexander 2007). Alexander understands the civil sphere as a social sphere or a field organized around a *particular kind of solidarity*, one whose members are symbolically represented as independent and self-motivating persons individually responsible for their actions, and also as actors who feel themselves, at the same time, bound by collective obligations to all the other individuals

who compose this sphere (Alexander 2001). Anyone could belong to the civil sphere, as it is based on the idea of an inclusive community, which is not based on any primordial but achievable (civil) characteristics. According to him, the ideals of civil society are connected with the idea of a fully inclusive community of putatively rational, independent and honest individuals. It is in relation to such an idealized community that existing divisions and inequalities became illegitimate (Alexander 2007). However, the ideal of a civil sphere based on inclusion and equality has its contradictions when it becomes a "real" civil society at a particular time and space (Alexander 2006). According to Alexander, the boundaries of belonging to the core group are negotiated using the binary *discourse of civil society*. Through this discourse, the symbolic representations of Self and Other are produced designating those who belong and those who are not entitled to belong. The discourse of civil society produces symbolic differentiation of those who are proper members of civil society and those who are not. According to Alexander, it designates those who are proper members as *active*, *rational* and *autonomous* and those who are not entitled to belong as *passive*, *dependent* and *irrational* (Alexander 2006). These binary codes represent categories of *"pure"* and *"impure"* into which every member, or potential member of civil society is made to fit (Ibid. 55). Those who are conceived as passive and irresponsible represent marginal members of the community. They are constructed under the anti-civil code and must be silenced, displaced or even repressed (Ibid. 61).

Inclusion Policy Paradox

According to Alexander, those who are excluded from the civil society can get entrance through the processes of incorporation. Assimilation, which is described mostly in negative terms, does not mean just structural power, but has a strong cultural dimension as well in Alexander´s view (see Alexander 2007: 424). According to him, *assimilation* allows members of "out groups" (or stigmatized groups) to become members of the society on the condition they keep their stigmatized qualities hidden behind the wall of private life.

Assimilation takes place when out-groups members are allowed to enter fully into civil life on condition that they shed their polluted primordial identities. Assimilation is possible to the degree that socialization channels exist which can provide "civilizing" or purifying processes – through interaction, education or mass-mediated representation – that allow persons to be separated from their primordial qualities (Alexander 2006: 421).

Assimilation thus allows persons to become separated from their stigmatised qualities and take up the primordial/civil qualities of the "core group". In theory everyone should be able to achieve it. Alexander calls it a process of *"purification"* through which stigmatized groups and individuals can become full-fledged members (see Alexander 2006: 7-8). However, in the case of the majority poor Roma who live in the Czech Republic, such purification processes do not take place, regardless of how much they are promoted at the level of national and local policies. The symbolic categorizations which are ascribed to them in everyday interaction function as symbolic boundaries, which are impossible to pass for the majority of them. They cannot get past the stigmatised categorizations and became "purified". This is becoming a paradox especially in light of the current state inclusion policies.

III. Method, methodology, and the research context

The paper draws on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a small region in the Czech Republic between 2008 and 2011 among the poor Roma, local NGOs and the representatives of local municipalities (local politicians and welfare officials). Ethnographic method enable to understand the way the processes of marginalization, inclusion/exclusion occur as a situated everyday action in people's interaction. In the policy documents and reports (Gabal analysis and Consulting 2006), the processes of inclusion/exclusion are described as a particular state or condition. However, the qualitative research and in particular the ethnographic method make it possible to study them as processes by focusing on "doing inequalities" and "doing inclusion and exclusion". To understand the dimension of "doing", I explored the concrete, everyday interactions and the discursive practices and narratives of the above mentioned agents as well as the structures of meaning behind the categories they created.

My research is based on three different types of data; *participant observation (fieldnotes), documents*, and *interviews* with local state actors. During my fieldwork, I spent 6 months as a volunteer in a local NGO and 4 months as a trainee at the Social Benefit Department. In the meantime I also focused on the activities of 'Agency for Social Inclusion' and its representatives in the region and visited regularly their meetings with town mayors and local social service providers (local NGOs). Besides my ethnographic material, I am using various *textual sources of data*, conducting an interpretive analysis of legal documents, governmental policy documents, and written materials from social workers and public meetings at local municipalities and regional newspapers.

This paper is based especially on data from 12 interviews with local representatives and officials and participant observations (fieldnotes analyses) at municipality representatives meetings and Social Department at local Municipality. Data were analyzed following the principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990) by utilizing Atlas.ti software.

"The Place"

My research is situated in a small border region in the Czech Republic, which is considered to be one of the most disadvantaged in the country. It is affected by high unemployment and economic deprivation due to effects of political and economic transformation and its distant position from metropolitan centres. The region has a rural character and my fieldwork was situated in small towns/villages (with 300 up to 3000 inhabitants) belonging to a single administrative region.[1] During the Communist era, the mining and lumber industries predominated in the region, however, after 1989; state enterprises diminished and most state factories were closed. Nowadays, there is the highest unemployment rate (reaching almost 30% in some villages) especially because of its remote geographical position, lack of industry and job opportunities in the region.

During the interviews, local town mayors and officials very often stressed several problems of the region; especially its remoteness (peripheral border region); high unemployment; continual leaving of young educated people to bigger cities; and especially high numbers and the troublesome influx of socially weak and mostly Roma people into the region. In the perception of local state actors (social workers, municipality officials, teachers etc.) there is a slow but steady influx of poor, mostly Roma families in recent years who are coming especially from bigger cities. According to the official regional reports[1] the number of the Roma living in the region is around 1,000, which is around 2 percent of population in comparison to the general number of inhabitants. They came to the region mostly from Slovakia during two waves of immigration, one in the 1960s and another later in the 1990s. Nowadays there are coming Roma families who are trying to find cheaper housing or move to their relatives who have their own houses or flats in the region. The 'Agency for Social Inclusion in Romany Localities' which was established by the Czech government in 2008 also started to work here in the same year. The region was chosen as one of the 'pilot localities' according to the presence of so called 'socially excluded Roma localities' and town mayor´s willingness to cooperate and solve the "problem" with the support of a governmental institution Agency. The role of the Agency officials consists in supporting local state actors and NGOs, personally, professionally and

financially to implement state inclusion policies via various inclusion projects and programs. Their work produced interesting arenas of negotiation which concerned indicating and labelling "problems" which are "necessary to solve" and people who are in need of governmental/municipal support. It is this perception of Roma as a "problem" that precipitates the construction of moral categorizations about them.

IV. Local Construction of Belonging

This chapter deals with the boundary work of local representatives (town mayors and local authorities) in the villages who are conceived as significant agents who should implement state inclusion policies in their practice at local level.[3] However my ethnographic material shows there can be various tensions between those two realms: governmental policies and local municipality practices and politics.

The question is who do we help? Show me that you really want us to help you and we will help you. But if you make a mess, if you don't want to work, you will be segregated. It is necessary to help only those who really want help. (...) (Town Mayor, Černá Ves[4])

The above quoted mayor received applause from members of the public present at the meeting of local authorities and citizens of the town and nearby villages with local officials and representatives of the government institution "Agency". During this public meeting concerning the new regional project designed by Agency together with local partners, there was a passionate discussion to who should the project actually bring support – to the inadaptable Roma who make problems and who are coming to the region without municipality´s control or to all ordinary citizens in the villages who, contrarily to the Roma, live properly and belong to local moral community. His statement expressed the conviction that only those citizens who are in local perception seen as helpful, willing to adjust and active to participate in legal (or visible public) work deserve state or municipality support and aid. At the same time the mayors differentiated between local Roma, who live in the villages for a long time, who are decent and willing to work and the other "Roma newcomers" who threaten

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[3] For example, municipalities could call for or cooperate on various grants and inclusion projects concerning social housing, employment, education, social field workers etc; they can be willing or unwilling to create jobs for the unemployed Roma at public service work etc.

[4] All names of the places/cities in the text are changed.

village live through their inadaptable behaving. In the local perception, the project was thus seen as a threat that new Roma will arrive to the nearby villages because of new social services and social housing which is offered to socially weak people by local NGO.

Many of the poor and mostly unemployed local Roma families are clients of local NGO which offer social services (social work, educational or professional programs for Roma children and youth) employment in public beneficial work and also "asylum housing program". The housing program is especially for needy families who lost their home or lived in unsuitable conditions under risk of taking away their children to state care. It offers assisted housing connected with intensive social work in flats situated in the centre of two villages. This program and other activities of the NGO are supported and presented as an example of good inclusive practice by the Agency or the regional Roma coordinator however they are strongly criticized by the local mayors and have already initiated many sharp local conflicts. Some of those mayors refuse to support activities of the NGO, which in their perception bring support to inadaptable Roma who come to live in their village, without their agreement. In their perception poor Roma families (who live in the region) do not fit into categories of citizens who are "really needy" or should be supported while they do not belong to the moral community of village citizens. They refuse to apply for available EU/governmental financial grants or criticise the activities and projects of local NGOs because of their conviction that social workers just give assistance to the Roma and do things and basic civic commitments instead of them[5].

So you know how it is, Roma has their mentality, so there are constant problems with them, you know. And they are like this, they will exploit everything for themselves, they are Roma easily. (...) They do nothing all day; they do not need any further assistance or anyone to take their kids to the nursery. I cannot understand this. If you want to integrate them they have to start to do something. No one excludes them; they exclude themselves through their behaviour. (Town Mayor, Velký Potok)

It seems that many of the mayors and local representatives who are supposed to put inclusion policy into practice do not believe in the assimilability of the objects of the inclusion policies. They negotiate who is proper/improper citizen and who deserves inclusion or help. In their classification they draw symbolic moral boundaries according to local notions of deservingness and belonging among village citizens. They differentiate *between proper/improper citizens; those who "really want help" and the inadaptable others* who only abuse the state. The paradox situation consists in the fact

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[5] E.g. they do not agree with taking Roma kids to nursery school instead of their parents or assistance of social workers with administrative issues for the offices and social benefits etc.

that those who are objects of care and represent a target group of the state inclusion policies do not belong among those who are seen as deserving objects of care and support by local representatives and officials. Local representatives differentiate categories of citizens who are "willing to integrate" (which means to adjust) and others who should not be supported and are not entitled to belong to the local moral community. During these local conflicts mayors negotiate their responsibility; on the one side they call for their bigger autonomy in the village/town affairs and do not see local NGOs as competent partners with responsibility in local matters, on the other side, they still see the state as responsible for actual problems and situation of Roma citizens.

"Deserved Help"

The state financial support called "*Help in Material Need*"[6] is conceived as a social assistance and material help for socially needy people. It is a financial benefit which is distributed by officials at the Social Department at municipalities in particular towns. In the official documents, this kind of help is defined as following:

"Modern form of help to persons with an insufficient income, which should motivate those persons to an <u>*active effort*</u> *to arrange their own resources for the satisfaction of their living needs. It is considered to be one of the arrangements through which the Czech Republic fights against social exclusion". It is based on the* <u>*moral principle*</u> *that* <u>*"Any person that works has to live in better conditions than a person that does not work or refuses to work"*</u>*. (Ministry of Work and Social Issues 2011, the highlights are made by the author)*

In this law, there already is a strong cultural meaning and moralizing work ethic discourse which call upon differentiating between the deserving and undeserving poor. In this way, according to Howe (1998), structural and economic explanation of the position of the poor and unemployed is translated into the discourse of 'cultural dependency'. Although there is a high level of unemployment in the region, which concerns especially low-skilled people, with the majority of the Roma among them, it is not an excuse for staying on benefits and remaining unemployed on a long-term basis. "While 'economic dependency' construes unemployment as involuntary and unwanted, 'cultural dependency' construes unemployment as voluntary, as a matter of choice, and thus 'desirable'" (ibid: 539). Cultural dependency is, according to Howe, a discourse, "which accentuates the difference between

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[6] „Help in material need" is a financial support provided by the state to people who are in material need. Help in material need is a financial benefit which is tested by the officials – the clients have to demonstrate an effort to make their situation better and look actively for a job. It is provided by the municipality in particular towns.

workers/jobless" (or ethno-cultural difference between unemployed Roma and non-Roma workers) and "asserts that many of the latter are motivated by a different and debased set of cultural values" (different mentality, self-interest, greed etc.) (ibid).

In a similar way, on the one hand, the officials apply the "Law of Help in Material Need" and evaluate the claimant´s applications according to fixed bureaucratic rules and principles[7]; while on the other hand, they consider the personal characteristics of the claimants according to shared cultural codes and moral values (see also Howe 1990 and in the Czech context Dvořáková 2009).

Once I had a client who came for the first time and who was really ashamed, you saw it immediately! I brought all the papers, all the necessary forms (and you know, there are a lot) and I realized that he started to back up. I said: 'Don´t be ashamed, anyone can get into this situation, and we can fill it out together.' But he reversed and said, you know what, keep it for the Gypsies! I just said, 'Why? So do not leave it here for them!' (Ms. Jitka, Employee of Municipality, Social Benefit Department).

During the time I spend at the Municipality Social Department, this story became very important for my colleague, who worked as a benefit specialist and repeated this story for me. What she wanted to stress was the fact that it was such a pity that in a case when someone *really deserves* help and needs it, it usually ends up in this way.

The employers of the office differentiate between those clients who *"get to the bottom, but who make an effort to get out of this situation"*, *"who really look for a job"*, *"who are ashamed to be here"* and on the other hand the clients *"who are completely comfortable with it"*, *"who are problematic and who are here from the 1990s"*, *"those are not to be forced"*, *"they do not expect anything anymore"*. In this way the employees of the office classify clients and their claims for benefits in moral terms, and through the moral discourse they impose on them, they create symbolic boundaries between those who really need help and those who are undeserving and in some cases even immoral.

What is important is the living conditions I guess, the mentality of the people. Some of them just do not need more, they do not care, it is natural for them (to stay on benefits). For example Marta K., she has been on benefits from the 1990s, in fact from the beginning. They do not have any higher demands on life, they grew up in it. (Ms. Jitka, Employee of Mu, Social Benefit Department)

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[7] They evaluate the applications according to a set of economic criteria. Among the most important is income, the expenses for services, housing conditions, number of people in a household etc.

The main difference between clients is in the concern/interest they demonstrate. They come to the office and they say: Help me! (...) You see? Some of them come and just reach out their hand. Some of them, on the other hand, really need help. That is the biggest difference! (Ms. Dana, Emploee of Municipality, Social Benefit Department)

The crucial point here is the act of classification. Officials classify the claimants according to their behaviour in the office, personal characteristics, activity/inactivity and their willingness to cooperate. They expect clients to be active during the administrative procedure of getting benefits which consists in the substantiation of all documents and their submitting on time, personal visits to the office, and especially active looking for a job or attendance at the public service[8].

People who worked, and who have a different life style, they make an effort, you can see it as soon as they enter the door! They say: "I will not stay here for long!" They are ashamed! They do not want to be on benefits, to be dependent on the system. (Ms. Lenka, Employee of Municipality, Social Benefit Department)

They consider especially their effort to change their living conditions, partly as illustrated by the clients during the administrative procedure and especially as assessed by officials on the basis of their long-term relationship with particular clients (especially those who stay unemployed for a long time).

Municipality officials sometimes complained that there are no strict rules in the law and in the system; there is "too much space" for their own judgements, which is sometimes very unpleasant for them. *"We had hopes that with the change of law in 2006, there would be stricter and clearer rules, but it [the responsibility] still lies with us" (Ms. Jitka, Employee of Mu, Social Benefit Department).*

In this "space for their own judgements" they also negotiate their binary position between the social worker (a person which desires to really help) and the official (a person which treats clients according to strict bureaucratic rules).

While doing this, officials differentiate between providing *"real help"* and mere everyday administration and money provision. They define "real help" as help *"which falls on good ground"*, *"when you can really see some results"*, *"when the client has improved"*. They shift between situations when they are "just" officials and emphasize the given rules of the office to undeserving

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[8] Public service is a sort of activation work organized by the municipality (or NGO) which can increase the amount of the benefit which the claimant gets. After six months of being on the benefit, the claimant has a commitment to work for the municipality for thirty hours per month. Failing to fulfil this commitment means "dropping down" to minimum subsistence which is 2400 CZK per month.

and problematic clients and on the other hand the situations when they are also social workers and strive "to really help" and do very willingly things which are beyond their official obligations.

The help provided by officials to their clients thus works as a contract – *"I will help you but you have to behave in some way"*, *"we are not obliged to help you if you lack any effort"*. The clients who fulfil the expectations of the officials and demonstrate effort are seen as moral and deserving help; on the other hand, the clients who keep living on benefits and do not fulfil their expectations or do not follow their rules are situated at the wrong side of the binary as immoral and undeserving.

V. Conclusion – Symbolic Boundaries at Work

The example of the Municipality Social Department shows that the classifications of welfare officials are based mostly on the moral characteristics of their clients. Although officials do not refer directly to the ethnicity of individual clients, there are hidden cultural meanings in their narratives which play a crucial role in the judging of the characteristics and morality of the clients. Municipality officials differentiate between those who are willing to cooperate and those who stay on benefits without any effort to improve their situation and who get used to it as a kind of lifestyle. In the majority, those who stay on the benefit longest are represented as unemployed Roma families and clients who, in the eyes of the officials, never worked and who, in the dominant discourse, are not willing to work either. The cultural code of moral values present in their judgements is thus strongly interconnected with the ethnic code as well. Although some Roma clients who demonstrate effort and fulfil the expectation can became deserving and moral in the eyes of officials, the general reference to the ethnic code can emerge anytime anyway. The symbolic moral boundaries and differences the officials draw between their clients are based on dominant cultural codes and moral values (which are also mirrored in contemporary welfare policies). Although officials strive to offer "real help", on the basis of their classifications and cultural expectations, they exclude some categories of clients from the moral right for the benefit or help.

The same moral distinctions and discourse of deservingness are present also in the public discourse. The example of local government representatives shows how town mayors classify proper/improper citizens and negotiate who deserves municipality support. The boundary work of municipality representatives creates moral boundaries of belonging to a particular community, delimiting those who deserve local (and also state) support and help.

According to Lamont (1992), symbolic boundaries presuppose both inclusion (of the desirable and proper) and exclusion (of the immoral and the impure) of particular people and in the latter case, they also produce inequality. The local state actors who draw the moral boundaries have considerable power and through their categorizations during benefits allocation they can influence the final amount of the benefits or in case of local government representatives access to the public work programs or various inclusion projects. In this way they also reproduce existing local hierarchies and power relations.

Although material help or state inclusion policies should be one of the ways in which the state wants to fight against social exclusion, the moral categorization put on Roma clients and citizens create symbolic boundaries which reaffirm their marginalized position and social exclusion from the moral community and solidarity of the "core group". As town mayors, local politicians, officials and social workers they give advice, judge, select, allocate and make important decisions, which can influence the lives of others (see Lamont 1992: 13). Through their categorizations and judgements, they frame important aspects of other people´s lives and this is why we should pay attention to the symbolic boundaries and understand how we create them.

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