Doing help, making ethnicity: Ethnicization of social work in Slovakia

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Abstract

As an entry point for discussion about neoliberalism of the welfare, race and ethnic relations I chose the case of Roma communities in Slovakia. Slovakia enjoys a great economic situation, complex and coordinated support for the 'marginalized Roma communities' from the European Structural and Investment Fund. In spite of that, the gap between the living standards of the marginalized Roma and the rest of the inhabitants is not closing. The aim of this study is to analyse how social power relations are (re)produced in the social work that is aimed to at improving the situation of Roma in Slovakia. In my thesis I use the method of the critical discourse analysis to examine mechanisms of meaning-making in social work for the Roma. The analysis is conducted from the position of critical Romani studies. This thesis demonstrates relations among mechanisms of meaning-making in social work for the Roma, and the reproduction of ethnic inequalities.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Although Slovakia is currently undergoing unprecedented economic boom together with extensive support from the European Union of 163.5 million euro for improvement of the Roma lives, the number of the Roma slums does not seem to decrease.[1] (MV SR, 2017a) Additionally, the anecdotal evidence of the people living in extreme poverty shows the opposite.[2] This creates an opportunity to study deficiencies in the ways in which help is provided. During the years 2014 – 2020, there have been several projects which aim to remedy problems of marginalized Roma communities. The projects offer 'soft' support, such as social work or pre-school education; and they also finance infrastructure investments, such as water and waste management, with the minimal financial participation of the municipalities.[3] In this thesis, I focus on the Take-away Package, which targets 150 municipalities with the worst situation in their communities. (MV SR, 2017c) I choose Take-away Package because I assume that preferential treatment can reveal the degree of ethnic inequalities. I investigate ethnic power relations that are enacted in this state-coordinated help with diverse 'soft' and material support.

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[1] Available are data for year 2004 and 2013. The next year should be published data based on the same most respected methodology.

[2] There is no research being done on the topic, thus the accessible evidence is reachable by the media. For example: RTVS. *V Žiline ľudia ostávajú v kontajneroch.* Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rO3BLpS7L0 ; *Vysťahovaním Rómov z domov porušujú Bánovce dohovor OSN.* Retrieved from: https://www.teraz.sk/regiony/pravnik-vystahovanim-romov-z-domov/234166-clanok.html.

[3] I relate to the programs for the 'marginalized Roma communities' of Operational Program Human Resources operating within European Structural and Investment Fund, which is supported by the European Union. According to it infrastructural projects for building water infrastructure, waste facilities, housing etc. usually require 5% of the total financial participation of the municipalities. (MV SR, 2019, Retrieved from: https://www.minv.sk/?OPLZ), while in the 'soft' projects based on the provision of the helping professions, such as social workers, program finance most of the expenditures related to the implementation of the project. (MV SR, 2019, Retrieved from: https://www.minv.sk/?narodne-projekty)

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The social work that I analyse is part of the Take-away Package funded by the European Union is called "National Project: Outreach social work and outreach work in the municipalities with the presence of the marginalized Roma communities" (later NP OSW&SW). [4,5] I choose social work as an object of this study because it is considered an important tool in addressing the social problems of Roma in Slovakia. (Grill, Hurrle, Škobla, 2016; Hrustič, 2011) My analysis aims to explore how the meanings that are attached to Roma assist in (re)producing ethnic inequality. Such a perspective has implications for the next academic works and policies dealing with ethnic inequalities.

The Slovak case is a convenient entry point to a discussion of neoliberal welfare states and ethnic inequalities. It demonstrates a post-communist country with a neoliberal system, however, it is not governed by the market forces in social services. (Kocman, 2013) As a point of departure, I use the ideas of newly a developed circle of critical Romani studies stemming from critical race theory.[6] Therefore, this analysis offers a rare critical look at the social work in Slovakia. Additionally, I employ the findings related to the study of neoliberal

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[4] All the translations from the original Slovak texts were made by an author of a thesis.

[5] Take-away Package was originally intended to be one individual National Project Take-away for years 2014-2020 as the preferential treatment for the 150 municipalities with the services supported by the so-called helping professions (social workers, assistant in the school etc.). Later, principle of the Take-away in its coordinated and complex support as part of the preferential treatment for the 150 municipalities was kept. Nevertheless, different means of support (social work, pre-school program etc.) were divided into individual National Projects that are institutionally located at the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma communities, although they are individual projects. Due to the delay in financing the National Projects (such as NP OSW&SW) started later in the year 2017. The first phase of the project NP OSW&SW runs for years 2017-2019. It is expected that right after the closure of this phase of the project, the second one will start for another two years financed by the European Union. After the finalization of the second phase of the National project, the state organizes social work for the marginalized Roma communities based on the local resources.

[6] I use the term related to 'ethnicity' because it is used in NP OSW&SW and also generally in Slovak context when speaking about the Roma. Although, different international sources I use often employ 'race'. The usage and meanings of 'ethnicity' and 'race' depend on particular historical and social context. (see Farkas, L. (2017) *The meaning of racial or ethnic origin in EU law: between stereotypes and identities*. Brussels: European Commission) Nevertheless, my interest is to study what kind of meanings are attached to them and create the social hierarchies.

social policies and explore how ethnic relations develop in neoliberal welfare states and social work. (Politt, 1993; Van Baar, 2012; Harris, 2014; Lorenz, 2017, etc.).

Relying on the above mentioned theoretical accounts of inequalities and the changing welfare state, I formulate the main research question as follows: What are the meaning-making mechanisms of the social work for the Roma people in Slovakia? In order to answer this question, I raise sub-questions. The first one is connected to creating the social work that is targeting specific ethnicity: What are the ways of conducting ethnicity-conscious social work for the Roma in Slovakia? The next one is related to creation of social inequalities: How is the otherness of the 'Roma' constructed in the social work and in whose interest is the image constructed? The last sub-question is related to the implementation of the inequalities in social work: How is the social work imagined in relation to ethnicity?

I employ a methodology that allows to understand discourses of neoliberal social policies and to look at how the ethnic category is constructed and legitimized in this context. I use the method of critical discourse analysis (later CDA) to study the constructed meanings associated with Roma. (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough, Wodak, 1997) This method allows me to explore mechanisms of creating social hierarchies based on ethnicity. Using CDA, I analyse documents related to designing and implementation of the NP OSW&SW. Specifically, I explore the documents such as guidelines for the evidence of the users, standards of quality of the social service, educational topics for the social workers, forms for the evidence of service users, etc. I also study the institutional arrangement of the NP OSW&SW and related strategic materials that shape implementation of NP OSW&SW, such as document of the Operational Program of the Human Resources that funds the OSW&SW, and also the statute of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma Communities that manages and guides the program and so far.

Besides the analysis of the documents, I also conducted interviews which helped me to navigate through the path-dependency of the documents, procedures and the concepts. I carried out two semi-structured interviews with a regional coordinator and a director of the department responsible for implementing NP OSW&SW. (Miovský, 2006)

This thesis is a result of foregrounded theoretical and analytical work, and it is divided into two major chapters, which are divided into sections. The first chapter locates the thesis within a discussion of neoliberal social policies, especially social work, in the light of the ethnic relations. The second chapter presents the analysis of the mechanisms of meaning-making related to the Roma in the Slovak case.

My analysis shows that although the NP OSW&SW declares the social work to be anti-oppressive, it uses paternalistic and stereotypical discursive practices. Unmarked whiteness of the producers of the discourses generates legitimization of paternalism towards the marginalized Roma. Consequently, unmarked whiteness positions the Roma as the Other – people of second order. (Vajda, 2015) Described processes help in discursive (re)production of ethnic inequalities instead of transforming them. I trust that these findings can be turned into policy recommendations to inform current debates over the establishment of the next state-run program of the social work in the marginalized Roma communities after completion of the European funded NP OSW&SW.

Chapter 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Background of the Research

Neoliberal Welfare State Debates in the Context of the Analysed Social Work

The Slovak case of NP OSW&SW is one of the rather rare complex policies targeted at people of a specific ethnicity and living in poverty to ameliorate the living standards coordinated by the state. To understand the context of the Slovak case, I present changes in organizing the welfare state and social work under neoliberalism. When possible, I also reveal neoliberal trends in the case of the NP OSW&SW.

The situation of the post-communist neoliberal welfare state differs from what the literature studying the 'Western Europe' or the neoliberal welfare in the United States of America portrays. (Fallov, Blad, 2019; Kus, 2006) Neoliberalism was not translated into the local context by wiping out of the welfare state through the exposure of the market forces. Rather this process shaped neoliberal governance with local standards without marketization. (Collier, 2011) Another aspect of neoliberalism in Central Europe is that it strengthens its hegemony by contrasting itself to the communist past, which translates into harsher social dumping policies, particularly affecting the Roma. (Livia, Druţă, 2016). Roma became objects of the paternalistic and disciplining policies of the changing welfare. (Baar, 2012; Černušáková, 2017) Also, European policies for 'integration of the Roma', which NP OSW&SW is part of, are recognized as part of neoliberal governance. (Van Baar, 2011) Some academics argue that discourses of the 'integration of Roma' together with the discourses related to the internal logic of the European Structural and Investment Funds to 'increase employment' enforces the neoliberalism and continue in the creation of Roma as

subordinate Other. (Rostas, Rövid, Szilvási, 2015; Vincze, 2014) Thus, this situation creates a unique entry point for enriching the ongoing discussion on changing the nature of the welfare state and ethnic inequality.

In the following part, I discuss the level of implementation of the three key processes of neoliberalism in the social work –marketization, managerialism, and consumerism – in respect to Slovak case of the ethnic targeted social work. (Harris, 2014)

Marketization seeks to exposure social services to the market forces, which is not wide-spread in Central and Eastern Europe and especially not in the Slovak case. In Slovakia, the state controls the majority of social services resulting in restriction of marketization, which is also the case of the social work NP OSW&SW targeted at 'marginalized Roma communities'. (Kocman, 2013; MV SR, 2017g) Standardization of services is part of the marketization. During this process, social services are unified according to the rules designated by the public authority. Standardization allows the public authority to compare services and purchase them, i.e. public authority use standards to compare what kind of service is cheaper or can accommodate more users. The main body of the public policy literature understands standardization as the trend which is an answer to austerity measures and which results in enhanced competition among the social services. (Politt, 1993; McEldowney, 2016)

Another characteristic of neoliberalization of social work is managerialism. Managerialism is the belief that one can lead an organizational unit without knowledge related to e. g. social work. Managerialism influences social work practices, which is then largely governed by managers. This decreases the implementation of the knowledge and power of a social worker in the field. (Politt, 1993) Discourses of managerialism try to

dominate professional social work by dividing it into 'professional' and the 'managerial'. (Clark, 1998, p. 24) Such process transforms the role of a social worker into an implementing agent who executes what was prescribed by standards set by managers and limited in his/her independent decisions.

The last process of neoliberal social work called consumerism, which stems from the imaginary of service users as consumers of services. Consumers can decide about the services they would like to purchase. (Timms, 1964, p. 35) Consumerism is criticized for its limited implications in the social service environment, since users of the social services often do not have that many choices and enough information related to services. (Corrigan, Leonard, 1978, p. 3; Beresford, Croft, 1993, p. 67) This is particularly important in the context of the NP OSW&SW. Selected municipalities are in remote areas with no possibility of choosing among the services. Service users are people who live in long-term segregation with limited literacy and mobility.[7] Consequently, consumerist logic does not apply in the context of NP OSW&SW.

In the previous section, I described the three process related to the neoliberal welfare and social work in the context of the NP OSW&SW in Slovakia. In the next section, I explore the debate about the reproduction of ethnic inequalities within social policies.

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[7] Illustration can be that the NP OSW&SW usually employs 3-4 workers for the localities they serve with the number of possible users from several hundreds to thousands. Municipalities can be part of also project of the community centres which would double the number of employees.

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Ethnic Relation Debates in the Neoliberal Welfare and Social Work

Ethnicity and race matter in social policies. Some authors together with parts of the general public claim that we entered the post-racial or post-ethnic age which is free of prejudice and discriminations. (Martiniello, 2001; Gilroy, 1998) Concepts of 'diversity' (Cooper, 2004), 'multiculturalism' (Lentin, 2014) or generally the trend of 'culturalization of policies' (Brown, 2006) started to alter the discussion about structural racism. These concepts create the vision of meritocracy that ignores the structural inequalities based on collective categories, such as ethnicity. There is also a body of literature indicating a lasting role of racism in modern society in view of different language practices on race or ethnicities. (Goldberg, 1993; Giroux, 2008) In the following paragraphs, I look closer at how an ethnic label is brought into social policies by using the concepts of ethnicity-conscious programs and ethnicization. Then I introduce the concept of 'whiteness' which raises awareness of unmarked whiteness in policies. In order to reconstruct the ethnic relations, I use the theoretical points of critical Romani studies.

Social policies, such as NP OSW&SW, which are informed by the position of its recipients based on their ethnicity, are called ethnic targeted or ethnicity-conscious. (Edwards, 2009). The rationale of such policies is based upon the need for a remedy because of unequal treatment of ethnic group in the past, which results in various present inequalities. Ethnicity-conscious policies are inevitably influenced by discourses about the social groups that these discourses also generate. The ethnicity-conscious policies do not have to necessarily reproduce discourses of dominations based on ethnicity. Instead, they are expected to tackle the inequalities caused by differential treatment of ethnicity.

The analytical category of 'ethnicization' denotes the mechanisms that systematically advance one group over the other along ethnic categories and justify these practices. (Hall, 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2005, p. 9) The superiority of one group is created by its access to the material and symbolic resources and endorsed by public discourses. These discourses claim ethnic hierarchy by creating different social representations of groups and result in the positive self-positioning of a group with more resources. Some authors hope that critical understanding of ethnicity in social work discourses create space for ethnic minorities to reconstruct access to the material and symbolic resources. (Razack, Jeffrey, 2002; Park, 2005; Abrams, Moio, 2009)

The analytical concept of 'whiteness' shifts the focus of attention to mechanisms of creating an environment advantaging particular 'white' ethnicity. (Allen, 2012; Vajda, 2015) By its proponents, whiteness is a category translated into the social construction of different aspects of life reserving high social status for people identified as white. Therefore, whiteness constructs ethnicized individuals. Conceptualization of whiteness is also discussed in social work studies. Some of the authors understand whiteness as a framework that helps social workers to engage with commitments to an anti-oppressive approach not only on political but also on a personal level. (Waltern, 2011; Heron, 2007) In my analysis, I focus on studying how unmarked whiteness influence meaning-making related to the Roma.

The possible reproduction of the social subordination of the Roma ethnicity in this paper is also studied through the lenses of critical Romani studies. This approach aims to reconstruct the position of Roma by reclaiming Romani subjectivities. (Bogdan, et al., 2018; Airhihenbuwa, Ford, 2010) Reclaiming the ethnic identity supports reconstruction of a new subjectivity, which is not stemming in the structural aspects of oppression but serves as the

source of solidarity. (Costache, 2018) According to such understanding, an ethnic category is not only as subject intermingled with stereotypes but also as the source for different solidarities and counter-narrations. I argue that public policies should be informed about the possibility of endorsing the existing discourses of dominations. This consequently re-creates the division of symbolic and material resources. Nevertheless, the process of reconstruction requires the emergence of new socio-cognitive representations and language practices.

Method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and its Role in Understanding Reproduction of Racism

The following section introduces the method of CDA when used to analyse racism in society. In the latter part, I engage in the debate about how the discourses linked to racism are becoming less visible because of neoliberal policy trends.

People with more access to power via having the material and symbolic resources can influence the way things are being spoken about. (Fairclough, 1995) Elites participate in generating and maintaining dominant discourses and thus contribute to subordination. (van Dijk, 1993) Also, state institutions, such as the legal instruments or executive bodies, facilitate the legitimation of the imagined social hierarchies. CDA pays special attention to the elite discourses that are recontextualized in different groups in societies. Thus, CDA focuses on phrases, sentences and other language practices that convey meanings which can influence interactions in different situations. (van Dijk, 1997, p. 2) The cognitive approach represented by van Dijk (1987, p.196) focuses on the language cognitions through

collectively acquired prejudices. These prejudices can transform into paternalistic tendencies towards minorities. In the following analysis, the approach by van Dijk is used together with the conceptualization by Norman Fairclough.

CDA often studies the political elites, which are believed to influence wider society via access to the media, but also by the execution of their power such as policy-making. Political and policy-making discourses are influenced by the context of discourse production, which can be examined by institutional analysis. (Bernstein in Krzyzanowski, 2016) This thesis is inspired by the recent works using CDA methods for analysing the European Union policy-making. (Krzyzanowski, 2016) The proposed method stems from the idea that contemporary neoliberal discourses shift attention from the social actors, such as members of the minorities, to the analytical concepts that need to be studied in its recontextualizations. In the case of the ethnicity-conscious policies in Slovakia, I study the meaning-making process related to the Roma as the conceptual category within NP OSW&SW. In order to do so, I look at the different managerial levels.

A body of CDA works is devoted to political and media discourse. There is also a growing literature dedicated to the analysis of the professional discourse of social work. Findings show that discourses include knowledge circulating within the professional world copying the dominant discourses. (Chambon, 1994; Rodger, 1991) Some academics argue that the use of the CDA within the social work field is crucial due to the transformation that social policy work generates on personal and political levels (Fook, 2003, p. 68; Ellerman, 1998). Stenson studied the power of the discourses used by social workers in the lives of the users of the service. (Stenson, 1993) His findings showed that users gradually recontextualize discourses of the social workers, and if the discourses are distant, i. e. paternalizing, the users consider those as oppressive.

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CDA is an apt tool to reveal the construction and reconstruction of the inequalities in social work. CDA offers a method to analyse (re)production of social problems, such as racism. CDA believes that there are social groups which have the power to generate the discourses that endorse their dominations. (van Dijk, 1991, p. 27) Dominations are based on inequality of the races, ethnicities, religions, etc. (van Dijk et al., 1997, p. 146) Especially, the cognitive branch of CDA analyses discourses drawing the demarcations lines of different race, ethnic or national groups. These dividing boundaries are traceable in the particular language practices, such as the discursive strategies of Othering by naming 'we' and 'they'.

The divisions of the people can be actively reproduced in speech and writing, which helps the production of cognitive categories (van Dijk, 1991; van Dijk, 1998). In the discourses of domination minorities are often mentioned together with deviance and danger. (Wodak, 1996, p. 114) Such discursive strategy positions the dominant social group as a victim. This shift is prerequisite in the legitimization of policies based on coercion and paternalism. So for example, minorities are being viewed as the Others who habitually rely on the welfare of the state. This imposes that the 'we' community have to work for the Others who do not contribute. An implication of this can be traced in the discourses related to the policies that try to introduce the need to work to get certain kinds of benefits (workfare). The discourses that are used for enforcing such policies see 'them' as deviant because 'they do not want to work properly'. CDA analysis can reveal the strategies used to enforce such legislation in connection to the prejudice related to the ethnic minorities. A similar analysis was done in Slovakia and connected the introduction of the workfare regime with the prejudice to the Roma. (Lajčáková, et al., 2017)

Neoliberal discourses do not have to employ formulations of the race or ethnicity, although they have significantly different effects on people according to their believed

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origin. Neoliberal discourses that reinforce politics of self-efficiency might ignore the differential social, economic, and symbolic resources people have. These resources are, however, structured by socio-economic position, gender, or ethnicity. It can be illustrated on an example of the housing policy in Central Europe. Neoliberal discourses focus on understanding housing as a financial investment and omit seeing the public domain of the housing. (Vincze, 2013, p. 237) Discourses resonating financialization of the housing pushes people into taking a mortgage and limits investments into social housing policies. (Samec, 2018) This has an impact on ethnic minorities, such as the Roma, that have worse access to good education, better jobs and consequently stable financial resources. In the case of Roma, this is combined with historical segregation, past limited access to the privatization of the public flats that were available for the middle class after the transition to capitalism and present discrimination on the housing market. (Snopek, 2015; Lajčáková, et. al., 2013; Bartoš, et al., 2013) Thus usage of the neoliberal discourses of 'self-sufficiency' does not take into account the historical process of constituting ghettoes based on the believed ethnicity and present discrimination on the housing market effectively keep and further reproduce marginalization of the Roma.

Chapter 2: Case Study of the Meaning-makings of the Roma in the Social Work in Slovakia

Ethnicity Entering the Debate

The present context of neoliberal policies is typical for silencing ethnic inequalities caused by economic inequalities. (Davis, 2007, p. 347) Post-holocaust and post-colonial public sphere also shaped policy-making discourses in which expressions of ethnicity are rather delicate. Nevertheless, the process of integration in the European Union brought to the member states the need for Roma-targeted policies. Different states have different approaches to policies aiming at closing the gap in the living standards of Roma and non-Roma in the European Union. The Slovak case is an example of the ethnicity-conscious policy. The ethnicity-conscious policy is rare in the context of social work, especially when it is so directly orchestrated by the state. This connection between a state and social work is an entry point to see what kind of meanings are attached to the Roma in the context of policy making for overcoming ethnic inequalities. To what extent is Roma ethnicity constructed around the topics related to oppression? Alternatively, is it constructed around the theme of emancipation? Could an ethnicity-conscious social work cause mobilization around a shared group identity?

I aim to answer the above questions in this section. In order to do so, I present the most influential sources of recontextualization on the macro, meso and micro level of

management of NP OSW&SW: more closely, the European Structural and Investment Funds, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma Communities, and NP OSW&SW.

I will trace how the concept of the Roma in social policies is created in order to understand the meaning-making mechanisms regarding Roma ethnicity.

Roma Targeted Policies: European Structural and Investment Fund

In the following section, I explore how the setting of the European Structural and Investment Funds in Slovakia resulted in the ethnicity-conscious policy of the European Structural and Investment Funds. I analyse discourses used in the critical document of the European Structural and Investment Funds and connect them with its recontextualization in the NP OSW&SW. Recontextualization in this situation means that the ethnicity-conscious discourses were influencing and are directly incorporated into the social work documents, and consequently operationalized into practice. (Fairclought, 2013, p. 180)

Although the European Union, which distributes the European Structural and Investment Funds, requires the creation and implementation of Roma integration policies. Each member state has the responsibility for the design of these policies. The general expectation is the European Fund investments in social policies are to be institutionalized. An essential document of the European Structural and Investment Funds is the Operational Fund of the Human Resources stating six priority axes of development, while two of the axes are dedicated to so-called marginalized Roma communities. (MPVSR, 2014, p. 35-135)

Two out of six specific axes are ethnicity-conscious, and they relate to the 'marginalized Roma communities': no. 5 "Integration of the marginalized Roma

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communities" and no. 6 "The technical equipment in the municipalities with the marginalized Roma communities". The sixth axis allocates infrastructural development subsidies for all the municipalities that were identified according to the report the Atlas of the Roma Communities written by the academics for the Slovak public administration. (Mušinka, et. al, 2013) I focus on the fifth axis since it targets the 'soft' development and primarily Take-away Package, which includes NP OSW&SW.

Before I analyse the mentioned priority axes, I present and comment on an example of gaps and silences of the ethnic inequalities in the document. There are several topics in the document when the aspect of ethnicity would be important, but it is missing.[8] (MPVSR, 2014) This fact noteworthy especially in the context of the priority axis of the social exclusion, which accents the need to focus on "multiple disadvantages". (MPVSR, 2014, p. 81-96) Even among enumerations of multiple disadvantage, race, ethnicity, or national minority are not mentioned. Instead, concepts of the "disadvantaged groups" or "islands of poverty" are used. (MPVSR, 2014, p. 9,12-14, 81) Ethnicity becomes pronounced only in the description of the separate priority axis no. 5 and no. 6. To mention Roma as part of the ethnicity-conscious policies targeting extreme poverty (but divided from "islands of poverty") creates the image of an ethnic label of difference. Ethnicity is not depicted in connection to the structural problems of racism concerning different spheres of social life, but it is reified in connection to ethnicized extreme poverty. Such a discursive constellation reflects preoccupations to discuss the minorities in relation to the deviance instead of everyday racism and structural inequalities. (van Dijk, 1994, p. 34-36) According to the discursive practices, preferential treatment of the municipalities with marginalized Roma

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[8] One exception is the topic of the special education, in which the segregation of the Roma is discussed.

communities do not seem to be part of the broader strategy to tackle racism shaping life trajectories of the inhabitants of the country.

In the next paragraph, I show an example of discursive silencing of ethnicity in the crucial document for the European Structural and Investment Fund - Operational Program Human Resources. I present goal no. 4.2.1. of the document the Operational Program Human Resources related to the shift from residential care to community care in which ethnicized description of the problem is translated into an investment measure. (MPVSR, 2014, p. 84)[9] As was showed in the joint research of governmental and civil society actors, there is the over-representation of the Roma in residential care for children. (ÚPSVAR, Úsmev ako dar, 2010) Another influential research indicates how professionals working in residential care for children have difficulties in working with Roma children. (CVEK, 2015) Even though over than half of the four thousand children in residential care are assumed to have Roma origin, there are no special programs that would accommodate this situation. (ÚPSVAR, Úsmev ako dar, 2010) When an institution does not acknowledge different ethnic or national background, it can lead to oppression on two different layers. First, personal conflicts can arise when a child cannot express himself/herself in the language that the environment forces on him/her to. Second, structural oppression takes places when the unmarkedness of whiteness leads to 'whiteness' being imposed upon the ethnic minorities as the dominant

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[9] Specific goal no. 4.2.1 Transition from the institutional to the community care (original: Prechod z inštitucionálnej na komunitnú starostlivosť). See also related strategic materials: MPSVR. (2011). Stratégia deinštitucionalizácie systému sociálnych služieb a náhradnej starostlivosti v Slovenskej republike. Retrieved from: https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/legislativa/dokumenty-zoznamy-pod/strategia-deinstitucionalizacie-systemu-socialnych-sluzieb-nahradnej-starostlivosti-1.pdf; MPSVR. (2016). NÁRODNÝ AKČNÝ PLÁN PRECHODU Z INŠTITUCIONÁLNEJ NA KOMUNITNÚ STAROSTLIVOSŤ V SYSTÉME SOCIÁLNYCH SLUŽIEB NA ROKY 2016 – 2020, Retrieved from: https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/rodina-soc-pomoc/soc-sluzby/narodny-akcny-plan-prechodu-z-institucionalnej-komunitnu-starostlivost-systeme-socialnych-sluzieb-roky-2016-2020.pdf .

category. An example can be illustrated on the difficulty to communicate with Romani children with employees. (CVEK, 2015, p.86-89) Therefore, children are not only expelled from their known environment but also left without the possibility of explaining the new situation, for example, house rules. This situation can easily lead to frustrations and conflicts between the children and the employees. However, this is not only an example of individual situation, but shows the systematic level which constitutes structural oppression. Romani children are not educated in Romani language, are prevented from speaking it, and only the Slovak language is presented as the approved language to express themselves. The necessary changes related to the everyday functioning of the residential children's care would require transformations of the institutions in a reflection of its silenced ethnicity, or nationality. (Guinier, Torres in Vaught, 2008, p. 578) The particular state of affairs is appalling since, on the one hand, the state develops evidence about the great minority representation of measures related to the care of children, but on the other hand, it fails to recognize ethnicity as an intervening factor in the change-making investment material. This is an example of a policy, where ignoring the different ethnic, or national origin in policy formulation helps to reproduce inequalities.

Coming back to the separate horizontal axis dedicated to 'marginalized Roma communities', one must look to the origins of the term 'marginalized Roma communities' The term is frequently used in different materials related to the social work originated in the analytical reports called the Atlas of the Roma Communities. (see Mušinka et al., 2013; Radičová et al. 2004) The conceptualization of ethnicity is based on attributed identity.[10] The discourses in the report are later replicated since the report functions as ex ante

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[10] By the term attributed identity I mean that someone else than the person defines someone's ethnic identity.

conditionality for obtaining European Structural and Investment Funds. (European Commission, 2011). This path inevitably leads to the reproduction of the professional trope of 'marginalized Roma community' in different discursive spaces, such as social work.

The discursive practice of 'marginalized Roma communities' ties two characteristics of ethnicity and poverty together. This results in the reification of the image of the Roma living in deep poverty. The analysed documents present long-term economic marginalization as the leading cause for "concentration of poverty". (MPSVR, 2014; Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015; Mušinka, et. al., 2013) This reasoning draws attention away from marginalization caused by ethnic prejudice and segregation practices. The analysed documents also use the terms of "concentrations of poverty" or "concentrations of Roma". (MPSVR, 2014; Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015; Mušinka, et. al., 2013; MV SR, 2017e) "Concentrations of Roma" is the lexical formulation recontextualizing academic language in policy materials and later in social work. Such formulations silence actors as well as reasons why the Roma are found in larger numbers at particular places and not in others. In addition, talking about the concentration of ethnic minorities can be associated with the concentration camps of the Jewish, but also Roma minority during World War Two.

Often, the longer descriptive formulation of the "marginalized Roma communities" is replaced by an abbreviation of "MRK" in the analysed texts.[11] Employing professional tropes and especially abbreviations can cause dehumanization by shifting the focus away from the people as social actors. (Fairclought, 2003, p. 151) The use of the label "MRK" allows one to avoid referring to people living in segregation. Using the label eliminates the

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[11] The abbreviation is not used only in the documents, but also of the newspeak of professionals.

possibility for depicting and understanding the fundamental forces, which bring about segregation. Rather than challenging it, the abbreviation reinforces the narrative that Roma are poor and helpless. The deployment of the 'marginalized Roma communities' or 'MRK' in social policy discourses limits the understanding of the Roma identity as the source of pride. (Costache, 2018)

In the analysed material, other ethnicities than the Roma, such as the Slovaks or Hungarians, are rarely mentioned. Selective naming of the Roma without disclosing the other actors creates discursive demarcation of the Other. (Park, 2005, p. 15) This discursive strategy, however, reifies the symbolic and social demarcations of essentialist categories, such as ethnicity. (Lamont, Molnar, 2002)

This section showed how the discourses used in social policy (re)produces the image of the Roma living in poverty rather than the Roma struggling with attributed identity on an everyday basis. It is also illustrated how the image of the Roma living in extreme poverty is epitomized by a dehumanizing abbreviation.

The "Gypsy Bureau" for "Gypsy Social Work"?

From the level of the discourses of the European Structural and Investment Funds, I move to the level of institution managing of the Funds – The Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma Communities, which is pejoratively called Gypsy Bureau. First, I describe the context of the Take-away package, which NP OSW&SW is part of, to study how the Office became responsible for the preferential treatment of the Take-away package. Later, I focus

on the discourses of the Office and I conclude with remarks on the impact of institutional arrangement of preferential treatment of the municipalities of the Take-away package.

The recipients of the 5th axis are the 150 municipalities recognized as the communities with the worst results in the "simplified index of the under-development". (MV SR, 2017c) This index assumes that under-development can be traced by residential characteristics. It is constructed based the rationale that the more people live in an average household in a community, the worst socio-economic situation families will show. (MV SR, 2017c). Municipalities with the poorest results are separated from the rest, thus they are not managed by the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of the Social Affairs and the Family, but by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma Communities.

The aim of the Take-away Package provided for 150 municipalities with the worst results in the simplified index of under-development is to ameliorate the living standards of the Roma in the marginalized Roma communities. This is done by the services of helping professions, such as social work, pre-school preparation program, community centres and the legalisations of the lands. These services are offered by National Projects, such as NP OSW&SW. According to the evaluations by the program managers, the provision of different services was not administered well in the previous program period. Nevertheless, it is perceived as a good strategy to continue. (MPVSR, 2014, p. 101)

The aid of Take-Away Package falls under the management of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma Communities (later Office). Language practices which legitimize different management for 150 municipalities focus on "necessity for the complex long-term approach" and "the specific characters of interventions for the communities".

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(MPVSR, 2014, p. 14) Specificity is associated with the combination of the ethnicity 'Roma' and the long-term poverty without noticing structural racism.

The Office is an advisory organ of the government, which is responsible for the "problematics of the Roma Communities in Slovakia" and specifically responsible for the integration of Roma communities through "more effective policies". (MV SR, 2012, ar. 3) According to its website, the predecessor of the Office is the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the People needing special help. (MV SR, 2018) The Statute of the Office which became ethnicity-conscious in view of the 'problems' of poverty related to the Roma minority which is depicted as being of a 'community' of shared interest. Discourses used in the Statute are seen by some authors as missing to meaningfully address structural racism. (Vrăbiescu, 2014; Kóczé, Rövid, 2012) Copying the European integration discourses, the Office employs the rhetoric of "inclusion", "integration" and "development" for denoting Roma policies. (MVSR, 2012)

The Office manages services, such as social work, for selected municipalities. The decision to provide the services to selected municipalities by a single Office was made upon the rationale of "efficiency". (MVSR, 2017c; MPSVR, 2014) The role of the Office is the same as the role of the organizational unit of the Ministry of the Social Affairs and the Family called the Implementation Agency, i. e. to guarantee the quality and financing of the projects, such as NP OSW&SW. Also, social work in both organizations is directed by the same professional codes and quality management mechanisms. (MPVSR, 2014, p. 101) In the case of the social work, professionals from the Office and the Implementation Agency of the Ministry for Social and Family Affairs work according to the same standards. (MV SR, 2017f; IA, 2017) The Implementation Agency implemented similar projects before, thus there are employees that can build upon this knowledge. The rationale of efficiency is

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connected to the idea of creating one centre, the Office, which manages all individual projects making up the Take-away package. Nevertheless, this creates a new agenda for the Office, that it has no previous experience with the projects funded from the European Structural and Investment Fund.

Policy formulation, as in the case of NP OSW&SW, moves from the efficiency rationale to the normative construction of deeper narratives regarding the functioning of society. (Durnová et. al., 2016, p. 49) I propose that preferential treatment of the selected municipalities managed by the Office is part of constructing the idea of particular 'Roma expertise'. 'Roma expertise' is articulated in the ethnicity-conscious policy rooted in the discourses of poverty, not in addressing the structural racism. The Othering of Roma from the other disadvantaged population is based upon the greater level of the poverty, but it is again not addressed in relation to structural racism and segregation practiced which created "concentrations of Roma". This 'Roma expertise' of help is also not constructed around the anti-oppressive and emancipatory approach, but, as I demonstrate later, to a large extent around the paternalist discourses leaving whiteness as an unmarked category, in between the lines.

The Management of NP OSW&SW

In the previous sections, I illustrated the construction of the ethnicity-conscious NP OSW&SW. The following section explores further uses of the concept of ethnicity that create social hierarchies. The broader question that this section engages in is to what extent does the state-managed social work makes ethnic relations segregating the Roma less visible.

As I show throughout the thesis, the notions of ethnicity in NP OSW&SW are often linked to related academic and policy-making works. I would like to continue in highlighting the role of the Atlas of the Roma communities in the construction of Roma and the practice of 'counting the Roma'. (Radičová, et. al. 2003; Mušinka, et. al. 2013) An example of accepting the concept without critical reflection is the following statement: "Most of the Roma in Slovakia, approximately 55,3%, live in ethnic communities". (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p.25) Although the methodology of the Atlas of the Roma Communities is based upon an expert estimation of the attributed identity, a fetishization of numbers epitomized by the precision of the decimal number. Some statements are even tautological, such as: "Roma marginalized communities are ethnically homogenous." (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015) This shows again not enough reflexivity towards how the ethnicity is constructed. The report leaves no space to distinguish between marginalized Roma communities and Roma communities.

Another characteristic of the term 'marginalized Roma communities' is that it leads to encapsulating Roma subjectivities in the imaginary of poverty. This leaves limited space for alternative imaginaries of the Romani subjects. (Costache, 2018, p. 39) Even within the discourses of Roma marginalization Roma, there is room for counter-histories. One such example from Roma communities living of fear in having children separated from their family if white social workers deem the children to be 'at risk'. (Lorenz, 1994) Such a narrative highlights the position of Roma living in poverty from different perspectives than the dominant discourses.

The only ethnicity that is named in the social work materials which I analysed is the Roma, and only as beneficiaries of the services. (MPVSR, 2014; MV SR 2012, Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015) A discursive practice which is used to avoid mentioning the other

ethnicities is to talk about the "majoritarian people" or "majoritarian environment". (see e. g. Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 31, p. 36) In the opposition to "majority" the Roma are constructed as users of services and associated with the category which is presented as impoverished, having problems with the parenting, not having enough money., etc. Any other race, ethnic or national origin is left unmarked, the Other as not-normal is produced. Critical whiteness studies show that between the lines of the named ethnicized Other are the assumed 'white' people. The role of the minority group as the Other is produced to be a contrast against the normality of white 'bourgeoning unity'. (Crenshaw, 2003, p. 26.) Such processes of ethnicized Othering serves to undermine the fact that everyone – including social workers and policy-makers – have an ethnicity. (Tsang, 2001) The visibility of ethnicity shapes our lives, not only if one is Roma, but also if one is white.

The situation is different in the ethnicity-conscious part of the guidelines called the Standards of Quality, focusing on the set of criteria through which the minimal level of quality in provision is defined. The authors ask to focus on the methods of social work related to extreme poverty, rather than to ethnic inequalities. Examples of such calls are:

> "We **do not know what the effect of different ethnicities** is on the "lifestyle" of the inhabitants of the Roma communities. We better understand the explanations related to concentrated poverty, social exclusion, and discrimination." (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 25) Because of that **social work is focused** on supporting the individuals, groups, and communities, living **in conditions of social exclusion** (…), it is important to understand the phenomena of **social exclusion** and phenomenon of **concentrated poverty and the reproduction of poverty**. (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 6) "The methods used in social work with

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Roma clients are in **limited relation with ethnicity**. Of the greatest importance is to be prepared for cooperation with clients experiencing **long-term poverty, oppression, and exclusion from society** (including spatial isolation)." (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 25; emphasized by the author)

All the quotations show how language practices are used to shift the focus of social workers from experiencing ethnicity to mainly experiencing poverty. The concepts of "social exclusion", "poverty", or "oppression" influence thinking about the gap in living standards between Roma and the rest of the inhabitants. That is in contrast with the understanding of the racist ideology as the explanation for one group of people having radically worse living standards than the general population. (van Dijk, 2011)

One of the analysed materials describes educational topics that the Office provides for the social workers of NP OSW&SW. One of the lecture topics is "social pathologies in the marginalized Roma communities". Discursive practices showing ethnic minorities as having a culture of diverse social pathologies are part of the white supremacist ideologies. (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 287) Some authors claim that certain concepts such as 'empowerment', and related discourses, which are widely used in the NP OSW&SW, are also part of a coercive role of social work as a state-managed institution. (Dominelli, 1997, p. 71-75) Critical understanding of the role of social work within state structures would help in the understanding of using social pathology in relation to ethnicity and poverty.

The most complex introduction into the topic of ethnicity for social workers is represented by the chapter of the Standards of the Quality for Social Work called "Some notes on outreach social work and outreach work in marginalized Roma communities." This particular topic has a different author than the rest of the Standards. She claims a Roma

identity and works as a professor in the Romologic Studies Bureau of the University of Constatinus Philosophy in Nitra.[12] The other authors of the Standards are not claiming themselves as Roma. The practice of choosing a Roma expert to comment on the ethnic aspect of the social work practice can be understood as creating a space for representing minority voice which has a 'real' experience that allows to express the opinion in a situation on controversial topics. (Van Dijk, 1987, p. 90-99)

As mentioned, the author of the chapter is a Roma, and the NP OSW&SW is for marginalized Roma communities implying that the ethnic identity of the users is also Roma. However, it seems that the text is written imagining an audience of white social workers: "If a social worker decides to accept a client of **different ethnicity** and work with it (this will certainly be necessary in some cases), (s)he should accept that it opens up for related stereotypes and prejudices. These can cause many problems at work." (Rusnáková, 2015, p. 25; emphasized by the author) Different ethnicity of social workers than presumed Roma ethnicity of users means that the author expects social workers to be Slovaks, Hungarians, or other 'white' ethnicities. From the perspective of whiteness studies, this rhetorical expression shows that the social workers are expected to be 'white' and the user of the service 'Roma'. However, the 'different ethnicity' is not explicitly named, explicit naming happens only in the name of Roma. The explicit expression of the ethnicity is reserved for the minorities, and otherwise, there is the expectation of 'whiteness'. Unmarked whiteness of the audience is a common denominator of the different text. Such shifting of the attention to the ethnicized minority create the opportunity to ignore the privileges that whiteness

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[12] „Romologic" is used as the most accurate translation of the Slovak term which combines the term „Roma" and „logos"as referring to the science about the Roma (originally: Ústav romologických štúdií).

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brings. (Young, 2004) Such discursive practice also demonstrates imagining that anyone does not have to acknowledge ethnicity. This ignores the fact that ethnicity shapes life experience.

Last sections traced the ethnicization mechanisms of the policy-making that were influential upon the object of study - social work. As was illustrated, the ethnicization of social work happens on various levels, including the institutional which are managed by the Office. Demonstrated discursive strategies lead to the Othering of the Roma and encapsulation the image of a Roma poverty.

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Social work imagining the help (for the Roma)

In the previous sections, I focused on different practices conducted on different levels of management of ethnicity-conscious social work in NP OSW&SW. I continue with the analysis of discourses on assistance and representations of the Roma. This section starts with an examination of the declarative character of social work. Then, I discuss language practices used in NP OSW&SW that are still linked to paternalism stemming from the so-called medical paradigm, in which social work is believed to objectively assess the life conditions of a service user and to devise interventions. (Shulman, 2016) The section closes with the analysis of the socio-cognitive representations of clients in the selected social work program.

Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory social work?

NP OSW&SW declares to be "rooted in the ideas of civil society and participatory democracy" and "based on the ideas of anti-oppressive and anti-discrimination theories and practice". (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 4, p. 6) Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory approaches are associated with the deconstruction of social hierarchies, especially ethnicity. These approaches stress the role of helping professions to reflect upon social hierarchies in the rapport, helps users of the services to access their right and transform social inequalities. (Harlow, Hearn, 2007)

In contradiction to the anti-oppressive approach, the analysed materials for social workers that guide their work warns that: "**Social work methods** have only limited

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connection to ethnicity," (Rusnáková, 2015, p. 25; emphasized by the author). "Ethnicity does not have to be significant every time and especially not in the **relationship between the social worker and the client**." (Rusnáková, 2015, p. 25; emphasized by the author). "Social worker should have knowledge about the 'Roma culture': application of this knowledge should be delicate. It can be the basis for production of the stereotypes (e. g. Romani are talented in music, inhabitants of the Roma ghettos live in more populated communities because they have different culture, etc.)" (Rusnáková, 2015, p. 26) Social workers do not have to acknowledge the existence of ethnicity, but are advised to focus on their 'professionality', i. e. focus on the methods or the rapport, instead of recognizing ethnicity as part of the professional practice.

Anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive approaches emphasise even more the present trend of social work to understand users of the service as the experts of their life situations. (Fox, 2016) That changed from the establishment of the social work when the social workers thought of themselves as having the expertise to establish the needs of the users of the services. This shift is due to the reaction of social work to critical studies showing how the minorities are silenced in the public space, which limits also their space to influence discourses about themselves. CDA shows that the members of the ethnic minorities are silenced unless they voice the hegemonic ethnicized discourses. (van Dijk, 1993, p. 97) I have illustrated that in the crucial document navigating social work practice, the person that shared explicit comments on the Roma is a professional of Roma identity who is a professor of Romology. Yet, there is no sign for that the users of the services or members of the target group were involved into the creation of the standards. The standards based on the source of knowledge that comes from: "(…) work of numerous **experts and practitioners** which dedicate their time to the social work and particularly the outreach social work" which is

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followed by an enumeration of different stakeholders and personals. (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 3; emphasized by the author). Although there are missing marginalized Roma, the Office was among the participating institution. (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 3) This reflects the European trend in which the involvement of the Roma is often required by the politics of the representation and since the Office is an official representative, it is sufficient to include them. Practices of including well-established actor, such as Ministerial body, have patronising impact without the democratic participation of the different actors and often ends up into complicity of a stakeholder instead of involving people particularly affected by the policies. (Kóczé, Rövid, 2012; Nasture, 2015)

Paternalism

Social workers use written forms to get to know the "social anamnesis" of service users "anamnestic interview". (MV SR, 2017b; MV SR, 2017d) These terms are associated with medical procedures in which it a patient's medical history is established. In social work, at the beginning of the cooperation with a user, social workers perform the anamnestic interview. The form and the guidelines require from a user to share numerous information related to the "identification data", "family anamnesis", "information about housing", "information about employment", "health", "social-pathologies", "economic situation", "other" and "outcomes-histories of the problems". (MV SR, 2017b) Formal requirements from the social workers to fill in the questionnaire and get to know such a volume of information about a services user reveal that it is the social worker who can assess the situation of a service user. A constructivist assessment would discuss with the service user

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why he/she came to the service and let him/her explain the relevant details about the case. Such a process allows concentrating on the agency of the user of service.

Another use of the medical term is 'catamnesis' which initially means to follow up a patient after discharge from the care. NP OSW&SW states that the evidence related to the users of service is important due to "catamnesis follow-up of the clients after the closure of cooperation." (MV SR, 2017d, p. 2.) Also, in between the lines, the motivation of a social worker is visible to 'objectively' follow the life trajectory of service user instead of waiting for service user's definitions of the life situation.

These uses of medical lexical expressions construct the user of services as someone with a social diagnosis based on 'objective' facts' of 'social anamnesis'. Social diagnosis labels the life of a user not as part of the system of ethnic inequalities but as 'problematic'. Consequently, usage of these medical discourses allows the legitimization of disciplining. That is an essential component of minority discourses: the disciplining maintains positive self-perception of the discriminating group. (van Dijk, 1993, p. 72)

Representations of the service users

In this section, I demonstrate the overlap of the socio-cognitive representations of ethnic minorities, according to van Dijk (1991, p. 27)[13] and representations of service users in the analysed guidelines of NP OSW&SW. Socio-cognitive representations are created as

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[13] I discuss socio-cognitive representation in the section called "Method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and its Role in Understanding Reproduction of Racism" on the pages 13 and 17.

part of the thematic and cognitive organization of the prejudices related to ethnic groups. In these representations, the ethnic minority is constructed as a source of threats. A discursive shift to 'ethnic minority as a threat' creates a position for defending the rights of the group excluding minority and normalization of disciplining a minority. (van Dijk, 1987, p. 60) In this section, representations of service users are categorized by three different threats that are generated by socio-cognitive representations of the minorities, according to CDA. (van Dijk, 1987, p. 61) These threats are constructed as cultural, social, and economic.

Some of the representations of the service users are based on the proposed dilemmas of the social workers that are discussed in their guidelines. These dilemmas frame representations of the service users and the expected reactions of a social worker. Reactions of a social worker do not take the form of normative recommendations; what a social worker should do in such a dilemma is to set questions to ask from herself/himself.

I start with representations of cultural danger that are according to van Dijk denoted the danger of a group assumed to have "different group identity". (van Dijk, 1987, p. 60) Such socio-cognitive representations require "adaptation" of the minorities. (van Dijk, 1987, p. 60) Social workers discourse do not mention ethnic stereotypes in the way the public discourses do. Thus, in the analysed material, the social workers' discourses do not argue that 'Roma are unadaptable' and 'needs to adapt'. (Miškolci, Kováčová, Kubátová, 2017, p. 79) However, I traced language practices indicating that warns not to 'adapt to them'. This is a sign to keep different group identity – 'not to became like them' by getting 'too closer' to the members of the target community.

Language practices emphasize the need to 'keep the distance' from the relationship, which are established in the community: "What kind of closeness can there be in the

relationship between the client and the social worker to keep it a professional and helping relationship? What are the differences between friendship and professional relationship? How does the environment of a client influence the relationship between a client and the social worker?" (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 12) The guidelines discuss the accessibility of the intimate space of the service users and the connection it might bring, but do not pay attention to the power position of a social worker. "A total blend with the milieu can be dangerous for the professionalism of a social worker because (s)he loses its professional identity (distance, detachment)." (Rusnáková, 2015, p. 26) Critical reading of the concept of 'borders in the social worker role' leads us to the idea of professionalism and neoliberal working practices, in which lives are segmented into the private life of the nuclear family and the work life. (Rajan-Rankin, 2016) "For example, if there is a conflict in the community, in which the family of a social worker is also involved, the other side can stop cooperating with the social worker and also the service, which can stop the continuity of the process of social work in the municipality." (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 12) For the social worker, choosing to live in the marginalized Roma community is depicted as a dilemma, whereas not living in the marginalized Roma community is taken for granted. Not having a natural connection to the community is not problematized.

There are also socio-cognitive representations of social threats through behaviours that are understood as deviant and disrupting the social order. (van Dijk, 1987, p. 60) Examples of such representations can be a mother who comes to the home of a social worker to ask for food for her children. "Should a social worker give her the food because she is also a mother and cannot say no to her or should she say no because this help does not solve the situation?" (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 12) This is also an example of the positive positioning of the social workers in which the framing of the possible solution of not securing

food for the mother is legitimized by the argument 'it is for their good'. (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 93) A social worker accepts that the mother does not have enough food for its family. Nevertheless, the attention is shifted to the connection between mothers and the distanced professional relationship.

I show other examples of the socio-cognitive representations of service users related to social threats. One of them is usury in the community, which is labelled as a social pathology. Usury is part of the social relations in poor communities who do not have access to bank loans. The only opportunity to gain financial resources is to borrow money of high-interest rate and informally. Another socio-cognitive representation related to social threats is the case of people with lousy parenting habits, who are "alcoholics or emotionally unstable people parents" or the families with violent behaviour. (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 12)

The last category related to the socio-cognitive representations of ethnic minorities is economic threats. Economic threats are related to the imaginaries of the minorities as people who do not have a common interest in accumulating resources and are more likely to live at the expenses of other people. In one of the presented cases, a social worker is asked to become complicit in the process of welfare fraud. "The dilemma of the social worker is to write truth about the family and consequently face the related problems, or to lie in the name of the family which wants to gain money from the state." (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 11)

Another representation refers to 'dependent' and 'time-consuming' service users. Social workers are encouraged to reflect how much time they dedicate to whom: "How much time should a social worker spend with a client? When should a social worker finish

cooperation with a client and should dedicate the time to other clients?" (Ondrušková, Pružinská, 2015, p. 11)

As demonstrated above, representations of the lives of marginalized Roma in the analysed NP OSW&SW materials overlap with socio-cognitive representations of ethnic minorities. These representations stem from the prejudices about the ethnic minorities. By using van Dijk's theory, I have portrayed them according to the danger they represent: cultural, social, and economic. Through my analysis of social policy discourses related to the European Structural and Investment Fund, The Office, and the NP OSW&SW, I have shown how these discourses endorse ethnic prejudice against the Roma minority. In spite of claiming to be anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory, NP OSW&SW silences the voice of the marginalized Roma. It paternalizes and reproduces socio-cognitive representations and results in (re)production of ethnic inequalities.

Conclusion

This thesis offers a critical look at the social work in Slovakia to study ethnic relations and the development of the neoliberal welfare state. Slovakia has developed serious measures to tackle the gap in the living standards between the Roma and the rest of society. My thesis focuses on a social work program called NP OSW&SW, which is part of the Take-away Package designed as preferential treatment for the 150 municipalities of the most impoverished situation among the marginalized Roma communities. (MV SR, 2017c)

The study analysed discourses of preferential treatment, which revealed ethnic relations in Slovakia. I examined conceptual frames related to the (re)production of the ethnic inequalities in neoliberal welfare systems, such as ethnicity-conscious policies (Edwards, 2009), unmarked whiteness (Allen 2012), and neoliberal social work (Harris, 2014). I employed critical Romani studies, which developed from critical race theory, to understand the strategies of meaning-making about the Roma. (Bogdan, et. al, 2018) I studied how the ethnic-conscious social work of NP OSW&SW reconstructs the unequal access to material and symbolic resources.

This study used the methods of the socio-cognitive branch of CDA to analyse constructed meanings related to the Roma. Nevertheless, there were some limitations of the used method of socio-cognitive CDA. The method is used dominantly for media and political discourses, in which there are more explicit practices of talking in prejudice about the Roma. In this sense, social work discourse is more delicate to use expressions that are commonly analysed by the socio-cognitive approach of CDA. Despite this, I am convinced that the

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combination of socio-cognitive CDA and institutional analysis of NP OSW&SW, proved to be fruitful to the tool to answer the research questions.

From my critical perspectives, ethnic relations are understood as organizing element of society that marginalizes the non-white population. This research shows that although NP OSW&SW proclaims anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory approach, the discussion of Roma ethnicity shows the opposite. In order to draw this conclusion, I present three different levels of management – European Structural and Investment Funds, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma communities, and NP OSW&SW–, that shaped the discourses of the NP OSW&SW. Roma is dealt with as a minority, which requires preferential treatment based on poverty and ethnicity. The way that racism is addressed in the documents limits the possibilities of transforming a society that is organized around the unmarked whiteness. This is similar to other Central European post-communist countries, in which the 'whiteness' of national identity is not questioned. (Imre, 2015)

I trace the replicated expression of 'marginalized Roma community' used in social work discourses, which leads to the Othering of the Roma and encapsulation of the image of Roma in living in poverty. Although the NP OSW&SW claims to be anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive, I show how it silences the voices of marginalized Roma or constructs the Roma through social diagnoses. This consequently legitimizes a disciplining behaviour towards the Roma.

I also illustrate how the representations of service users in the NP OSW&SW correspond with the stereotyped representation of the ethnic minorities, according to van Dijk. (199) Instead of framing members of the marginalized Roma communities as creative

in using the limited resources, the representations mimic the public representations of ethnic minorities perceived as social, cultural, and economic threats. (van Dijk, 1987, p. 61)

The work elucidates how critical Romani studies could offer an enriching perspective on the subject of ethnicity-conscious social work. The findings show that social work discourses are re-enacted in the lives of the users of the service, thus have tremendous effects on these lives. (Stenson, 1993) Ethnicity-conscious social work is in the Slovak case is governed by the state, but it is not used to transfigure the environment by claiming the Roma rights. Still, ethnic-conscious social work might be used for re-conceptualization of identity as a source of solidarity and the existing discourses might be used to centre the margin. (Airhihenbuwa, Ford, 2010)

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